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How the internet has influenced political campaigns in the United States in the 20th century

Abstract: Modern political campaigns in the United States need to combine the use of traditional and new media in order to let the candidate win. The emergement of social media allowed the campaign staffs to create a bond with the voter, through sharing and evaluating the content uploaded by the candidate. Nowadays, with the help of the internet, candidate is able to spend less time and money on the campaign, while interacting with a much bigger number of followers. The internet, however, is a rather new invention and only in the 21st century more than 50% of Americans started to use it on a daily basis. The study aims at determining how did the presidential candidates in the United States try to attract the voter with the help of the World Wide Web – what is more, it's goal is to answer what kind of voter used the internet back in the 20th century and what kind of candidate would have the biggest chance to attract him.

Key words: internet, presidential elections, Democratic Party, website, political campaign

Introduction

Modern political marketing is heavily influenced by the internet – the use of social media during the campaigns allows the voter to interact with the politician, which leads to him learning more about the candidate and his program. What is more, this type of canvassing is more efficient for the campaign staff, since it allows the politician to spend less money on campaign, while engaging more people in a shorter period of time.

Political campaigns in the United States in 21st century have proven, that the internet, especially social media may help the candidate to connect with the voter – what is more, voter may engage in candidate's internet activity in order to handle his campaign by donating, sharing his content or even taking care of the organization of the campaign events in his or hers area.

The success of Barack Obama in 2008 and 2012 and Donald Trump's presidential win in 2016 have been heavily influenced by their activity in new media and the buzz, that was generated by their content. One may ask, however, when did this all start – social media are a rather new trend in political marketing and became popular way after the internet has been created. Only recently, politicians during their campaigns in the United States decided to switch to new media, while slowly resigning from the traditional forms of campaigns.

However, the internet started to become accessible for the Americans in 1980's, which allows the political scientists, to analyse almost 20 years of political campaigns, that have been influenced by the internet, before it became modified for the user's needs as Web 2.0. This article tries to answer, whether in the 1990's the candidates have been

using internet to reach out to the voters and whether it was successful. What is more, it will shows which of the candidates were the precursors of the internet use in political campaigns (especially the presidential ones) and if this way of communicating with the voter has let them create a bond with them, that traditional media could not ensure. The analysis of 1992, 1996 and 2000 presidential campaign along with the campaign of Jesse Ventura, who campaigned for the position of the Governor of Minnesota in 1998 should allow us to acknowledge the power of the internet in political marketing way before its global era.

Theoretical framework

According to Ulrich Saxer, media are "complex institutionalized systems around organized channels of communications of specific performative capacity" (Saxer, 1980), which can be understood, that media often combine different roles in the society, such as organizations or social systems.

The further analysis of this subject leads to a division into traditional and new media; in this model, traditional media can be understood as the forms of mass communication, which were created before the rise of the digital media, such as television, radio or newspapers. New media allowed the recipient of the information to moderate and rate them – Logan defined them as "those digital media, that are interactive, incorporate two-way communication and involve some form of computing" (Logan, 2010). Before its era, internet has mostly been used for the search of the information and access of a needed data. As Christian Fuchs has been established in his work, over the last years, the web was reshaped from a system, that focuses on providing the information, to a one, that concentrates on the communication between the users and the community building (Fuchs, 2012, p. 3).

This allows standard internet users to express their views and to seek for the citizens, who share their political views. This new situation, however, has demolished the until this time order, on which the political marketing and communication were based, mainly because the standard mass media have stopped meeting voters expectations (Tomaszewski, 2017, p. 99).

In 2004, a Web 2.0 term became popular, mainly because of the O'Reilly Media Group, which has organized conferences, that briefly described how the modern internet has been reshaped. Tim O'Reilly, who was a chef of O'Reilly media, stated, that because of the evolution of the world wide web, standard media begin to allow their subscribers to change their policies and evaluate their ideas in order to build a better product (O'Reilly, 2005). What is more, O'Reilly has established how do the internet users communicate with each other; as they exchange the content they are receiving, they create a form of cyber-socializing through blogs and other social media tools (2005). From this moment, the internet was not only a simple code, that linked the users, it allowed them to express their personality. In order to let the user find the similar content, cookies applications have been created, which allowed their devices to not only remember their choices, but also to influence them, by suggesting similar subject of their thoughts. This led to a new way of political activism, which focused on the new media and of course has
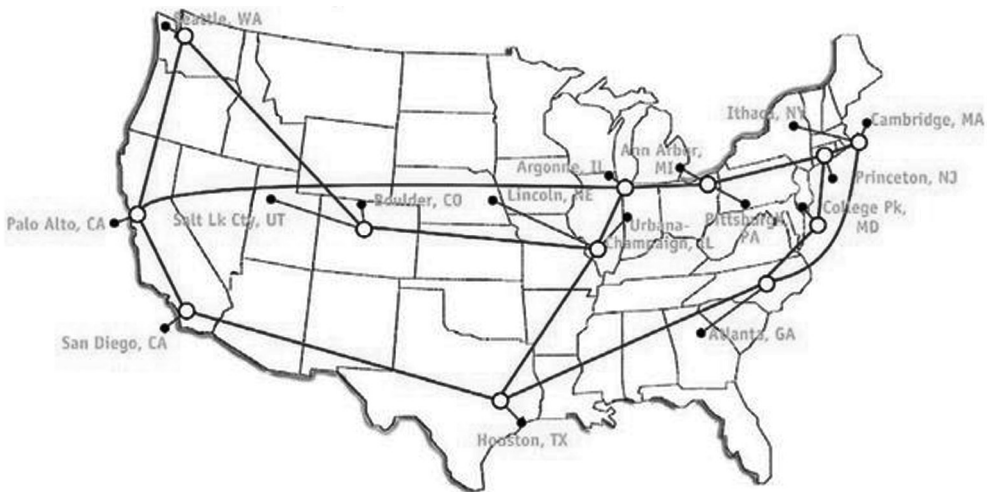
been recognized by the interest groups, which wanted to establish relationships with the citizens (Tomaszewski, 2017, p. 100). It was obvious, that the politicians would find out, that the internet is the best form of communication with the voter, since it would be less expensive; moreover, they would spend less time on campaign events, while attracting a bigger group of potential voters.

As Williams and Gulati have described in their paper, that was published in 2007, as the candidates focus on Web 2.0 tools in political campaigns, social media let them control the content they are creating and as well how the content is received and evaluated by the web users, which may lead to the initiation of the content with other users, who share their political views (Williams, Gulati, 2007, s. 4).

1992 presidential elections – the beginning of a digital era

Back in the 1992, the internet was becoming more and more popular in the United States. As the table shows, it became more and more accessible for the citizens (voters), who could get the information about the candidate.

Fig. 1. NSFNET T3 Network 1992

Source: Merit Network, Inc.

As a result, many candidates decided to focus on the new technology to attract the voter. Bill Clinton, during his campaign created a website, that allowed his supporters to get the information about the policies, that he was supporting and the full text of speeches (Hendricks, Kaid, 2004, p. 4). Apart from launching a website, Clinton also distributed speeches, biographies of the candidate and his political program in the internet community, through posting this content in various discussion groups (Chadwick, Howard, p. 14). Last, but not least, the Democratic candidate made his e-mail available for the voters through internet service providers such as Compuserve (2010). His presidential campaign was also supported by the Democratic internet users, mainly college students,

who generated first "internet buzz" for the candidate, by sending e-mails and joining the bulletin groups (Klotz, 2003, p. 67). During his campaign, Clinton was able to generate nearly 800 postings weekly with one study showing, that the group of internet users, that supported him was that wide, that his campaign headquarters was not able to provide any interesting tasks for them (2003). This analysis shows, that his campaign staff tried to flirt with new technologies, but was not really able to connect with the users with each of the sides providing content, but without allowing to interact with it and evaluate it.

Another candidate, that used internet, while fighting for the nomination was Larry Agran. Former Mayor of Irvine received over 58,000 votes during the Democratic primaries, but is remembered as a true pioneer of online campaigning, who used the dial-up services such as the aforementioned Compuserce, American Online or Prodigy. The website posted news about the voters becoming bored with the current political campaigns, providing such terms as "cyberspace campaigning or "modemocracy" to describe the voters, who look for the campaign news on the internet (McCracken, 2016). As Agran was not party's favourite and he even was not invited to the Democratic debate on NBC, he got to the voters one day earlier through CompuServe and provided a speech, that was reached by 850,000 subscribers (2016). What is more, he even organised an online conference at the beginning of 1992 and became the first candidate to do so. Agran has also held online Q&A's, during which he would speak out loudly the answers to the questions, that were asked on the message boards, so his transcriptionist could quickly type and post them (Smith, 2016).

Another politician, who decided to focus on the use of new media was Jerry Brown, who at that time was a former governon of California. What attracted him to the internet were the small costs of online canvassing, being compared to the traditional ways of handling the political campaigns, the same attribute, that encouraged aforementioned Agran. In March of 1992, Brown held a meeting on Genie, an online service message board, that was attended by 200 internet users and later organised similar event on CompuServe (2016). Since Argan did not really play an important role during the 1992 elections, Brown is acknowledged as the first major primary candidate, who used internet as a form of canvassing. On the message boards, he was leaving personal comments regarding Jesse Jackson, which were posted from a borrowed MacBook (2016).

Hence, the internet in 1992 elections, one needs to reconsider the role of Prodigy, a network, that at that time has introduced a news database, that was available for the users for $12.95 per month, which was called Prodigy's Political Profiles (Belton, 1992). The news team has cooperated with the League of Women Voters in order to increase the voter turnout during the 1992 elections (1992). Website posted information about the primaries, debates, conventions and caucuses – what is more, it allowed the user to search through a database by the zip code (1992). The most significant role of the website was the identification of the candidates by the political profiles. Potential voter could check how their candidate has voted on the policies they were interested in (1992). Prodigy knew, that this could revolutionize how the voters would seek the information about the candidates, that is why the website has offered ads to the candidates, which would cost above $10,000 (Schwartz, 1992).

It is worth to mention, that at that time the internet was only available to a privileged group of people, which stated, that the politicians were trying to target a very specific

type of voter. With the web reaching more and more citizens, next elections seemed promising for the fans of new technologies in political campaigns.

1996 – The year, the internet became a common tool

Over the next four years, the internet has developed, thanks to the release of Mosaic, which was the first popular browser. Web seemed like a new media tool, that would revolutionize the politics, since the politicians no longer needed to use message groups to reach the users, as they slowly resigned from Prodigy or Compuserve in order to launch their own websites. As Pew Research Center states in their analysis, at that time more than one in five American citizens have been using the internet in order to find the news.

Fig. 2. Trend in Online Use

	1995	------ 1996 ------					
	June	Jan	Feb	March	April	July	Early Sept
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Total	14	21	21	22	20	22	22
Goes Online for...							
Current events/ political news	n/a	11	11	14	10	13	12
Presidential election news	n/a	n/a	4	4	3	3	5

Source: Pew Research Center.

Because of that, the 1996 presidential elections became the first ones, when the candidate has organised a fundraiser for his campaign with a minor success – Bill Clinton was able to gather $10,000 through internet donations, which may not look spectacular, but at that time was a big thing (Hendricks, Kaid, 2004, p. 4). These elections, as it has been already aforementioned, were the first ones, when the parties have launched their campaign websites. Republican National Party was the first one, launching their website rnc.org in March of 1995, while the Democrats have launched their website month later with the address dnc.org (Chadwick, Howard, 2010, p. 14). Even during the Republican primaries, the candidates such as Lamar Alexander, Steve Forbes or Phil Gramm have launched their websites (2010).

The candidate's websites were not that popular until Bob Dole, the Republican nominee has invited the viewers to visit his website after the speech during the presidential debate. Even though he made a mistake while encouraging the voters to do that, by saying, that the address is www.dolekemp96org and forgetting a dot before "org," his website managed to be visited by 2 million web users within the following 24 hours

(Cornfield, 2004a, p. 3). The candidates created cyber campaign offices, in which the user had the access to the speeches, fundraisers, papers, that described the policies of the candidate and audio and video clips (Johnson & Braima, Sothirajah, 1999, p. 101). Candidates bragged about how successful their websites were, the Republican Party announced, that over 8,000 people have visited their website in order to sign the guest book and 10,000 people subscribed to Bob Dole's mailing list. The Democratic Party, however, also had nice results with Clinton and Gore bragging, that their website had 1,000,000 visitswithin the first ten days (1999).

The websites also tried to attract specific voters, as for instance the website of Lamar Alexander, who was a Republican candidate during the primaries, had a red plaid background, which was supposed to reach to the working class (Stromer-Galley, 2014). Clinton's and Gore's website offered downloadables such as wallpapers and screensavers; the most interesting thing, however, was the welcome audio file from Clinton. Even though Dole has lost the elections with Clinton, he will be remembered as a candidate, that surprised the Democrats with his innovative tools, that allowed him to reach the internet users in quicker way. What is interesting, is the fact, that his website is still working; while visiting the dolekemp96.org website, one may find the information on his agenda, news headlines and the interactive part, in which the user may play games, check the trivia and download the postcards.

The 1996 presidential elections have proven, that the internet was becoming more and more important as a new media tool during political campaigns in the United States. As the web developed over four years, it no longer was available only for a small group of priviliged citizens and was becoming more and more common. The study from the Pew Research Center, that was conducted between July and September of 1996 shows, that Clinton was the most popular candidate among internet users.

Fig. 3. Political Profile of Online Users

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                  Political Profile Of Online Users*

                          Total     Wtd.     Online
                          Pop.      Pop.+    Pop.
                          %         %        %
Party ID
  Republican              29        31       34
  Democrat                33        31       28
  Independent             32        35       36
1996 Pres Pref#
  Clinton                 49        48       47
  Dole                    34        36       38
  Perot                   11        12       12
1996 Cong Pref#
  Republican              44        46       50
  Democrat                49        48       47

* Based on 2,724 interviews/690 online users conducted July, Sept 1996.
+ Demographically balanced sample (see footnote on previous page).
# Among registered voters.
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Source: *Campaign '96*, 1996.

The study has also proven, that the internet users had a bigger knowledge about the candidates than the average voter – 71% of them knew, that Bob Dole called for a 15%

tax cut. 55% of the users acknowledged, that "bridge to the future" was a phrase, that was linked to Bill Clinton (*Campaign '96*, 1996).

The candidates were able to use more tools while attracting the voter on the internet, they no longer needed to visit message boards – now they were able to launch their own websites, where they could post and share the content, that was related to their campaigns. Furthermore, they could appeal to the younger voters with internet gadgets such as designed wallpapers, screensavers and online games.

However, this did not mean, that the web users were fully satisfied with the content they received. In 1996, 10% of the voters have stated, that they have gathered the information about the candidates from the web, but only 25% of them felt, that these information were useful (Leuschner, 2012). Nevertheless, according to political scientists the internet had a huge positive impact on the 1996 elections. People, who used internet on a more frequent scale, tended to look for the political news over the web, which allowed to spread a bigger political awareness. Internet became a platform for new ways of political activity, as from 10 to 25% of internet users stated, that they were involved in online politics at some level (Katz, Rice, 2002, p. 148).

2000 presidential elections – how online fundraisers became a crucial part of modern political campaigns

The 2000 presidential race was predicted as a first, when the campaigns would reach the digital era and slowly resign from the traditional forms of media, taking into consideration the fact, that 50% of Americans were already online (Klotz, 2004, p. 67). This allowed the less popular primary candidates to use this source as a way to raise money for the campaign.

As John McCain could not count on huge support among the Republicans with George W. Bush being everyone's favourite, he decided to organise cyber fundraisers to fuel his campaign. In 1999, McCain's website McCain2000.com started to become popular between the voters – in December, a new version has been launched called Mc-Cain Interactive – website allowed the user to search for the online locations across the country, that could allow to generate buzz for the candidate in user's area (Tomlinson, 2003, p. 180).

The candidate has sent an e-mail to his subscribers stating, that the internet will play a crucial role in his primary campaign. The visitors of the website were able to check the alerts, which have displayed, whether McCain is going to canvass in their area, or even could exchange the information between the campaign staffs all over the country in need for some canvassing materials such as stickers (2003). This has created a new model of handling the political campaigns, as McCain not only decided to rely on new media, but also has urged his supporters to use the internet to handle his campaign. As he was becoming more and more popular among the Republican voters, McCain knew, that the buzz generated around him in the traditional media would pay off on the internet. When he won the New Hampshire Republican primaries, more voters started to get interested in his policies. After his success, McCain was receiving tons of online donations, his campaign staff advised, that his campaign was receiving $18,000 an hour

(Natta Jr., 2000). Apart from that, over 7,000 new volunteers have signed in at his website. McCain has raised $2.2 million over the internet, which was the best result among the Republicans. What is interesting, is the fact, that he relied on rather small donations with the average being around $115, which shows, that he was supported by the ordinary, conservative citizens (2000). According to his webmaster, Max Fose, before conceding to George W. Bush, John McCain managed to raise $6.4 millions of donations and had 142,000 volunteers (Buie, 2000).

However, McCain's campaign was not the first one, that has been collected $1,000,000 of donations. Bill Bradley, who was taking part in the Democratic primaries, requested in June 1999 for the ruling of Federal Election Commission, that the online contributions from the credit cards would be made available as the federal matching funds (Eagleton, 2016). When he managed to succeed, his online campaign has been fueled by the donations.

George W. Bush did not seem to follow the internet trends, which allowed his opponents to attack him on the internet, as a satirist Zack Exley has created a website called gwbush.com, on which a fake picture, that showed Bush snorting cocaine was posted (Buie, 2000). As Bush reacted to the website angrily, it became more popular. Nevertheless Bush had a quite strong support on the internet, as he bragged, that over 80,000 people have sent the donations to his campaign. What is interesting, is that he has made his donations public, so everyone could see who supported him financially, which led to the media attacking other candidates regarding this issue (2000). In 2000, Bush managed to raise over $3,600,000 online and additional $2.4 million during the recount in Florida (2000).

On the other hand Al Gore knew, that the internet can be a key to reach young voters. His website, algore2000.com, allowed the users to connect through an "Instant Message Net" option, which collected the data from the users in order to find them potential friends, with whom they could discuss politics, which shows how the beginning of Web 2.0 worked. Ben Green, who was Gore's webmaster, made the website available for every day operations, for instance a Gore 2000 FASTTV viewer allowed the user to watch clips, commercials and speeches (Buie, 2000). He even managed to attract computer geeks – since his website was built with an open source code, they could analyse it in order to find a message from the candidate (2000). Gore and his team have also launched a mobile version of the website. The Democratic candidate has also engaged in online discussions, as during the primaries he has sent a video e-mail to Bill Bradley, that in a skeptical way asked about his policies on healthcare (2000). It is worth to mention, that Bush has earned a symbolic win during the presidential debate on the 3rd of October, 2000. As his website managed to automatically refresh itself in order to show the transcript of his speech, Gore's supporters had to refresh the website by themselves to find new information (Lewicki, Ziaukas, 2000). Last, but not least, Gore became a target for the opponents and comedians, when he announced in a CNN interview in 1999, that he basically "invented the internet" (Wiggins, 2000). This quote has been riddiculed by David Letterman, Jay Leno and many other comedians and Republican politicians.

The last main candidate, that used the internet in order to reach a nice result during the 2000 presidential elections was Ralph Nader, a candidate from the Green Party. Only three days after he announced his website votenader.com, the website received 4,000

viewers. Nader started to organise online fundraisers only at the end of his campaign, which earned him around $100,000 (Bimber, 2003, p. 184). The candidate managed to have almost 40,000 volunteers signed up to his website. What is the most interesting in his case, is how the internet community tried to cooperate between each other to reach their goals. As Nader did not really have the chance to win the elections, progressive voters were afraid, that a vote for him may let George W. Bush win with Al Gore. Not only did the campaign specialists create a website called nadersraidersforgore.com, on which they tried to demonstrate, that Nader voters should choose Gore; many websites have been created, which encourage a vote swap – in areas, where Gore was close to Bush, Nader voters would be encouraged to vote for the Democratic nominee, whereas in the areas, where Nader had a good result, Gore voters would vote for the Green Party candidate, so he would secure a 5% result, which would allow the Green Party to receive the funds from the state (Stromer-Galley, 2014, p. 59).

Conclusions

The end of the 20th century has brought a revolutionary approach to the political marketing and political campaigns, thanks to the invention of the internet. Beginning with the visible influence of the internet community groups in 1992, the study shows how the candidates in US presidential elections tried to engage with the voters; both the conservative and liberal ones. It is obvious, that in 1992 politicians could only interact over the web with the IT geeks and the small group of people, who could afford having the internet, but four years later the article proves, that the internet has been slowly developing with its users, becoming more and more accesible to the middle class. With the development of new media, politicians needed to find new way to reach the internet users, which would be easier and more efficient – that is why they started launching their own websites, which helped them track their fans by a location, send group messages and provide canvassing materials such as screensavers or wallpapers. What is more, the voter could check the political program of the candidate.

It is needed to be stressed, that not only presidential campaigns used the internet as a main power in order to communicate with the voter, as one needs to remember the case of Jesse Ventura, who as a third-party candidate won the race for the position of Governor of Minnesota. Many of the internet users could take part in the elections, as the law allowed same-day registration and Ventura used the new media to inform them about such possibility (Klotz, 2004, p. 71). All the information about the rallies were posted on his website and through e-mails, that were collected throught the subscription; Ventura proudly admitted, that the internet was used as a main nervous system of the campaign (Thompson, 2003).

The 2000 presidential elections have made the use of the internet in political campaigns mainstream – candidates from all of the parties used web in order to collect donations from the supporters; the development of the internet allowed them to post videos on their websites and even provide a live coverage of the debates. The case of John McCain shows, that the internet was the perfect mean of use for the candidates, who were not poll's favourites and did not have that much media coverage as their opponents. By

creating an online community, they could interact with young voters, who previously would not care much about the elections. The users also started to help the candidates on a much bigger scale, through the creation of the discussion groups, which would be the first signs of the social media era.

Study, supported by the Pew Research Center's statistics proves, that the internet users at that time were more interested in politics – as they reached out to the internet to get the news, they were becoming more and more involved in the politics. One may ask, what are the differences between the voter-internet user nowadays and the one from the 20th century? Recently, the internet has been flooded with fake news websites, that manipulate the viewers in order to support the political candidate represented by them. Even the internet users create media bubbles, through sharing and posting crucial political news, that support their theses, which leads to a polarization of the political views on the internet. Before the Web 2.0 era, when the internet users simply wanted to receive the information and engage in campaigning activities, it was quite easy to avoid internet trolls and various information traps, that were waiting for them. The most important difference, however, is the fact, that as the candidates were quite new to the internet, they did not focus on negative campaigns, because they just wanted to attract the voters, who happened to use new technologies; nowadays the candidate needs to entertain the voter and share his private life in order to appear more Average Joe-like to him. Internet has became as a huge power, that can allow the candidate to win the elections, but with the great power comes great responsibility, which not everyone seems to care about.

As campaigns have reached the internet era, the candidates needed to follow the trends in order to keep up with the young, technology-oriented voters. The study shows how the relationship between the candidate and the internet has developed, as at first it was perceived as an interesting curiosity, that would create a media buzz, but later became an important part of the campaigning process. This was mainly caused by the fast spread of the internet access in the United States, as every year more voters used the internet to get the news. The history shows, that it was just a beginning of the wider trend in political marketing, which ha been slowly marginalizing the traditional media.

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Jak Internet wpłynął na kampanie polityczne w Stanach Zjednoczonych w XX wieku

Streszczenie

Współczesne kampanie polityczne muszą sprawnie operować zarówno tradycyjnymi środkami przekazu, jak i nowymi mediami, by ich kandydat mógł wygrać. Rozwój social mediów pozwala na-wiązać relację z wyborcą, poprzez możliwość udostępniania oraz interakcji kontentu udostępnianego

przez kandydata. W dzisiejszych czasach, z pomocą internetu, kandydat może poświęcić mniejszą ilość pieniędzy oraz czasu na kampanię, jednocześnie mając dostęp do szerszej bazy potencjalnych wyborców. Warto jednak pamiętać, że internet jest nowym wynalazkiem, a na początku XXI wieku jedynie odrobinę ponad 50% Amerykanów miało do niego codzienny dostęp. Celem artykułu jest sprawdzenie w jaki sposób kandydaci w wyborach prezydenckich w Stanach Zjednoczonych próbowali zachęcić wyborców do swojej kandydatury poprzez użycie internetu; co więcej, artykuł zadaje pytanie jaki typ wyborcy korzystał z internetu w XX wieku oraz jakiego typu kandydaci mieli największe szanse na zdobycie ich poparcia.