The Role Of Social Media In Donald Trump's Presidency

Over the last decade, the American media system has experienced significant changes. The rise of social media has led to the creation of a new approach to campaigns, governance, and politics. Today most people rely on digital sources to get information on political events and issues. There has also been a significant shift to user-driven content, where social media trends dictate what is newsworthy or not. The new dispensation of social media-driven politics has now limited traditional media sources to the periphery as their roles are assumed by public figures and influencers. Perhaps, social media politics has had the most significant influence on the presidency of Donald Trump, who partly rose to power on a wave of unprecedented social media influence. This paper seeks to understand the impacts of social media on Donald Trump’s presidency.

The political impact of social media in American politics was first witnessed during the presidential elections of 2008, where Barrack Obama utilized a robust social media company to out his rivals during the Democratic Party primaries. Reminiscing on the Obama campaign Author, Arianna Huffington remarked, “Barack Obama would not be president. Were it not for the Internet, Barack Obama would not have been the [democratic] nominee” (Miller, 1). Which in my opinion is debatable. Trump’s campaign in 2016 further perfected the strategy by spending 44% of its campaign funding on digital advertisements (Martinez 1). The successes of Trump’s campaign help to highlight the vast influence held by social media in guiding political discourse.

Social media has been integral in defining and shaping President Trump’s support base. Hailed by his supporters as a ‘modern-day president’ Trump's popularity is mainly hinged on his abrasive and constant social media presence. Trump and his supporters have used social media platforms to assert and spread his influence by leveraging on attack ads and repetitive posts. Not only is Trump more actively involved in social media, but he is also more tactical.

President Trump has managed to utilize his favorite social networking site, Twitter to personally connect with his supporters, express his policies, and decry his opponents. He has also been labeled “the Twitter President” With an all-inclusive media platform, the President has managed to gain access to both individuals and institutions while bypassing traditional media. By utilizing repetitiveness and an emphasis on keywords and phrases the president has managed to completely dominate the press and news reports (Owen 3). Through social media, President Trump has been able to assert his influence and garner more attention. Since the popularity of a tweet is dependent on how many likes, retweets, shares, and views it gathers, Trump's tweets are always trending whether good or bad. In my opinion, Trump has used social media to gain political relevance.

Besides the shift in political strategy and the spread of information, social media has been integral in fostering misinformation during the Trump presidency. With a higher reliance on social media for information, there has been a steady rise in influencers and public figures shaping political discourse. Twitter CEO, Jack Dorsey acknowledges “We have [social media has] witnessed abuse, harassment, troll armies, manipulation through bots and human-coordination, misinformation campaigns, and increasingly divisive echo chambers,” (Wagner,

1). The result of this shift is biased and non-factual information being easily and quickly propagated. When people encounter information that they do not agree with, they label it has ‘fake news.’

Overall, the boost of social media has had significant effects on the American political scene during the reign of President Trump. Social media has emerged as one of the most critical tools for sharing information. The impact of these shifts has been the rise of prominent figures as a sort of litmus test for news reports and events, leading to increased rates of misinformation. The responsibility is on social media platforms and users to enact ways of thoroughly verifying the information to prevent the spread of misinformation.

Works Cited

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