Social Media Sites of Politicians Influence Their Perception by Constituents

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Abstract

This research examined the impact social media outlets—Facebook and Twitter—have over the way constituents view politicians. This research examined how politicians can use their Facebook or Twitter pages in the most effective fashion and incorporate these new media outlets as essential campaign tools and tactics. A mixed-method approach using content analysis and a survey revealed that voters value personable content over trustworthiness and general electability. Voters received more positively politicians with personable content than those who relied on professional content when considering content provided on Twitter. Ultimately, a politician's social media use significantly influenced and enriched the experience an individual has with the public figure.

I. Introduction

After the 2008 presidential race, citizens watched the newly inaugurated President Barack Obama stand in front of a crowd of 7,000 and speak about the power of a mobilized youth. This youth was the same that propelled Obama to victory and utilized the social media sites that Obama frequented. "The Internet and an extraordinary social movement enabled him to come to power and youth were the engine of his victory" (Harfoush, 2009). While President Obama wasn't the first to explore social media as a campaign tactic (Howard Dean, 2004 Democratic primary), he was the first to use it as an essential aspect of his candidacy. This reliance on social media and use of "an array of new, incredibly speedy and cheap internet tools-- e-mail, social networks, Twitter, and the like-- to run a grassroots campaign that contacted individual voters in personalized encounters on a near daily basis" (Graber, 2010) was the first fully formed campaign whose success was partially attributed to social media use by researchers and news outlets alike.

This research discusses the impact politicians' social media use has over their overall electability and likability and explores the integration of social media as an essential campaign tactic on both the local and national level. Regardless of a politician's party affiliation or previous history "social media simplifies word of mouth and facilitates collaboration" (McConnell, 2007), a concept key to generating and maintaining interest in a campaign. In addition, social media has significantly altered the accessibility and availability of information on specific candidates. Instead of gathering basic knowledge from news stories and websites, users of social media gather information, and at times, opinions, using interactive sites where communication is continuous between voters and politicians and where information flows directly from politicians' mouths to voters' Facebook and Twitter pages. Social media use by politicians vary: Some sites focus highly on design and applications while others rely on content quality or even the informality of speech to draw in voters.

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This research aimed at understanding the power social media has inside the political arena and out. Most politicians are now replicating Barack Obama's use of social media and in turn, consider Facebook and Twitter as essential campaign tactics. Researchers, politicians and the public are still attempting to understand the most effective and useful practices in managing social media sites. Facebook and Twitter offer a new outlet to mobilize groups to action and unlike most media, "the receiver cares about the sender" (Shirky, 184) enough to seek out additional information.

This study tried to define an "effective" social media site, examined current politicians' sites based on this definition and asked college students to evaluate candidates before and after they viewed the politicians' social media pages.

II. Literature Review

As social media outlets gain in popularity and scope, it is impossible to know the lasting impact these sites will have over voters' political and cultural perceptions and the way that they communicate.

Media Systems Dependency Theory

When considering the impact of social media, the public's relationship with the outlet becomes essential. Facebook and Twitter have become a part of the way we talk, socialize and spend our time; social media has begun to take precedent over other communication outlets in part because of its heightened accessibility and usability. In turn, dependence on these outlets to provide individuals with rewarding interactions has become greater. Baran and Davis explain the media systems dependency theory as "the more a person depends on having needs gratified by media use, the more important the media's role will be in the person's life, and therefore the more influence those media will have" (Baran & Davis, 2006, p. 127). Therefore, the more the public relies on Facebook and Twitter as not only necessary lines of communication, but as rewarding parts of the communicative process, the more value and influence Facebook and Twitter will have.

 Twitter and Facebook have also created an audience that is aware of not only the elements in the message but of processing those elements. Twitter and Facebook have the unique ability to reach individuals who choose to seek a company, person or cause out (Comm, 2009, p. xvi). This makes social media a particularly effective marketing tool, enabling succinct communication with individuals who have already expressed an interest. More importantly it enables public figures "to build deeper relationships" (Comm, 2009, p. xvi) with clients, partners and individuals, creating an easy, far-reaching campaign tactic for modern day politicians.

Barack Obama's 2008 Presidential Campaign

"Like a lot of Web innovators, the Obama campaign did not invent anything completely new. Instead, by bolting together social networking applications under the banner of a movement, they created an unforeseen force to raise money, organize locally, fight smear campaigns and get out the vote that helped them topple the Clinton machine and then John McCain and the Republicans" (Carr, 2008). For this precise reason, Obama's 2008 presidential bid became an innovative and politically revolutionary one that used media in ways the public had never seen before. Researchers have examined Obama's campaign from start to finish, noting the impact social media had over his constituents. In part, Obama's success can be attributed to "an array of new, incredibly speedy and cheap internet tools-- e-mail, social networks, Twitter, and the like—[and enabled him] to run a grassroots campaign that contacted individual voters in personalized encounters on a near daily basis" (Graber, 2010, p. 194).

Obama was able to use the Internet to not only provide information but also encourage activism. During his campaign, Obama was given over $55 million dollars in donations by linking from his social media sites and website to a site called MyBo. (Penenberg, 2009, p. 11) This call to action and utilization of Internet resources ultimately put Obama's fundraising and reach far beyond earlier uses of the Internet during a campaign.

Research from PEW Internet Research Center showed that in 2008, a record-breaking 46% of Americans used the internet, email or text messaging on their mobile devices to gain information about campaigns, share opinions and mobilize others (Rainie & Smith, 2008). Obama's supporters made up a substantial amount of this group. A notable 39% of voters are using the Internet to get unfiltered campaign materials,

including videos of debates, speeches, announcements, political position papers and transcripts.

In addition, the 2008 election integrated other media that was not previously used in the campaign process. During the months leading up to the election, 35% of Americans said they had watched political videos online, 6% of Americans had made a political contribution online and 10% said they had used social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter to gather information about candidates and become involved in their campaigns. Internet users under 30 include an important part of this group: Two-thirds of them have a social networking profile and of those, half use their sites to engage in the political process or obtain information.

Social Media to Mobilize the Masses

Beginning in 2004 with Howard Dean's campaign and four years later with Barack Obama's presidential campaign, the Internet gained popularity as a campaign tactic. Facebook, Twitter and blogs can serve as important tools to mobilize groups to action (Shirky, 2008, p. 184). Unlike most media, the "receiver cares about the sender" (Shirky, 2008, p. 184) and seeks out information about them, increasing the likelihood for activism. New social media outlets are essential to politicians and causes, enabling them to gain support, encourage participation and have an open and continuous dialogue. Most importantly, social media allows "the highly motivated people to create a context more easily in which the barely motivated people can be effective without having to become activists themselves," (Shirky, 2008, p. 190) creating an environment perfect for politicians to utilize.

The developing connection between emerging social media and its public and political influence has begun to transform the political process and campaign tactics. Politicians are now using social media and the Internet and, in turn are "permitting a new arena of grassroots politics" (Axford & Huggins, 2001, p. 90). Voters no longer make decisions solely based on information available through traditional media and instead seek out additional knowledge, and in some cases, additional means of activism, using their computers and mobile devices. Studies have also found that mass media use and social media use is positively correlated to an individual's voting behavior. Essentially, the more they look to mass media and social media for information, the more likely citizens are to vote. (Pinkleton, Austin and Fortman, 2010, p. 39) Ultimately, "social media simplifies word of mouth and facilitates collaboration" (McConnell & Huba, 2007, p. 27) in a cost-effective and impactful fashion and as research points out, is reaching individuals who are more likely to be motivated to actively participate in the political process.

Social Media and Disclosure

The "open and public nature" (Axford & Huggins, 2001, p. 90) of social media has begun to change the way that campaigns are developed and politicians relate to their constituents.

Politicians and voters alike use Facebook and Twitter as a means for disclosure—they post photographs, personal information and leave public messages to their friends in cyber space. The benefit of this is that social media "removes the barrier between professional and consumer, showing the latter how the former works and allowing the latter to actually contribute immediately to the work of the former." (Barlow, 2008, p. 93) This breaking down of previously existing barriers enables strengthened relationships between voters or advocates and politicians who utilize social media in an effort to reach their voter base. However, the emergence and popularity of social media does not come without a price. The repercussions of the digital explosion means that not only are people able to make personal information available to the public, but that they are encouraged to without considering the lasting effects of doing so (Abelson, 2008).

The purpose of this research is to explore the impact politician's social media sites (e.g. Twitter and Facebook) have over individuals who use them.

• RQ. 1: How do politicians' use of social media impact voter's impressions?

• RQ. 2: Does an appealing or personal use of social media increase a politician's likability and electability?

By exploring the impact of politician's social media use, this research hopes to identify what makes an effective social media site and the repercussions or benefits of utilizing these tools as campaign tactics.

III. Methods

In order to explore the relationship between politicians' use of social media sites and their electability and popularity, the researcher conducted a content analysis of three politicians' current social media sites and then surveyed 88 college students to understand social media's influence over their perception of the politicians.

The three politicians, Claire McCaskill, Kevin McCarthy and Thaddeus McCotter, were selected because they have all been previously noted or acknowledged by journalists for their candid and innovative use of their social media sites (Warren, 2010). In addition, these three individuals insisted on updating their sites themselves with entirely original content. The vested interest of these politicians in social media made them viable resources; each politician had a distinctly different feel to their sites.

Content Analysis

The author first examined the three politicians' social media sites. Past research did not rate or examine politicians' social media use in depth or below the presidential arena; consequently, a unique rating scale must be developed to give a rating to a site.

Sites were evaluated based on the initial page shown when a site address is first typed in. Since it is not possible to effectively monitor or regulate how individuals click through a site, it was imperative that they were evaluated for the information that is immediately available upon visiting the social media outlet. Content analysis is essential to creating a basis upon which we can methodically evaluate social media sites and their effectiveness; in turn, this allows for the comparison of viewers' perceptions of effectiveness.

The politicians' Facebook and Twitter have each been evaluated for five different attributes: content quality, informality of speech, design, frequency of posting, and the number of followers on each site. A politician can score a maximum of 5 points on each attribute.

Content Quality: This focuses on policy, political beliefs, upcoming events and important commentary pertaining to the campaign. High ranking social media sites avoid information and commentary that is not directly applicable to the politician's beliefs or campaign. High content quality (information related to candidate's campaign efforts etc.) will be rated a 5 and poor content quality will be rated a 1.

Informality of Speech: This covers use of colloquial phrases and a conversational tone associated with accessibility and approachability. Key content that indicates informality include information about a politician's personal life, daily happenings (unrelated to campaign appearances and events) and questions or prompts that elicit responsiveness among viewers. High informality will be assigned 5 points and rigidness in social media content will be assigned 1 point.

Design: This will serve as an important factor in the utilization of social media. Sites will be rated from 1 to 5 points on originality of design, effective use of color and aesthetic appeal.

Frequency of Posting: Politicians who post on their social media site daily will receive 5 points. Those who post 3-6 times a week will receive a "4." Politicians who post 1-2 times a week will receive 3 points. Those who post less than 4 times a month will receive a "2." Individuals who post less than the aforementioned numbers will receive a "1."

Number of Followers: Politician's sites who have over 1,000 followers will receive a "5." Those who have between 500-999 will receive a "4." Politicians with 250-499 followers will receive a "3" Those with 100-249 will receive a "2." Finally, those with less than 100 followers will be rated with a "1."

Within each category, the social media outlets were assigned between 1 point (ineffective) and 5 points (extremely effective). Once each of the politicians' social media outlets (Twitter, Facebook) were rated, their scores were averaged to produce a rating on the effectiveness of their use of social media.

Survey 1

Upon conducting a content analysis of politicians' social media sites, the author surveyed 88 college students.

In Survey I, participants viewed a brief paragraph taken from the politicians' sites describing who they are without their name and political affiliation. On a scale of 1-5, the participants were asked to rate how trustworthy the description made the politician seem, how personable they seemed from the description and how

likely it was that they would vote for him or her.

Survey 1 served as a control, allowing the author to have a basic understanding of respondents' opinions of a candidate without taking their social media sites into account.

Survey 2

Another survey was conducted with the same participants. In Part I of this survey, the participants were asked about demographic data.

In Part II, the participating students viewed the sites through a projector while the author navigated the sites to ensure each individual surveyed was seeing identical information and not clicking through a site or interacting independently. The participants responded to the same questions they did in Survey I. This survey focused on gathering information on how personable the politicians' social media content was, how trustworthy they seemed and ultimately, how electable their social media sites made them appear. They were also asked whether they would vote for the candidate.

In Part III, the participants were asked about which politician had the most effective Facebook site, Twitter site, and overall social media presence. They were then prompted to explain why they chose a specific social network site as being the most effective.

IV. Findings

Content Analysis

Claire McCaskill: a U.S. Senator for Missouri: Two salient observations emerged from evaluating Claire McCaskill's Twitter site and Facebook page and coding for five attributes: content quality, informality of speech, design, frequency of posts and followers.

McCaskill's Twitter site was notably informal when compared with her Facebook site.

McCaskill used Twitter most effectively of all politicians evaluated; however, used her Facebook page least effectively according to the aforementioned criteria.

McCaskill has been noted as one of the TIME's Top 10 Notable People on Twitter and has previously been recognized by journalists for her unique and unprecedented approach to her Twitter site (Warren, 2010). She has openly posted about "family problems" and personal challenges. In addition to this content, McCaskill intermixes posts about election coverage, sports, local and national issues concerning constituents and interesting news or media. Her twitter site, unlike her Facebook, makes use of various types of media, often linking to news stories, photos, videos and other sites of interest.

Analysis of her Twitter site produced Content Quality of 3; Informality of Speech of 5; Design of 5; Frequency of Posts of 5; Followers of 5; and Overall Twitter Score of 23/25, as shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Evaluation of politicians' Twitter and Facebook based on 5 attributes

	Content quality	Informality of speech	Design	Frequency of posts	Followers	Overall score
McCaskill						
(Twitter)	3	5	5	5	5	23/25
(Facebook)	5	3	3	4	5	20/25
McCarthy						
(Twitter)	5	3	4	4	4	20/25
(Facebook)	3	4	5	4	5	21/25
McCotter						
(Twitter)	2	5	2	5	4	18/25
(Facebook)	3	5	4	5	5	22/25

McCaskill's Twitter was used often and genuinely appears to be a personal outlet for expression, as opposed to a professional venue to reach voters. This use of Twitter significantly differed from the other politicians' mannerisms and demeanor on the site; not surprisingly, she had the greatest following with over 43,000 individuals marked as "followers", which could possibly be attributed to her position as Senator, as opposed to the other two politicians examined who were Congressmen.

On the other hand, McCaskill's Facebook page did not echo her colloquial phrases and approachable but impactful Twitter posts. She provided very professional, formal information and little of the rich media that was included on her Twitter site. Her Facebook included no photos other than her profile pictures and made little use of videos or links. Her scores were 5, 3, 3, 4, 5 each on the five attributes as shown in Table 1.

Kevin McCarthy: a U.S. Congressman for California: Kevin McCarthy's Twitter site and Facebook page were used in a similar fashion when viewed side by side. McCarthy generally used similar content, maintaining a fairly formal approach to his posts. In addition, he posted frequently on both sites and preferred to discuss political happenings and his professional life as opposed to providing insight into his personal life like Claire McCaskill was noted for. Her Twitter and Facebook ranked very similarly.

McCarthy's Twitter site used the most simple design and layout and provided the most predictable or politically based content of the three Twitter sites viewed. While the content was of high quality, McCarthy scored low on informality of speech because of the formal nature of his postings. McCarthy's scores for his Twitter site were 5, 3, 4, 4, 4 on the five attributes as shown in Table 1.

McCarthy's Facebook page has high quality content posts. Its content was rather formal and avoided using familiar phrases, abbreviations or other online discussion habits both McCaskill and McCotter used. In addition, McCarthy made use of various Facebook applications and frequently included links, news stories and videos on his site. He had a notable number of albums on his page and frequently added images of himself at events. His Facebook scores were 3, 4, 5, 4, 5 on the five attributes as shown in Table 1.

Thaddeus McCotter: a U.S. congressman from Michigan: Thaddeus McCotter's social media sites were considered the most unique and candid of the three. McCotter's Twitter site was colorful and original in design; it showcased an image of him tiled in the background and a profile photo of him playing the guitar in casual clothes. His text was red and blue and bold. It is also important to note that most of his posts were at (@) other users and often offered up interesting commentary. The process of tweeting at an individual means that your commentary is directed to them, their site is linked in the tweet and can be clicked on when individuals view your profile. His site was colorful, made use of images and often had snarky or opinionated commentary. McCotter's Twitter genuinely seemed to be an outlet for personal expression and disclosure. More than the other two politicians, McCotter was unafraid of using twitter to interact with others. The following were scores on his Twitter site: 2, 5, 2, 5, 4, on the five attributes, as shown on Table 1.

McCotter seemed to view his Facebook as a separate entity of his online presence. McCotter used Facebook in a more professional capacity and this was reflected in the rankings seen below. The following are McCotter's Facebook scores on the four attributes: 3, 5, 4, 5, 5, as shown in Table 1.

General Observations: Based on the content analysis, the following were found: Politicians in general were more informal with their speech on their Twitter pages; politicians had more solidified followings on Facebook than Twitter; and these findings affected how to interpret the results of the two surveys the author conducted.

Survey 1: Evaluation of Politicians Based on Excerpts from Their Social Media Sites

Respondents were least likely to say they would vote for McCotter (Or "Candidate 3"). McCarthy ("Candidate 1") was most likely to be voted for and McCaskill's ("Candidate 2") numbers were between the two. From the brief description provided, McCaskill was seen as the most personable, followed by McCarthy and finally, McCotter.

Survey 2, Part 1: Demographic Information

The first part of the survey asked respondents about basic demographic data including age, political party, voting behavior and Facebook and Twitter use. The average age of respondents was 20.38. Twenty-five respondents identified their political party as Democrats, 27 as Republicans, and 14 as Independents. The remaining 22 individuals did not indicate their political party affiliation. While only 46 of 88 people voted in the last election, social media use was strikingly high among respondents. Out of 88 respondents, 73 used

Facebook daily, 4 used it a few times a week, 5 used it weekly, 3 used it monthly and only 2 did not have Facebook pages. Twitter use for respondents was much more varied: 14 people used Twitter daily, 16 people used it a few times a week, 5 people used Twitter weekly, 9 people used the site monthly and the remaining 44 people did not have Twitter accounts or never used them if they did.

Survey 2, Part 2: Politician's Attributes Based on Social Media Viewing

Regarding attributes of politicians on their social media sites, there were positive relationships among trustworthiness, electability and personableness, except for McCotter's Facebook (see Table 2 below), which will be analyzed later.

Table 2: Social Media Ratings and Average

	Trustworthiness	Electability	Personableness	Voting Intention
McCaskill				
(Twitter)	3.50	3.27	3.89	
(Facebook)	3.41	3.35	3.68	
(Average)	3.46	3.31	3.79	3.02
McCarthy				
(Twitter)	3.59	3.39	4.13	
(Facebook)	3.51	3.67	3.74	
(Average)	3.55	3.53	3.94	3.22
McCotter				
(Twitter)	2.93	2.97	3.29	
(Facebook)	3.12	3.07	4.06	
(Average)	3.03	3.02	3.67	2.63

Politicians were always rated as more personable after respondents viewed their social media sites, as shown in Table 3. The second row shows the average of the three politicians' Twitter and Facebook ratings before respondents viewed the politicians' social network sites while the third row shows the average after respondents viewed their sites.

Table 3: Personable Rating Pre vs. Post Viewing of Social Media

	McCaskill	McCarthy	McCotter
Pre-Social Media Personable Score	3.50	3.35	2.79
Post-Social Media Personable Score	3.79	3.94	3.67

Survey 2, Part III: Effectiveness of Social Network Sites

Kevin McCarthy had the most effective Facebook, Twitter and overall Social Media presence, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Site Effectiveness

	Twitter	Facebook	Overall Social Media Presence
McCaskill	34.6%	22.2%	34.6%
McCarthy	43.2%	40.7%	49.4%
McCotter	22.2%	37.1%	16.0%

When examining comments from Part III of Survey 2, why the respondents chose a specific social network site as the most effective one, the author found that respondents most commonly used the words "professional", "trustworthy", "personable" and "approachable."

V. Analysis

Relationship between Personable Content and Voting Intention

The first notable finding was the relationship between the personable content rating a respondent gave a candidate and the likelihood that the respondent will vote for them in the next election.

Figure 1 demonstrates the relationship between personable social media content and respondents' voting intention.
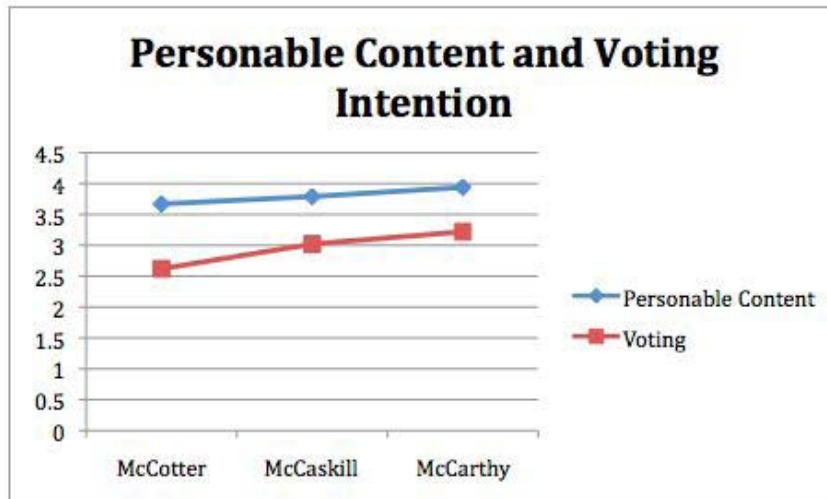

Figure 1: Personable Social Media Content and Voting Intention

As seen in Table 2 earlier, politicians' personableness was positively related with their trustworthiness and electability. When the rating of each social network site was analyzed individually, an exception appeared. McCotter's Facebook page scored notably high in the "personable content" category with 4.06, higher than the other two candidates, but scored markedly low in trustworthiness and electability on his Facebook site. This finding explains that sharing too much (as noted in the content analysis about McCotter) may detract from the professionalism that respondents expect from political figures. The initial content analysis explained the content on McCotter's Facebook is personable, but overly so. It is noted that his Facebook site was "an outlet for personal disclosure."

Personable Rating Pre and Post Social Media Viewing

Although social media's impact over a campaign as a whole is difficult to gauge, the author explored how viewing a candidate's social media site impacted the respondent's opinions regarding trustworthiness, electability and personableness of a candidate. Trustworthiness and Electability scores were not consistently higher for each candidate after respondents had viewed their social media sites; however, it was found that personable rankings went up substantially for each candidate after viewing their social media sites, as shown in Table 2 above.

Effectiveness of social network sites

The highest number of respondents ranked the social network sites of Kevin McCarthy as the most effective, followed by those of McCaskill and McCotter.

Asked to comment on why they chose the candidate they did as having the most effective social network sites, only 41 out of 88 answered. Regarding McCarthy's sites, one respondent noted that he "discussed family, political issues and news on his social media sites in an effective, easy to understand way." Another chose McCarthy because he was "personable yet was professional…the other two politicians had grammatical and spelling errors."

When analyzing all the respondents' comments, the author found that there were five words that were all mentioned more than 7 times each: "professionalism," "personable," "approachable," "candid" and "trustworthy." These attributes were valued by respondents and were qualities that they found attractive in the politician's social media sites that they ultimately chose as being most effective.

V. Discussion

Upon analyzing the content of selected politician's Facebook and Twitter sites and surveying respondents before and after they have seen a politician's social media pages, there were several relationships that require in-depth discussion.

Facebook and Twitter: Varying Expectations

Facebook and Twitter are often grouped together in discussions in order to cumulatively explore social media; however, the way in which they are used and the public's expectations of content coming from each site are distinctly different.

Simply because of the nature of Twitter, short posts no longer than 140 characters and an emphasis on mobile accessibility, the content should rightfully be different than that provided on a Facebook site. Content analysis in this study revealed that for all three politicians, their content scored higher in informality of speech on Twitter than it did on Facebook. In addition, Twitter sites for the three politicians were updated more frequently and with more personal information than Facebook. The content serves as a stream of consciousness directly from the politician's mind to the people. In turn, the respondents seem to anticipate more personable content from a Twitter site and in analysis, the author saw that Twitter communicates these desired candid opinions more so than its social media counterpart, Facebook.

Expectations of a Facebook page were entirely different. The individual who was rated highest in personable content on their Facebook page, Thaddeus McCotter, was not seen as most electable or trustworthy. This could be attributed to a few things including, but not limited to, a notion that respondents' low opinion of McCotter's Twitter site flowed over into their perception of his Facebook, the inconsistency of image presented on his Facebook site versus his Twitter site, and the need for professionalism in a social media site as expressed by many respondents.

It is also interesting to explore this in relation to respondent's expectations from politicians. The other two politicians' Facebook sites were more professional than their Twitter sites, and notably more professional than McCotter's. They included more political content and expressed fewer opinions that were not directly policy related. Contrary to this practice, McCotter's Facebook seemed to use the same approach as his Twitter, offering clear, personal information and unsolicited opinions. This technique could have negatively impacted his overall effectiveness when compared with the other two politicians' Facebook pages.

It can be inferred that the public is more accepting of personal disclosure on Twitter, in short, unfiltered sentences, than they are on Facebook. We can conclude that *excessive* personal content does not equal the most effective use of a social media outlet.

Shortcomings of Providing "Personable" Content

In the content analysis, McCotter's Twitter site was noted as having "personal information overload" and his "tweets directed at the media and other politicians do not bode well for his overall image." These comments provide some insight into how the personable content can perhaps work against a politician if not used with discretion. This was reflected in a low "personable content" score for his Twitter site, the lowest average personable content score and the lowest effectiveness score overall of all three politician.. The survey respondents also mentioned McCotter's "personal attacks" on other politicians and the "overwhelming busyness" of his Twitter site.

It would be valuable to further explore the importance of being personable when using social media and where the limitations lie. It appears that politicians who provide updates on their personal life interspersed with professional and pertinent content are seen as using social media most effectively. Respondents received McCotter's Twitter poorly and, as content analysis explained, it had an excessive amount of personal content and an unprecedented open and honest approach.

Political Party and Ideology

While it was noted that the most reoccurring attributes in the comment section explaining candidate's effectiveness with social media were words like "professionalism", "trustworthiness", "approachable" and "personable," there was an additional relationship between these attributes and the political party of respondents. There was a clear relationship between political party and attributes respondents desire from politicians' social media sites. Republicans and Independents are more likely to value "professionalism" and "trustworthiness" in a social media site, whereas Democrats are more likely to value "personable" content. Republicans and Independents overwhelmingly noted "professionalism" or "trustworthiness" as a reason they chose the politician they did as having the most effective site, whereas Democrats overwhelmingly stated a politician's site being "personal" or "candid" or "approachable" as most important.

This relationship identifies the possibility of different needs a politician's social media site has to satisfy depending on the political party of the audience a candidate is trying to reach. This could assist in tailoring a politician's image based on whom they wish to reach. These ideological differences between parties and their approach to various media outlets should be further examined.

VI. Conclusion

While social media's role continues to evolve within the political realm, there are definitive relationships to be explored between a politician's use of these sites and the public's opinion. Facebook and Twitter have enabled people to access public figures at an unprecedented level; campaigns no longer can rely only on traditional media to reach constituents without running the risk of overlooking a new population of voters who use social media as integral parts of their decision making process. This accessibility and tendency to post personal and candid content ultimately benefit the politician. Politicians like McCarthy and McCaskill, who make use of personal content intermixed with professional commentary and knowledge, are more likely to have a vote cast for them in the next election. While this seems like a simple relationship, McCotter provides a hook. Content that is overtly personal, snide or uncomfortably honest, does not read as personable to potential voters. While social media may indeed be breaking boundaries and providing extensive access to others' lives, people are not comfortable with candidates or political figures tweeting the same way ordinary people tweet. In the midst of Facebook and Twitter's revolutionary impact over political campaigns and elected officials, it should be noted that, like everything, there is a limit. Ultimately, constituents still want their politicians to be politicians; while snippets into their personal lives are beneficial, this cannot take precedent over career-driven content. When it does, politicians lose credibility and trust with their voters.

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Appendix I:
Survey 1: Evaluation of Politicians Based on Excerpts from Their Social Media Sites

Please read the following descriptions of politicians currently running for office in the United States. After reading, please answer the questions below each politician's biography and rate them accordingly.

Politician 1:
Politician 1 was born in Bakersfield, California and currently serves on the Financial Services Committee and on the House Administration Committee. He has been mentioned in Newsweek as one of the "most persuasive members" and has been dubbed a top politician and strategist by other publications. At the age of 21, owned and operated a small business and began his political career just 10 years ago. This past year, he has focused on reducing the state budget deficit, getting rid of the state worker's compensation system and enhancing the business climate.

1. Based on this description, how likely would you be to vote for Politician 1?
   1   2   3   4   5
   (Not Likely)   (Not Sure)   (Very Likely)
2. Based on this description, how personable does this candidate seem?
   1   2   3   4   5
   (Not at all)   (Not Sure)   (Very)
3. Based on this description, how trustworthy does this candidate seem?
   1   2   3   4   5
   (Not at all)   (Not Sure)   (Very)
4. Based on this description, do you think Politician 1 will be re-elected?
   1   2   3   4   5
   (Not Likely)   (Not Sure)   (Very Likely)

Politician 2:
Politician 2 was born in Rolla, Missouri and is chairman of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Subcommittee on Contracting Oversights and currently serves on the Permanent Subcommittee for Investigations, the Armed Services committee and Commerce committee. Politician 2 has her law degree and has worked as a prosecutor, legislator in her home state, state auditor, and was the first woman elected to the U.S. Senate from her state. This past year, she focused on economic concerns, benefits for veterans, reforms to the mortgage industry and earmark reform.

Based on this description, how likely would you be to vote for Politician 2?
   1   2   3   4   5
   (Not Likely)   (Not Sure)   (Very Likely)
1. Based on this description, how personable does this candidate seem?
   1   2   3   4   5
   (Not at all)   (Not Sure)   (Very)
2. Based on this description, how trustworthy does this candidate seem?
   1   2   3   4   5
   (Not at all)   (Not Sure)   (Very)
3. Based on this description, do you think Politician 2 will be re-elected?
   1   2   3   4   5
   (Not Likely)   (Not Sure)   (Very Likely)

Politician 3:
Politician 3 is originally from southeast Michigan and is currently Chairman of the House Policy Committee and serves on the House Financial Services Committee and the Housing and Community Opportunity Committee. He graduate from law school and worked as an attorney for years before focusing his efforts on politics in 2002. Politician 3 has focused his efforts on preserving and promoting small businesses, has supported the war and an increase in homeland security and is a proponent for reducing the size and scope of government.

1. Based on this description, how likely would you be to vote for Politician 3?

    1   2   3   4   5

(Not Likely)   (Not Sure)   (Very Likely)

2. Based on this description, how personable does this candidate seem?

    1   2   3   4   5

(Not at all)   (Not Sure)   (Very)

3. Based on this description, how trustworthy does this candidate seem?

    1   2   3   4   5

(Not at all)   (Not Sure)   (Very)

4. Based on this description, what do you think the likelihood will be that Politician 3 will be re-elected?

    1   2   3   4   5

(Not Likely)   (Not Sure)   (Very Likely)

Appendix II: Survey 2

Part I : Demographic Data

1. Age:
2. Political Party Affiliation:
3. Did you vote in the last election?
4. Do you use Facebook?
   Daily   A few times a week   Weekly   Monthly   Never
5. Do you use Twitter?
   Daily   A few times a week   Weekly   Monthly   Never

Part II: Evaluation of Politicians' Attributes

Claire McCaskill

1. Based on her twitter site, how personable does Claire McCaskill seem?
1	2	3	4	5
(Not at all)		(Not Sure)		(Very)
2. Based on her twitter site, how likely is it that McCaskill will be elected in the next cycle?
1	2	3	4	5
(Not Likely)		(Not Sure)		(Very Likely)
3. Based on her twitter site, how trustworthy does Claire McCaskill seem?
1	2	3	4	5
(Not at all)		(Not Sure)		(Very)
4. Based on her Facebook page, how personable does Claire McCaskill seem?
1	2	3	4	5
(Not at all)		(Not Sure)		(Very)
5. Based on her Facebook page, how likely do you think is it that McCaskill will be elected in the next cycle?
1	2	3	4	5
(Not Likely)		(Not Sure)		(Very Likely)
6. Based on her Facebook page, how trustworthy does Claire McCaskill seem?
1	2	3	4	5
(Not at all)		(Not Sure)		(Very)

7. If the only information you were given was the candidate's social media sites, how likely would you be to vote for McCaskill based on what you have viewed?
1	2	3	4	5
(Not Likely)		(Not Sure)		(Very Likely)

   Comments:

Kevin McCarthy

1. Based on his twitter site, how personable does Kevin McCarthy seem?
1	2	3	4	5
(Not at all)		(Not Sure)		(Very)
2. Based on his twitter site, how likely is it that McCarthy will be elected in the next cycle?
1	2	3	4	5
(Not Likely)		(Not Sure)		(Very Likely)
3. Based on his twitter site, how trustworthy does Kevin McCarthy seem?
1	2	3	4	5
(Not at all)	(Not Sure)		(Very)	
4. Based on his Facebook page, how personable does Kevin McCarthy seem?
1	2	3	4	5
(Not at all)		(Not Sure)		(Very)
5. Based on his Facebook page, how likely do you think is it that McCarthy will be elected in the next cycle?
1	2	3	4	5

    (Not Likely)   (Not Sure)   (Very Likely)

6. Based on his Facebook page, how trustworthy does Kevin McCarthy seem?

    1   2   3   4   5

    (Not at all)   (Not Sure)   (Very)

7. If the only information you were given was the candidate's social media sites, how likely would you be to vote for McCarthy based on what you have viewed?

    1   2   3   4   5

    (Not Likely)   (Not Sure)   (Very Likely)

Comments:

Thaddeus McCotter

1. Based on his twitter site, how personable does Thaddeus McCotter seem?

    1   2   3   4   5

    (Not at all)   (Not Sure)   (Very)

2. Based on his twitter site, how likely is it that McCotter will be elected in the next cycle?

    1   2   3   4   5

    (Not Likely)   (Not Sure)   (Very Likely)

3. Based on his twitter site, how trustworthy does Thaddeus McCotter seem?

    1   2   3   4   5

    (Not at all)   (Not Sure)   (Very)

4. Based on his Facebook page, how personable does Thaddeus McCotter seem?

    1   2   3   4   5

    (Not at all)   (Not Sure)   (Very)

5. Based on his Facebook page, how likely do you think is it that McCotter will be elected in the next cycle?

    1   2   3   4   5

    (Not Likely)   (Not Sure)   (Very Likely)

6. Based on his Facebook page, how trustworthy does Thaddeus McCotter seem?

    1   2   3   4   5

    (Not at all)   (Not Sure)   (Very)

7. If the only information you were given was the candidate's social media sites, how likely would you be to vote for McCotter based on what you have viewed?

    1   2   3   4   5

    (Not Likely)   (Not Sure)   (Very Likely)

Comments:

Part III: Evaluation of Politicians' Social Network Sites

Of the three politicians, who had the most effective twitter site?

    a. Claire McCaskill

    b. Kevin McCarthy

    c. Thaddeus McCotter

Of the three politicians, who had the most effective Facebook page?

    a. Claire McCaskill

    b. Kevin McCarthy

    c. Thaddeus McCotter

Of the three politicians, who had the most effective general social media presence?

    a. Claire McCaskill

    b. Kevin McCarthy

    c. Thaddeus McCotter

What about their social media sites made them effective?