

**What is the Role of Social Media in Presidential  
Election Cycles?**

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## **ABSTRACT**

In today's society, technology and online communication are utilized for both business transactions and personal enjoyment. Over the last decade, political election cycles have become more heavily dependent on the use of social media marketing in campaigning. This research study will examine the impact of social media in presidential election cycles. Furthermore, how the perceptions of voters are hindered when observing the online political activity of fellow voters and presidential candidates.

*Key terms: social media, marketing, political campaign, election cycles*

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## **CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION**

### **Section A: Prologue**

Over the last decade, political campaigns have increasingly used social media to help shape the public's perceptions of candidates. Social media is an online communication network which allows the public to produce original content through platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, to mention a few. While each platform offers the public various means of expression, all platforms are centered around the idea of social networking. Because of the great success in utilizing social media during political campaigns, and the rise in the interest of voters, candidates have begun to normalize the use of social media in political campaigning.

### **Section B: Literature Review**

While social media and social networking are typically used by the general public for the expression of thoughts and ideas, professionally, the individual producing content is rarely the one whose name is on the profile itself. It is well known that professional communicators have written speeches for The President of the United States at press conferences. This may be owed to a lack of time that the president has to produce quality content, or because the president may lack the factual knowledge to write and relay a speech to the public on a given topic. These instances are most common with those of extremely high profile, often political candidates, who seek out professional communicators to efficiently engage with the public. Professional communicators write and publish content on behalf of political candidates to the general and voting public. Nadler (2016) write that the news and media often give the public what they want to hear to gain recognition of their news network from the public, causing the candidates to come forward and respond to false messages that have been relayed in the news. Those responses need

to be straightforward, honest, and factual responses, and are often best constructed by professional communicators.

The digital approach to marketing is growing among all industries, ultimately causing social media to be a strong force within marketing. According to Nadler (2016), the journalistic approach of marketing is focused on the consumers feedback, driving the actions of news producers, including how they present and portray current events, products, and initiate discussion in the media. This demand-driven approach leaves journalists with both an opportunity and problem at hand, as the feedback of consumers is nearly unpredictable. Precise data feedback is enabled through marketing information systems and the distribution of data. As stated by Tsiakis (2015), a business's success depends heavily on the marketing and advertising techniques used within a franchise.

Mahoney (2012) writes that social media is customizable, as the profile holder has close to complete control over the posts and account they see, like, and follow on their own feed, with few exceptions of sponsored advertisements. If consumers decide they do not prefer the content they are exposed to, they have the option to unfollow that account, or adjust their profile as necessary. Rodgers and Thorson (2012) explain that consumers may run into trouble when attempting to remove certain advertisements from their feed, as advertisements are often posted to the social media network at the cost of the given company. As stated by Pelet (2019), marketing information systems allow analysts to access data regarding the way consumers respond to advertisements, including whether or not they follow the company's account or like their posts. This information can be used to better the marketing and brand strategy of the company.

Honest marketing is difficult to execute, and marketing information systems allow the honest messages from candidates to reach the correct voting market. Marketing information systems allow campaigns to understand who their political marketing is reaching, who is responding, and how their platform can be better communicated. Information technology has led to the development of marketing techniques, ultimately increasing the success rates of business transactions. Within social media marketing, there are algorithms and strategies created by marketing analysts to provide more direct and smooth communication (Tsiakis 2015). For example, in the 2016 presidential election, social media “bots” were used through the creation of highly automated accounts that stirred up debate-like activity online. These social media bots raised the political interest of the general voting public through false rumors and controversial discussion regarding political candidates.

Kumar (2017) defines big data as a surplus of information that is complex, which requires further analyzation. Big data is an emerging phenomenon which plays a pivotal role in the realm of research. Big data is typically large in size, leaving the analyst to sift through the set of data, selecting and focusing on information relevant to the center of research. Halordai (2019) explains that the knowledge revealed through big data leads to bigger marketing, which offers conclusions in the face of marketing challenges. Big data in marketing is easily applied to political campaigning, through the frequency of online surveys and communities. Jamil (2019) writes that this is reflected by the retention of a candidate’s followers online.

Marder (2018) writes about the self-presentation theory and its presence when “liking” political candidates on social media. How one’s online followers might perceive them if they choose whether or not to support a candidate could result in social anxiety. One’s personal brand can be altered with a single action of advocacy or disapproval online. Harrington (2014)

recognizes the “like” phenomenon taking place among social media platforms is the idea that a social media user can like a post, endorsing or advocating for a given topic without posting original content. Canel and Voltmer (2014) state that this “like” phenomenon has played a large role in political campaigning. While a candidate has their own profile to develop through original content, followers may also see what or who they follow or like, revealing small or hidden aspects of their platform.

In the midst of the digital age, political campaigns are relying heavily on online communication platforms to gain support in campaigning. Online campaigning can be just as hurtful as it is helpful, but social media in particular, has the capacity to dampen the scope of politics. According to Pătruț (2014), social media can mobilize riot-like behavior, as the discussion of politics, including controversial topics and conversation, are easily accessible with the utilization of online communication. With this easy access to political discussion, social media changes voters’ perceptions of one another, as well as candidates.

In a society where pop culture influencers exist, and are often idolized, the likeliness of followers to take after an influencer’s actions is more likely. Voters are finding ways to justify their actions and behaviors, as they dismiss their original intentions and mindset, moving to follow those of influencers. While the initial intent for online political activity was to allow for constructive discussion and expression of one’s opinions, it does bring baggage of skewed perceptions of voters and candidates (Frantzich 2016). While online behavior and activity during an election cycle can alter one’s vote or following of a certain candidate, it can also hinder one’s psychological behavior (Xie, Liu, Wu, and Tan 2018) observed that the power of a “like” online is often reflective of the poll results, after following the behavior of voters in Taiwan’s presidential election of 2016.

Kirshner and Middaugh (2015) comment that in a world that is so intricately connected through the avid use of technology, and more specifically, social media, historically human interaction has been modernized to take place from one side of a screen. While some may argue that technology is taking away from genuine human interaction, the use of technology and social media in marketing has seemingly opened doors for all industries. Respectively, social media in the news and current events industry has mobilized headlines, allowing audiences to respond and react with a greater chance of their claims of advocacy or disapproval being heard (Fitzgerald and Housley 2009). With these online interactions comes a lack of genuine interaction, blurring the relationships between the voting public and candidates, as what a candidate may portray in the media is not always the truest reflection of their integrity.

Hennessy (2018) illustrates that the term “influencer” is consistently tossed around, as individuals with a great following are leaders and models within society. In the instance of a political campaign, all users of social media gear their actions and posts to seek the approval of others. Rishi and Bandyopadhyay (2017) suggest that approval and acceptance are two things that humans seek naturally, and social media heightens the urge to be liked by others. Social media allows individuals to mask their flaws by giving the option to only share the highlights of life. Kuypers (2018) recognizes that voters may support or disapprove of a candidate on social media to seek attention from followers. When it comes time to go to the polls, voters have the choice to stay true to their personal values and political beliefs, while others may let those around them impact their final decision.

A political campaign aligns nearly parallel to a business, as the marketing department has the same responsibilities to uphold. Horst (2018) emphasizes that responsibilities include maintaining a positive reputation in the industry, selling a given candidate to an audience that

will ultimately choose to buy into or disregard their campaign, and catching the eye of the consumers, or voting population, to gain interest. Like any business, marketing plays a vital role in the growth of a campaign (Ermann and Hermanik 2018).

IGI Global (2017) writes that when a company begins to develop a product, a product life cycle is often written out to implement throughout the various stages of development, and this cycle often includes a pre-launch stage, which consists of the brand making a name for itself through marketing and advertising. This creates a firm foundation for the name of the company and encourages success of the product. In terms of this concept, the candidate is almost like the product, in the sense that the candidate's marketing team must set up the candidate in a fine position before true, commercial, public campaigning takes place (Vaughn and Farrar-Myers 2015). Target marketing refers to the segmentation for a market into smaller groups, lighting a clear path for advertisements to reach a certain group of consumers' desires and needs (Alcantara-Pilar 2015). Similarly, positioning refers to a consumer's perception of a given brand, compared to its competitors. These concepts of a business can easily be applied to political campaigning as they hand responsibility to the management of a campaign, successfully setting up a brand strategy for the candidate.

The 2012 presidential election cycle is widely considered as the first election cycle to heavily incorporate and rely on the use of social media in strategic marketing (Newman 2016). While Romney had a presence among various social media platforms, Obama was the first to dive into the world of social media campaigning, with profiles on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr, Google+, and YouTube. Not only did Obama use these profiles to relay his platform to the voting public, but he used it to interact with those following, gaining response and interest through online communication (Yanes and Carter 2012). While the main objective of Obama's

campaign team was to promote his campaign, they still held consumer driven ideals, working to reflect Obama's values and character in a humanistic, rather than commercial fashion.

Politicians have the potential to benefit through the use of social media to develop and manage their social brand. Pătruț (2014) recognizes that while there are many instances or cases of social media use in electoral marketing, a fine example is the use of Facebook in the 2012 presidential election. With over thirty-three million Facebook likes, Obama favored social media as a more effective way of relaying his campaign, rather than conventional campaigning. Barack Obama must have recognized that the public's attention was switching from paper sources and paid television ads to social media. Thus, this was an optimal time to incorporate social media in his political campaign, giving him his claim to fame as the "first social media president."

For an advertisement to be effective, it is important that it reaches the optimal audience. Wuyts (2010) writes that sales and market orientation, as well as attack and defense strategies must coincide in order for this reach to take place. Sales orientation, also known as the outward marketing approach, is geared solely toward the consumers views and preferences. Contrarily, market orientation is considered the inward approach, which gives a company's management preference in regard to the content of an advertisement (The Marketing Academy of Nigeria 2009). In political campaigning, the management team would also seek to develop strong attack and defense strategies. The management must decide and suggest how to react in the face of adversity, as well as how to challenge the opposite candidate. All of this must take place while staying true to the candidate's character (Spiller and Bergner 2011).

A political campaign involves a large amount of competitive strategy, as an election is a formal competition between two candidates (Johnson and Brown 2018). Thurber and Nelson (2014) write that competitive strategies are heavily enacted online, as competitors are left with

the platform and ability to engage in colloquy with one another. In the face of adversity or scandal during a political election cycle, candidates are often found turning to social media as a defense mechanism. Social media gives candidates an opportunity to get through to their audience without going through the mainstream news and media. There have been boundless instances where candidates have turned to social media to apologize or clear the air in the midst of campaign scandals or issues. Kuypers (2018) write about an instance during the 2016 presidential election cycle, when an audio clip of Republican candidate Donald Trump was released. This audio clip was recorded years ago, in which what he said might be interpreted offensively by a specific demographic. Martinez (2017) states that Trump's activity in the media caused positive discussions as well as riot-like outbursts in the media. Recognizing his wrongs, Trump turned to Twitter to defuse the situation. He attempted to do so by posting a video speaking on the issue, saying in the Twitter post's caption, "Here is my statement". While an apology does not always justify inappropriate actions or words, political candidates use these competitive strategies to attempt to regain followers they may have lost in their faults.

Nothing on the internet is ever truly "deleted", and social media is not an exception to that. Because presidential campaigns have some of the greatest following among the media, the actions of candidates are amplified, as candidates are put on a public pedestal (Rossinni, Hemsley, Tanupabrungsun, Zhang, and Stromer-Galley 2018). Not only does the voting public react to actions or posts of political candidates, but the news does as well. Additionally, the news media is often strung from many different directions, potentially skewing and interpreting the reality of the situation. Horst (2018) states that the voting public's perceptions of candidates and one another are typically altered by the everchanging news headlines, and the way in which they are broadcasted.

Farrar-Myers and Vaughn (2015) write that political strategy takes into account the historic tendencies of candidates, government regulations, and how a candidate will communicate their platform. A presidential campaign is built upon their plans and intentions for the United States of America, and how they plan to execute those said plans. Nadler (2016) indicates that candidates must stay true and honest to themselves, while simultaneously finding creative ways to engage the public in their campaign. Translating a platform digitally comes with challenges, as human, in person communication cannot be replicated digitally.

Pătruț (2014) write that although there are many different social media platforms, they all hold the same purpose to build a brand for one's self, through networking. While social media marketing has been a positive addition to building a candidate's platform, the results and impact on the voting public's perceptions are not always helpful. Harrington (2014) states that correlation is not the same as causation, and researchers have found that the root of success in social media marketing is owed to cross sectional surveys.

While the concept of social media marketing was adapted into politics from the world of business, there has been a turnaround. Researchers have begun to discover that businesses can now learn from how political campaign teams are implementing the use of digital media in brand development (Canel and Voltmer 2014). In 2008, Barack Obama's campaign team was one of the first to heavily involve the use of social media marketing in a political campaign. Wuyts (2010) recognized the success of adaptation as Obama's team adapted typical business marketing practices to the scene of politics. Media is not successful when it invokes conflict, especially when there is a candidate's name or brand attached to the head of the issue at hand. Although conflict and disagreements are inevitable in the face of two different parties, campaign teams must come from an operational standpoint to overcome. Mahoney (2012) writes that this is so in

the sense that positive content posted online leaves an open door for those who may disagree, but posting negative, attacking, or condescending content nearly doubles the chances of negative response. Businesses can learn from the use of social media in political campaigning, when they recognize the great importance of laying low in the face of conflict.

### **Section C: Problem Section**

As said previously, social media has made an incredible impact among every industry over the course of the last decade. In the midst of what is known as the digital age, society relies on the media to gather all information regarding current events. Political campaign managers have adapted the use of social media marketing and have seen great success in doing so. Social media is changing the game for candidates, and expanding the scope of politics. Candidates and voters are directly engaging more than ever before, but at the cost of their judgement and perceptions of one another.

## **CHAPTER II: MATERIALS & METHODS**

### **Section A: Design**

An original survey was constructed using the Qualtrics software provided by the University of South Florida. This survey was created to discover the behaviors and tendencies of legal voters in the United States of America. The survey consists of around fifteen questions, both multiple choice and free response, allowing survey participants to thoroughly convey their thoughts and concerns regarding each question. The purpose of this survey was to collect original data that would reflect how social media marketing in political campaigns impacts the voting public's perceptions of voters and candidates. The main goal in constructing this survey was to achieve clarity regarding the way in which voters engage in political activity on social media platforms. This survey was sent out to people of eligible voting age, with no limits on the voters' state of residency. When writing the survey, the content was geared toward any and all voters in the United States of America, regardless of their social media use.

### **Section B: Method**

The link to the survey was distributed through direct messaging and posted on various social media networks, from multiple accounts. Reaching the college-aged population by posting the survey link to the University of South Florida Facebook pages offered a unique take on my data and provided insight from young voters on my research topic. The millennial generation consists of all born within the years 1980-1999, which is the age group category that most of my survey participants fell into. This method of distribution resulted in exactly 334 responses, providing plenty of data to work with using the Qualtrics Survey Software. The Qualtrics Survey Software offers excellent data collection tools, which was used to an advantage in analyzing the collected survey responses.

### **CHAPTER III: RESULTS & ANALYSIS**

Of the 334 individuals that participated in this original survey, not all participants answered every question, which is important to keep in mind when interpreting this set of data. To gain demographic understanding, my survey began by asking the participants to select their age range, and the largest response of 208 participants was that of those between ages 18 and 22. Following the age, participants were asked if they are currently in college, and the survey reported that 210 participants were currently in college. Finally, participants were asked to state their gender, if they felt comfortable, revealing 251 females, 68 males, and 5 that chose not to disclose their gender.

Following the section declaring basic demographic information of participants, the survey dove into their use and engagement on social media. 302 individual participants claimed to have observed political campaign advertisements on social media. Survey participants were able to select each social media platform in which they had observed political campaign advertisements. It was reported that most political advertisements had been observed on Facebook (261), followed by Instagram (172), Twitter (148), and SnapChat (110). While observing a political advertisement on social media is one thing, engaging in political activity is another. Found among the Qualtrics survey data, most participants choose to not engage, while the remainder engage in political activity through reposting (48), discussing (39), supporting (30), debating (8), and flaming (3).

When participants were asked how they observe fellow voters engaging on social media, participants reported they observe debating (101), reposting (84), discussing (41), flaming (31), and supporting (25). Likewise, participants revealed that they observe political candidates engaging on social media through discussing (80), debating (55), reposting (42), flaming (33),

and supporting (30). It is important to keep in mind that not all participants may follow political candidates or voters that engage in political activity. A lack or excess of observation of political engagement could simply be due to the individual's preference of profiles to follow. This is because of the customizable aspect of social media. This data from the Qualtrics survey reveals a sample of the voting public's perceptions of candidates and fellow voters' political activity among various social media platforms.

Researchers have claimed that political activity on social media often correlates to the poll results at the end of a political election cycle. This is because voters may choose whether or not they allow the advertisements and activity they observe during a political election cycle to affect their vote. Of the survey participants, 134 claim they might allow political engagement to impact their vote, while 124 responded they would not, and 43 responded that they would.

## **CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION**

### **Section A: Summary of Findings**

As an eligible citizen, voting is a civic duty, and those who choose to vote must decide how they engage in political activity, on and offline. In the midst of what is known as the digital age, technology, but more specifically social media, impacts a majority of society. The correlation between those who are active on social media and those who engage in political activity online is very strong, which is owed to the culture that has been set on social media. Social media is led by the idea of social trends, whether that be regarding fashion, mantras, photography, or political ideas. In the midst of political election cycles, political interest rises among all parties, entailing high engagement among various social media platforms.

From the Qualtrics survey results, it is apparent that social media is used in many ways by voters and candidates during a political election cycle. Voters tend to heavily observe interactions between voters, including debating and discussing political topics. Social media was designed to be a social network, and it is clear that this has been accomplished as users are actively interacting with one another. Of those who responded to the survey, most claim to engage in political activity through reposting and advocating for issues. Engagement online varies based on the individual's circumstance, but it is interesting that most voters admit to personally engaging in positive measures. Reposting and advocating are both actions of engagement that support a candidate or idea, while actions such as debate are driven by challenge or argument. Respondents were more apt to admit that they participate in positive engagement, while they did not hesitate in stating fellow voters or candidates engage in more negative activity. It is challenging to take away one conclusion from this, but it does reveal that one's experience on social media is individualized.

Social media is customizable from one individual to the next, so at any given moment one might be exposed to content that is completely different from another. This might be owed to those an individual follows or their political preferences. This survey asked questions regarding voters engaged on social media as a whole, disregarding the fact that social media is interpreted and used differently by all.

The final question of the survey, an open-ended free response question, asked participants if social media has dampened or invigorated their willingness to participate in political elections. With many, varying replies, common replies include that social media has hindered their involvement in politics, while others state that it has invigorated them to advocate for their values and beliefs. The advocacy of voters might be enacted by taking their passionate knowledge to the local government and polls. In the simplest of terms, some voters feel discouraged, while some feel empowered when they observe fellow voters voice their political opinions on social media.

These results lead to further exploration regarding the ways social media has an impact on all of the voting public, and if it leads them in deciding whether or not they will vote. Likewise, further research may seek adjustments that need to be made within social media, so that it is a more comfortable environment to enact one's freedom of expression. By encouraging positive political activity and providing consequences in the face of negative activity, social media might find itself in a better, more accepting place. The use of positive political engagement might lessen the population of those whose political interest is dampened by social media. Both candidates and voters are responsible for allowing this to occur, by seeking an optimistic approach to a candidate's platform. Rather than attacking one candidate, they might

praise the other for their devotion to a certain stance. Breaking down community has never allowed comfort to flourish, but more so entails hostility.

### **Section B: Weaknesses in Research**

The variety of survey respondents was a weakness in this original research. The survey used to conduct original research was distributed through the posting of the link on various social media platforms and direct messaging. A large majority of survey respondents were those who were sent the link of the survey directly, which did not allow for a wide range of respondents. Although all respondents were of legal voting status in the United States of America, there was limited variety in age and gender. Likewise, this survey link was shared through social media platforms and networks, which limits who has access to the survey itself. For instance, if an individual is not active on a social media network, they would not have had the opportunity to partake in the survey at all. Typically, those of younger generations are most active on social media platforms, which might be a part of the reasoning as to why majority of survey respondents were ages 18-22 (208).

To fix this lack of demographic variation in survey respondents, this survey could be conducted online and in person. Offering multiple mediums in way the survey was conducted would allow those who are not in direct contact with the researcher, as well as those who are not active on social media, to participate in the survey.

### **Section C: Further Research**

To minimize weaknesses, and expand the scope of this study, further research may be conducted. The causes of voters to perceive a political candidate or voter a certain way. While the survey distributed explores whether or not activity on social media causes a change of perception, it does not ask the voter why this change in perception takes place. Further research

could be done to find if voters' perceptions are more altered by reposting and responding to content or by candidate's original statements. If a survey were to be constructed to better answer that question, the researcher might present examples of statements or original content on the same issue, posted by both voters and candidates on social media. From there, the survey participant would be asked to rank the statements from most negative to most positive, to indicate how they interpret each statement. This activity would help the researcher better understand the type of content that hinders the perceptions of voters.

Statements made on social media are often posted at the campaign management's discretion. Further research may include interviewing a candidate's campaign manager to explore their motivation in posting content on social media on behalf of the political candidate.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research study has revealed the great impact of social media in political campaigns through a review of past studies and the development of original research. Social media's purpose is to build a strong brand through social networking and the production of original content. Political candidates are able to directly engage with and impact the voting public through the use of various social media platforms. In a world so centered digitally, voters struggle to find a common ground that encourages genuine human communication while mobilizing the media.

Political activity on social media platforms causes voters to form perceptions of one another and candidates. The research conducted in this study explained that whether or not voters choose to engage in online political activity, their political interest might be dampened or invigorated. Candidates are the leaders of campaigns, ultimately setting the example for the public as to proper behavior and tendencies online. The behavior of candidates online translates to the response of voters. Voters are seeking a more accepting and positive environment to express their thoughts freely online, which cannot be done without the cooperation of voters and candidates cohesively.

## **REFERENCES**

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Hershey, PA: Business Science Reference.

This book addresses the way in which businesses approach a diverse consumer market, while gaining a global perspective in marketing. It is critical that management of a business understands their target demographic, while avoiding any sense of discrimination in the market.

Canel, M. J., & Voltmer, K. (2014). *Comparing political communication across time and space: New studies in an emerging field*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ermann, U., & Hermanik, K. (2018). *Branding the nation, the place, the product* (First Edition ed.). New York: Routledge.

This book ultimately focuses on the brand of any given thing, and how that brand can be developed in present day. In regards to political campaigning, a brand can be approached and developed through the utilization of technology and media outreach.

Farrar-Myers, V. A., & Vaughn, J. S. (2015). *Controlling the message: New media in american political campaigns*. New York: New York University Press.

This book explains the rise of media communication in political campaigns. Candidates must use the media to efficiently communicate their platforms thoroughly and honestly.

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Frantzich, S. E. (2016). *Newman, bruce I.: The marketing revolution in politics: What recent U.S. presidential campaigns can teach us about effective marketing* American Library Association CHOICE.

Haldorai, A., & Ramu, A. (2019). *Big data analytics for sustainable computing*. Hershey, PA: Engineering Science Reference, an imprint of IGI Global.

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Horst, P. (2018). *Marketing in the #fakenews era: New rules for a new reality of tribalism, activism, and loss of trust*. Charleston, SC: Advantage.

Managing a brand's public relations is challenging in a world that gains its knowledge from the headlines of mainstream media. This book focuses on how businesses and brands approach the skewed news broadcasting in the media.

Information Resources Management Association. (2017). *Advertising and branding: Concepts, methodologies, tools, and applications*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

This book explains the new and emerging technologies utilized when approaching the consumer market. Understanding an audience, but being able to collect and respond to data is vital in a society that so heavily depends on the development of technology.

Jamil, G. L. (2019). *Handbook of research on expanding business opportunities with information systems and analytics*. Hershey: Business Science Reference, an imprint of IGI Global.

Johnson, D. W., & Brown, L. M. (2018). *Campaigning for president 2016: Strategy and tactics* (Third; 2016 Edition ed.). New York: Routledge.

Brown and Johnson (2018) write on the fierce presidential election of 2016, and the campaigning strategies that forced more competition between candidates than ever before. The authors describe how candidates were able to reach their audience in innovative ways, grabbing their attention through original statements online.

Kirshner, B., & Middaugh, E. (2015). *#Youthaction: Becoming political in the digital age*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc.

Kuypers, J. A. (2018). *The 2016 american presidential campaign and the news: Implications for american democracy and the republic*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books.

Media bias is a challenge that operational staff face in trying to maintain a certain brand or reputation.

The perceptions of voters are altered in the face of social media, as voters choose what they advocate and defend freely.

Mahoney, S. (2012). *The rough guide to social media for beginners: Getting started with facebook, twitter and google+*. London: Rough Guides.

This source reveals how social media practices may be adapted among various industries, shown from the point of view of personal branding.

Manish Kumar. (2017). *Applied big data analytics in operations management*. Hershey, PA: Business Science Reference an imprint of IGI Global.

Marder, B., Ben.[Marder@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Ben.Marder@ed.ac.uk). (2018). Trumped by context collapse: Examination of ‘Liking’ political candidates in the presence of audience diversity. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 79, 169-180.  
doi:10.1016/j.chb.2017.10.025

Marder focuses heavily on the self-presentation theory, giving the reader a greater understanding of the intentions of a voter in following a political candidate. Researching mainly the 2016 presidential election, the writer reveals how and why followers tend to take sides in the face of adversity online.

Marketing Academy of Nigeria. (2009). *Academy international journal of marketing management*.

This source compares and contrasts the sales and market orientation among a given campaign. Campaign management must seek the best approach to gaining consumer market approval.

Martinez, A. R. 1. (2017). Monstrosities in the 2016 presidential election and beyond: Centering nepantla and intersectional feminist activism. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 40(2), 145-149.  
doi:10.1080/07491409.2017.1302260

Nadler, A. M. (2016). *Making the news popular: Mobilizing U.S. news audiences*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

This source focuses on the trend of following the news digitally, and how the news is becoming popular in this sense. Technology is largely motivated by its consumers, for example, if an advertisement is shown on a website, if data is shown that very few consumers are clicking on or following up, producers

will likely take down or change the advertisement. Nadler offers the producer standpoint to prove the point that through filtering and experiment, the right advertisements can reach the right people when data is monitored closely.

Patrícia Rossini, Hemsley, J., Tanupabrunsun, S., Zhang, F., & Jennifer Stromer-Galley. (2018). Social media, opinion polls, and the use of persuasive messages during the 2016 US election primaries. *Social Media + Society, Vol 4 (2018)*, doi:10.1177/2056305118784774

Pătruț, B., & Pătruț, M. (2014). *Social media in politics : Case studies on the political power of social media* Cham : Springer, 2014]. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.lib.usf.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat00847a&AN=usflc.032828408&site=eds-live> <http://ezproxy.lib.usf.edu/login?url=http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-04666-2>

Pătruț expands the idea of political social media marketing to a global comparison by using data from the 2012 United States presidential election and the 2011 Turkish general elections. The power of the internet and the impact of more specifically social media in social conversation. Pătruț focuses on the use of Twitter in creating riot-like behavior online, and the audience's response through social media.

Pelet, J. (2019). *Advanced web applications and progressing e-learning 2.0 technologies in higher education*. Hershey PA: Information Science Reference.

Rishi, B., & Bandyopadhyay, S. (2017). *Contemporary issues in social media marketing* (1 Edition ed.). New York: Routledge.

Humans naturally seek approval and acceptance, whether it be in person or online. This book suggests that when in-person interactions are attempted to be replicated online, the public struggles in defining the line between the two.

Rodgers, S., & Thorson, E. (2019). *Advertising theory* (Second ed.). Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge.

Spiller, L., & Bergner, J. T. (2011). *Branding the candidate: Marketing strategies to win your vote*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger.

This source reveals the ways in which candidates grab the audiences attention, whether it be in a negative or positive light. Candidates are challenged with staying true to their character while gaining support of the voting public.

Thurber, J. A., & Nelson, C. J. (2010). *Campaigns and elections american style*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

This source includes information on the competitive strategies necessary to flourish in a political election cycle. Combining academic theories and research, the campaigns in America continue to develop with each election.

*Trends and innovations in marketing information systems*(2016). Ringgold, Inc. Retrieved

from <http://ezproxy.lib.usf.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgao&AN=edsgcl.439057366&site=eds-live>

Tsiakis, T. (2015). *Trends and innovations in marketing information systems*. Hershey: Business Science Reference.

This source heavily informs the reader on information systems and technology, and how they play a large role in marketing. Recently published as well, Tsiakis provides data on trending tools that continue to successfully reach audiences. Tsiakis's writing focuses in on sales, but is still valuable to my research as it conveys the product and consumer relationship perspective. Although political campaigns seldom revolve around products, it is still the same concept in the way that the campaign team has to very strategically relay information to voters, or consumers.

Wuyts, S. (2010). *The connected customer: The changing nature of consumer and business markets*. New York: Routledge.

Consumer marketing simply do not remain the same over any given period of time. With an ever-

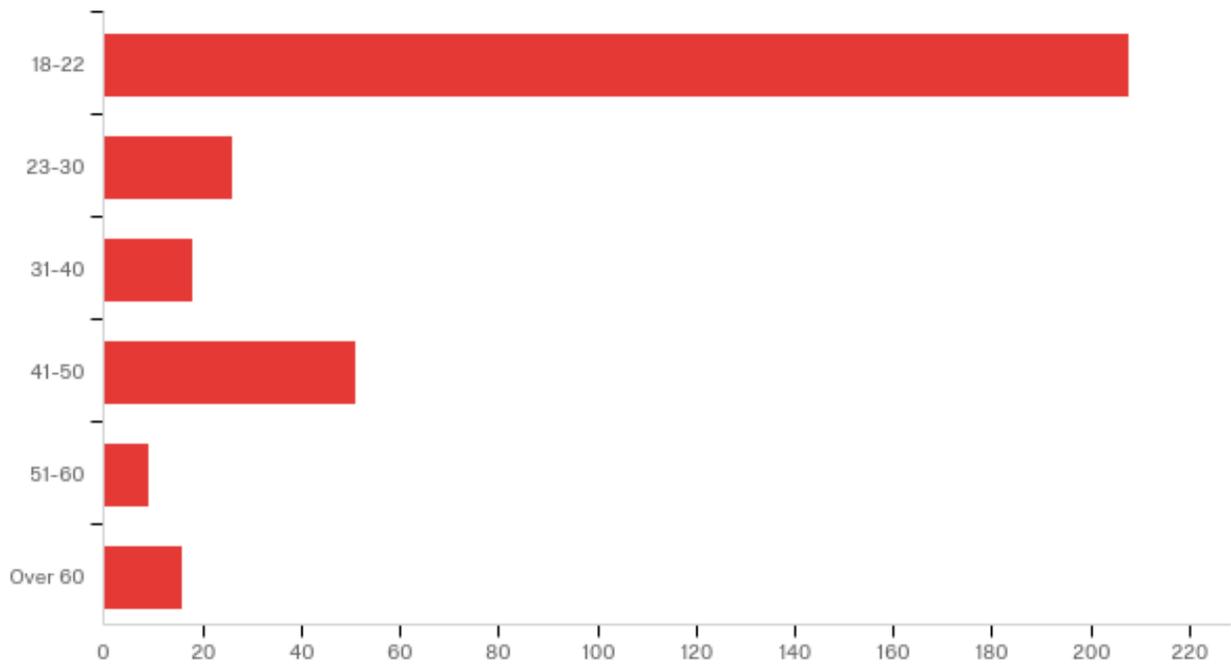
changing and nearly unpredictable nature, management must seek the current ideal approach to the given market.

Xie, Z., Liu, G., Wu, J., & Tan, Y. (2018). *Social media would not lie: Prediction of the 2016 taiwan election via online heterogeneous data*

Using data from Taiwan's 2016 presidential election, this writing focuses less on the impact of marketing on a vote, but more on the psychological impact on one's behavior. The authors offer a different perspective that reaches conclusions that reveal the predictive power of online activity during an election.

## APPENDIX

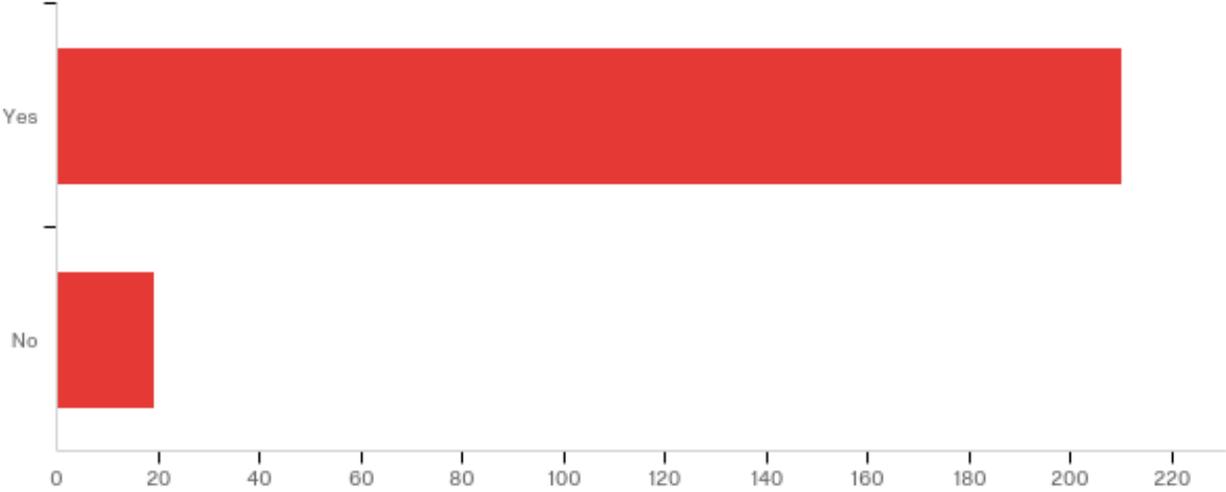
### Q1 - What is your age?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	What is your age?	1.00	6.00	2.01	1.53	2.34	328

#	Answer	%	Count
1	18-22	63.41%	208
2	23-30	7.93%	26
3	31-40	5.49%	18
4	41-50	15.55%	51
5	51-60	2.74%	9
6	Over 60	4.88%	16
	Total	100%	328

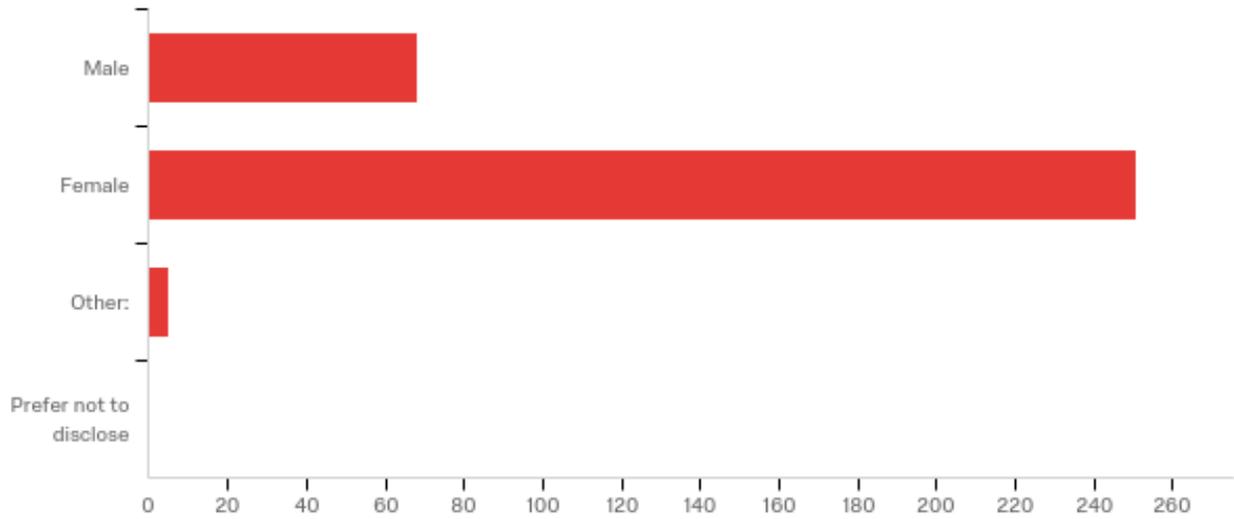
**Q2 - Are you currently in college?**



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Are you currently in college?	1.00	2.00	1.08	0.28	0.08	229

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	91.70%	210
2	No	8.30%	19
	Total	100%	229

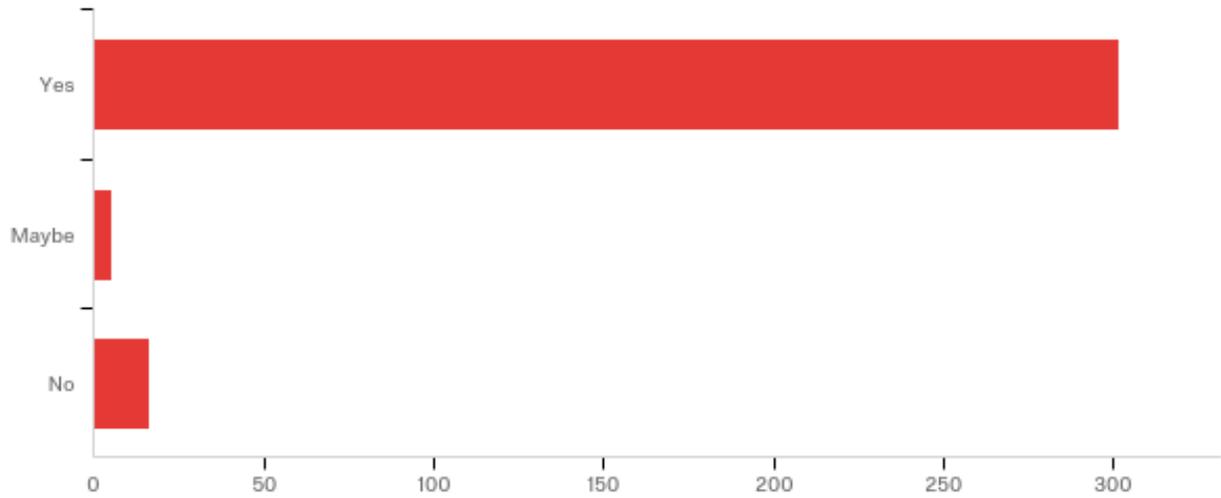
### Q3 - What is your gender?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	What is your gender? - Selected Choice	1.00	3.00	1.81	0.43	0.19	324

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Male	20.99%	68
2	Female	77.47%	251
3	Other:	1.54%	5
4	Prefer not to disclose	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	324

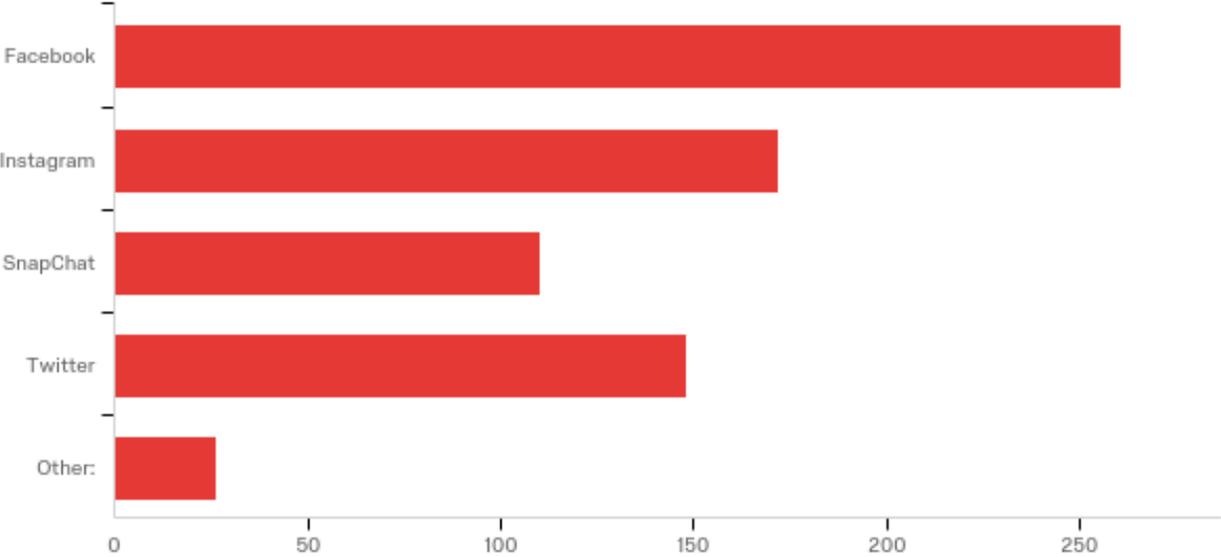
#### Q4 - Have you observed political advertisements on social media?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Have you observed political advertisements on social media?	1.00	3.00	1.11	0.45	0.20	323

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	93.50%	302
2	Maybe	1.55%	5
3	No	4.95%	16
	Total	100%	323

**Q5 - On what social media platform(s)? Check all that apply.**



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Facebook	36.40%	261
2	Instagram	23.99%	172
3	SnapChat	15.34%	110
4	Twitter	20.64%	148
5	Other:	3.63%	26
	Total	100%	717

Other:

Other: - Text

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YouTube

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Youtube

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YouTube

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Hulu

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YouTube

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YouTube

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Spotify

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Youtube

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YouTube

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Youtube

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TV

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There are only two genders

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NEWS

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LinkedIn

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YouTube

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Youtube

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YouTube

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Reddit

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YouTube

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Yahoo

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Youtube

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Tv

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Youtube

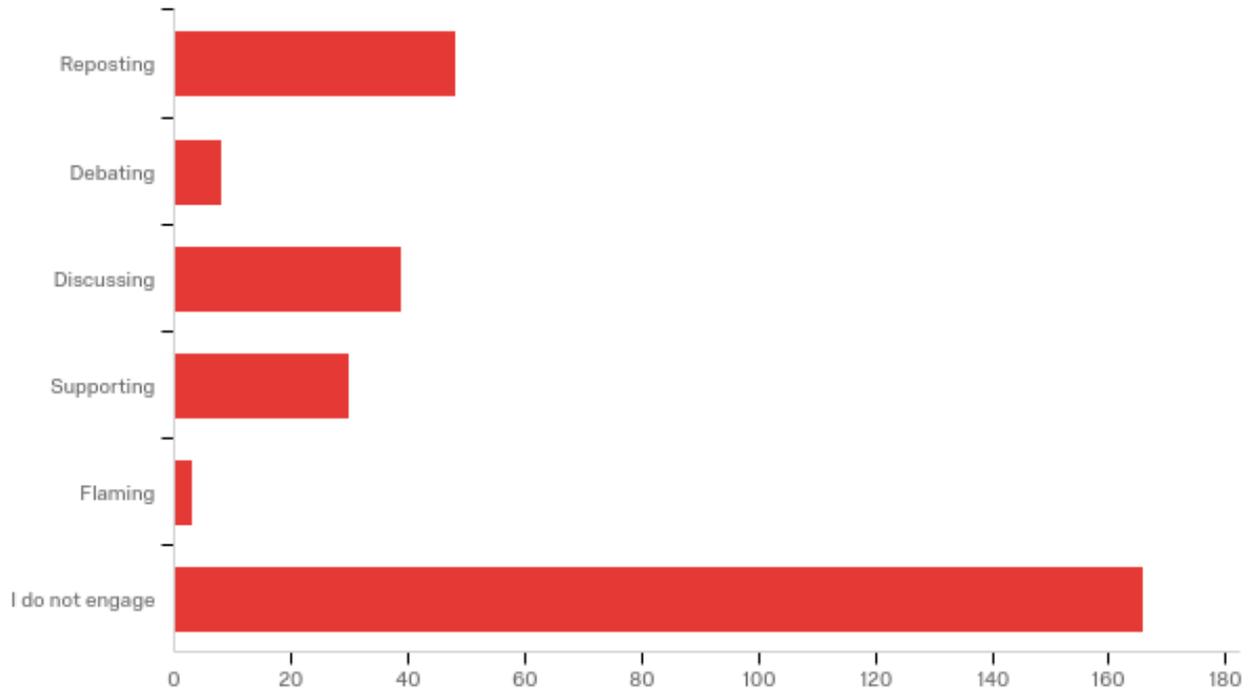
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Q I'm a Quanon

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Ads, google, yahoo

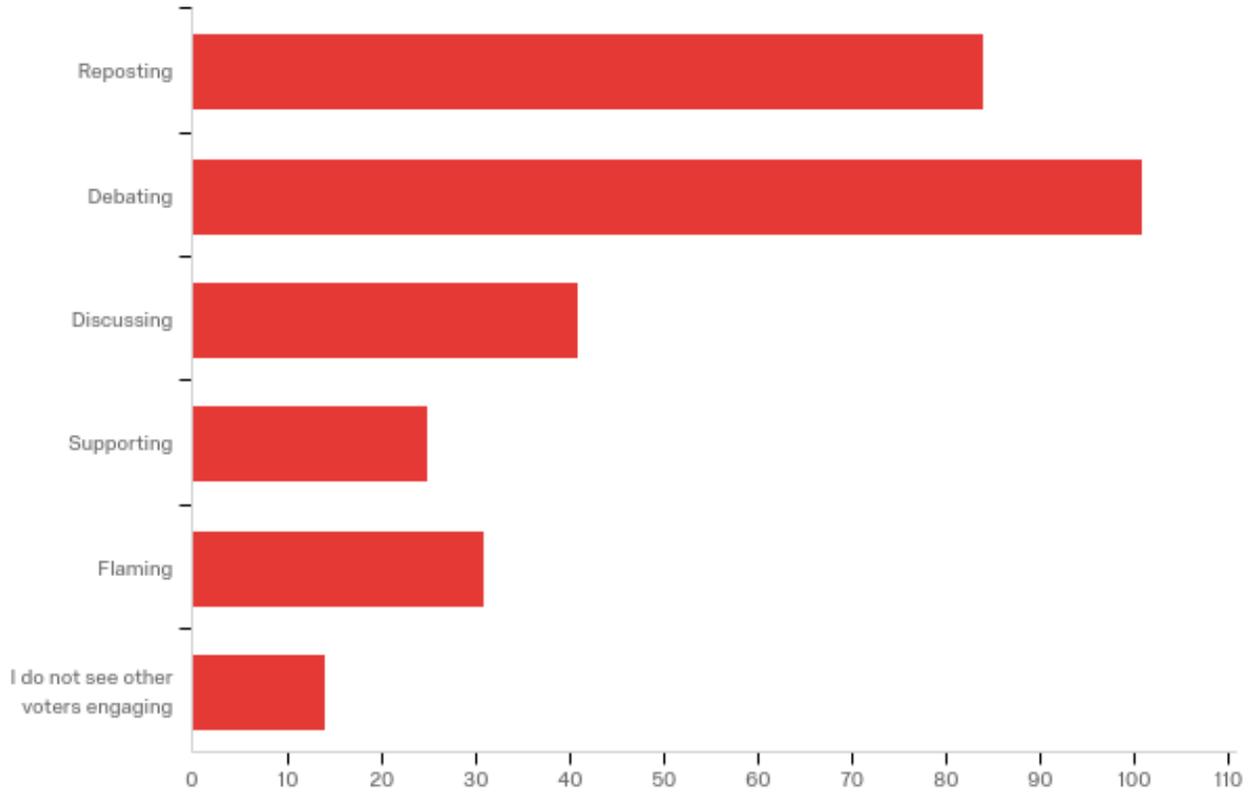
**Q6 - How have you engaged on social media regarding political campaigns?**



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	How have you engaged on social media regarding political campaigns?	1.00	6.00	4.46	1.94	3.77	294

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Reposting	16.33%	48
2	Debating	2.72%	8
3	Discussing	13.27%	39
4	Supporting	10.20%	30
5	Flaming	1.02%	3
6	I do not engage	56.46%	166
	Total	100%	294

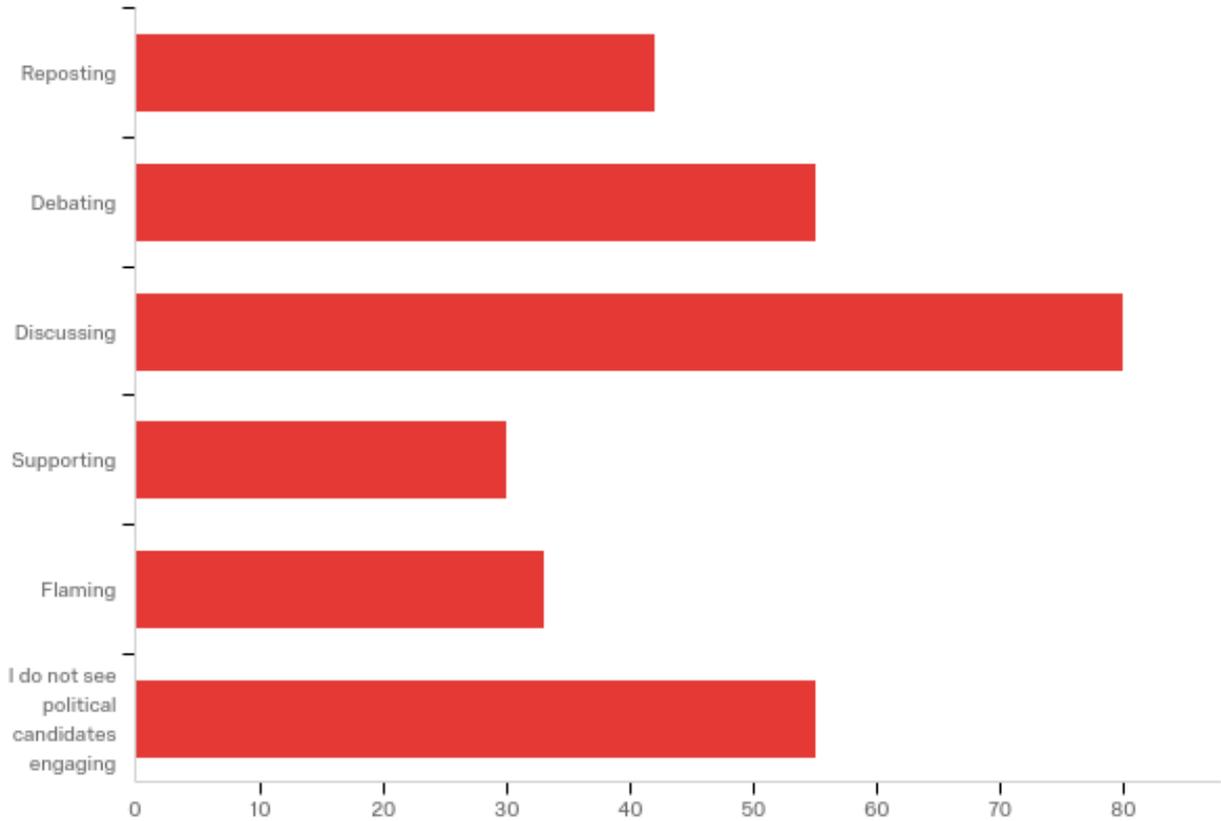
**Q7 - How have you observed other voters engaging on social media regarding political campaigns?**



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	How have you observed other voters engaging on social media regarding political campaigns?	1.00	6.00	2.53	1.48	2.18	296

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Reposting	28.38%	84
2	Debating	34.12%	101
3	Discussing	13.85%	41
4	Supporting	8.45%	25
5	Flaming	10.47%	31
6	I do not see other voters engaging	4.73%	14
	Total	100%	296

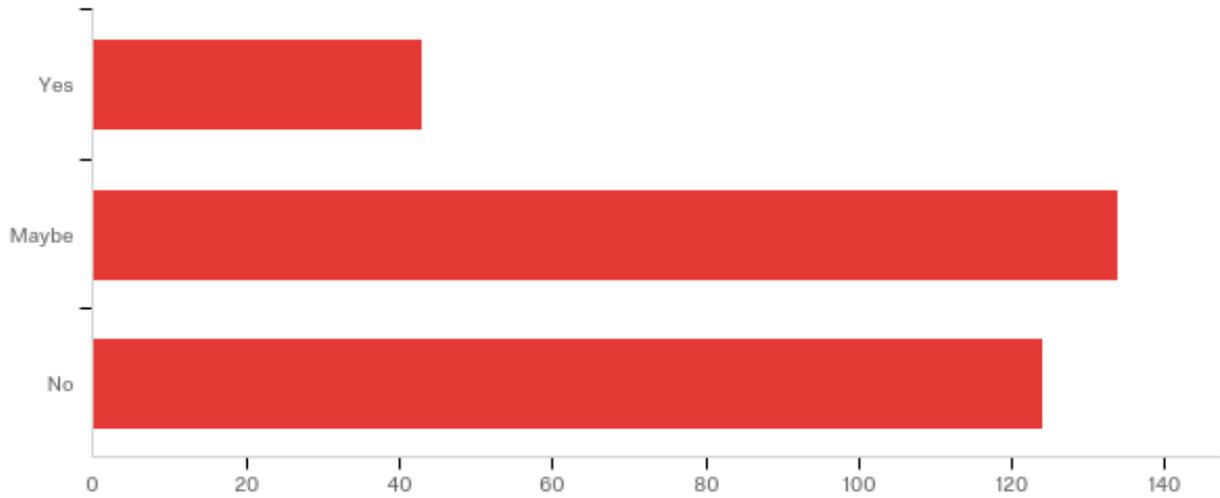
**Q8 - How have you observed political candidates engage on social media regarding political campaigns?**



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	How have you observed political candidates engage on social media regarding political campaigns?	1.00	6.00	3.41	1.68	2.81	295

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Reposting	14.24%	42
2	Debating	18.64%	55
3	Discussing	27.12%	80
4	Supporting	10.17%	30
5	Flaming	11.19%	33
6	I do not see political candidates engaging	18.64%	55
	Total	100%	295

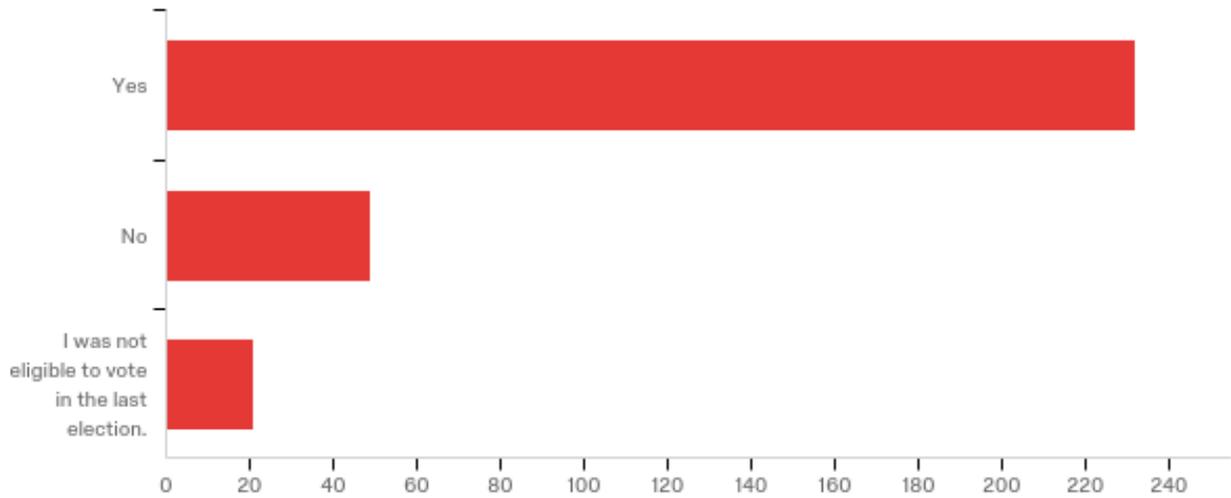
**Q9 - Would observing a political advertisement potentially impact your vote?**



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Would observing a political advertisement potentially impact your vote?	1.00	3.00	2.27	0.69	0.48	301

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	14.29%	43
2	Maybe	44.52%	134
3	No	41.20%	124
	Total	100%	301

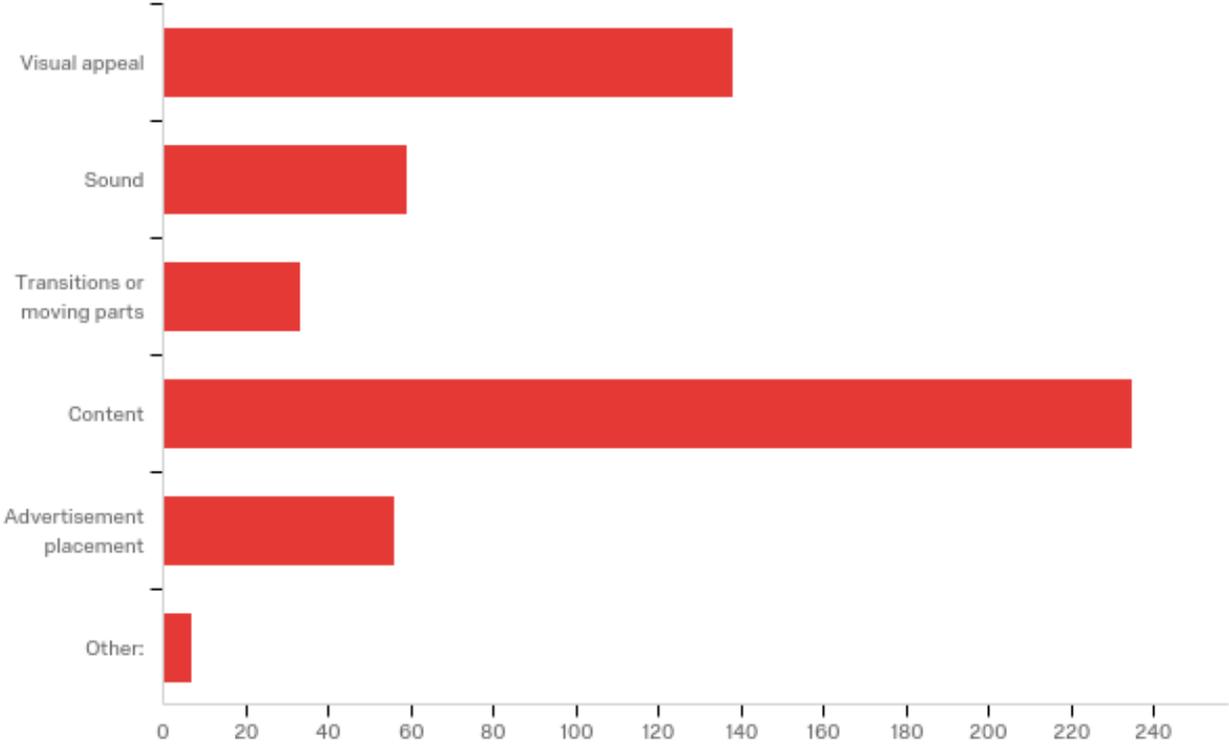
**Q10 - Did you vote in the last election (on all scales) that you were eligible to vote in?**



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Did you vote in the last election (on all scales) that you were eligible to vote in?	1.00	3.00	1.30	0.59	0.35	302

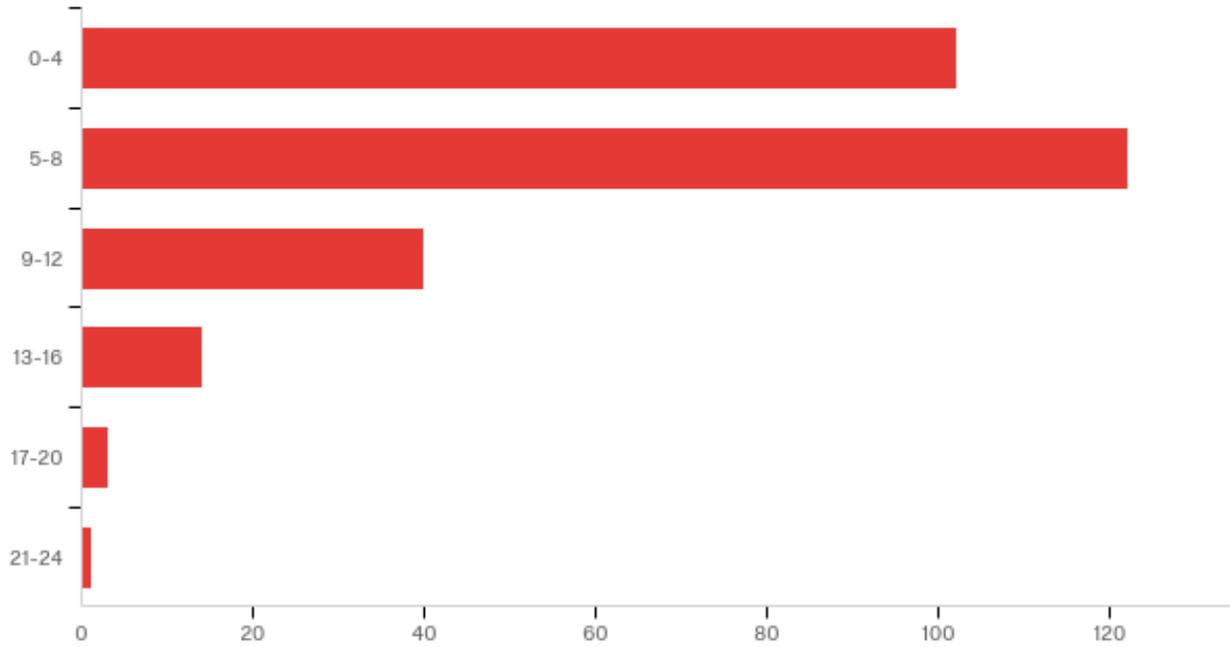
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	76.82%	232
2	No	16.23%	49
3	I was not eligible to vote in the last election.	6.95%	21
	Total	100%	302

**Q11 - When observing an advertisement, what aspects draw your attention?  
Check all that apply.**



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Visual appeal	26.14%	138
2	Sound	11.17%	59
3	Transitions or moving parts	6.25%	33
4	Content	44.51%	235
5	Advertisement placement	10.61%	56
6	Other:	1.33%	7
	Total	100%	528

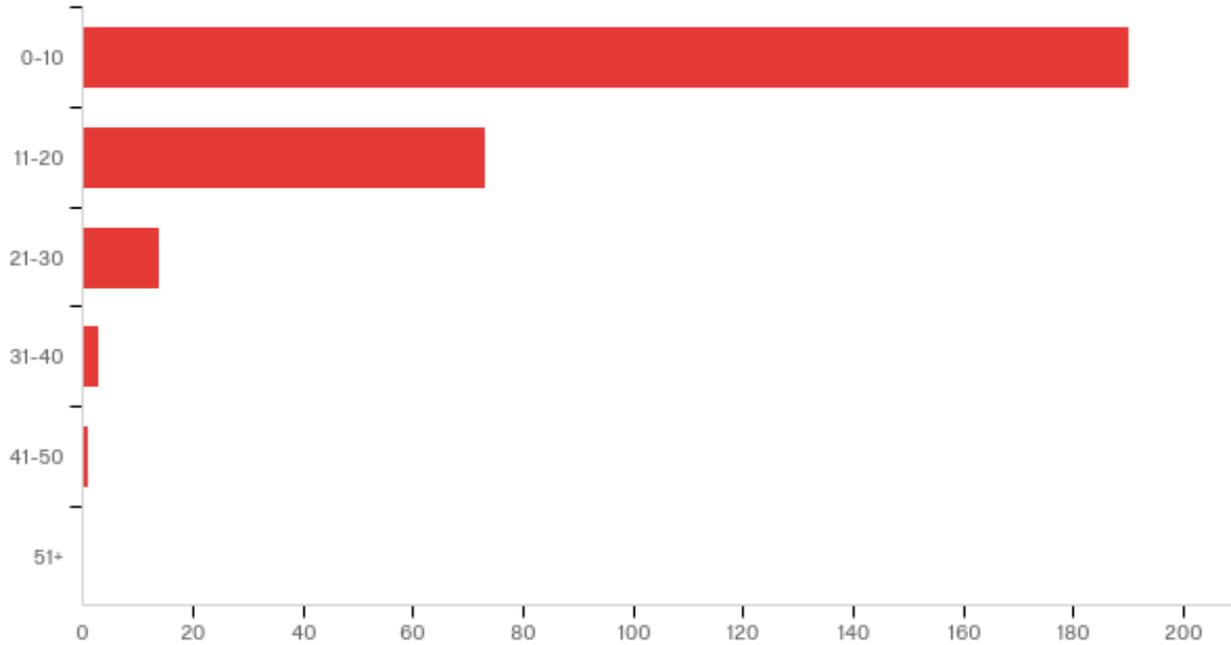
**Q12 - Approximately how many hours do you spend using technology per day?**



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Approximately how many hours do you spend using technology per day?	1.00	6.00	1.93	0.92	0.85	282

#	Answer	%	Count
1	0-4	36.17%	102
2	5-8	43.26%	122
3	9-12	14.18%	40
4	13-16	4.96%	14
5	17-20	1.06%	3
6	21-24	0.35%	1
	Total	100%	282

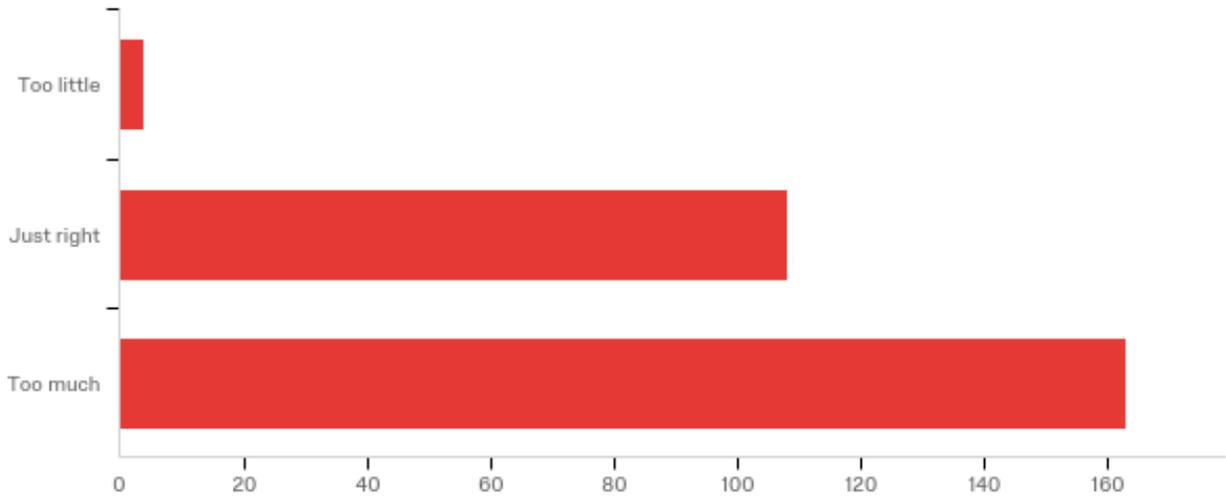
**Q13 - Approximately how many political advertisements do you see each day?**



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Approximately how many political advertisements do you see each day?	1.00	5.00	1.41	0.67	0.45	281

#	Answer	%	Count
1	0-10	67.62%	190
2	11-20	25.98%	73
3	21-30	4.98%	14
4	31-40	1.07%	3
5	41-50	0.36%	1
6	51+	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	281

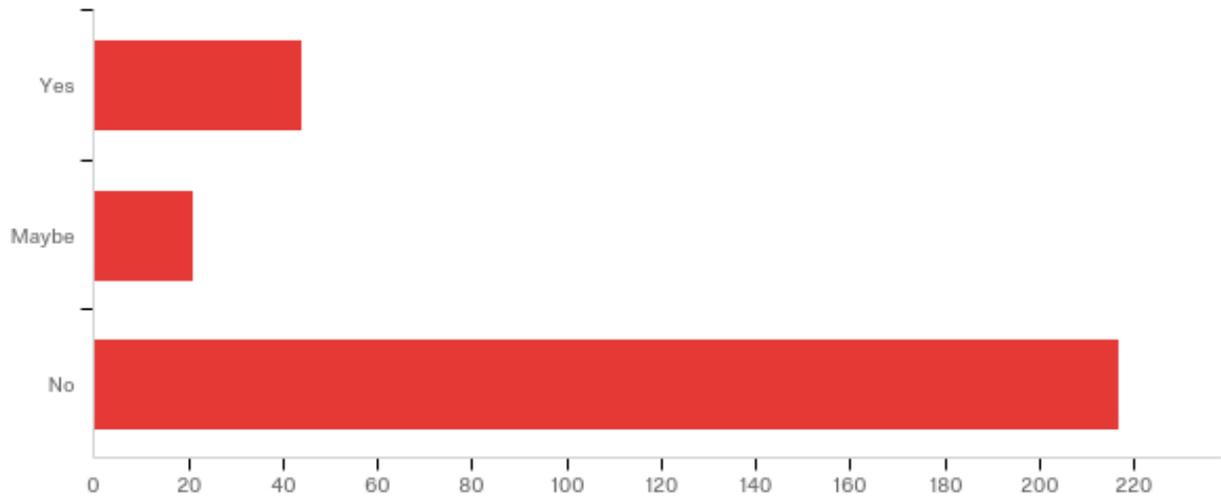
### Q14 - Do you feel like this is...



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Do you feel like this is...	1.00	3.00	2.58	0.52	0.27	275

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Too little	1.45%	4
2	Just right	39.27%	108
3	Too much	59.27%	163
	Total	100%	275

**Q15 - Have you ever felt pressured into voting for a candidate based on political digital media you have seen?**



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Have you ever felt pressured into voting for a candidate based on political digital media you have seen?	1.00	3.00	2.61	0.74	0.55	282

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	15.60%	44
2	Maybe	7.45%	21
3	No	76.95%	217
	Total	100%	282