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Campaign strategy in the internet age: The use and effectiveness of internet advocacy tools in American political campaigns.

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CAMPAIGN STRATEGY IN THE INTERNET AGE:
THE USE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNET ADVOCACY TOOLS IN AMERICAN
POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the use and effectiveness of Internet Advocacy Tools, including Twitter, Facebook, Email, and blogs, in American Political campaigns in order to better understand their role in the American electoral process. Data was collected through a census of political campaign professionals immediately following the 2010 Congressional elections.   The results of this research indicate that simply utilizing Internet Advocacy Tools is not enough to win an election, and that campaign professionals of all political persuasions have reservations regarding their across-the-board usefulness and effectiveness, despite presenting some certain advantages over traditional campaign methods and tools.

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INTRODUCTION

As Internet access has become more ubiquitous in everyday life, it has also been quickly adopted by political campaigns. Political campaign professionals have played a key role in integrating the Internet, and more specifically Internet based advocacy tools and methods into the political campaign atmosphere. It is with that in mind that the following research study was conducted. The research will aim to discover how Internet advocacy tools such as Facebook, Twitter, Email databases, and campaign blogs are utilized and viewed by campaign professionals.

CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW

At present, there is no literature pertaining specifically to how campaign professionals view Internet based advocacy methods. The initial section of the literature review covers traditional campaign methods, and how those methods have manifested themselves online. The next section of literature surveyed in relation to this study focuses on individual activists views of Internet advocacy, how people relate to candidates and campaigns online via social media, the importance of fostering dialogue on social networks, and a general overview of the use of blogs for political purposes. In so doing, it is presumed that the views of activists for specific causes found in previous literature can serve as a reasonable corollary for political campaign professionals. Literature is also surveyed on recent studies discussing the impact the Internet has had on political campaigns.

As a large portion of this research pertains to campaign professionals' views of online tools vis-à-vis traditional offline methods, it is important to survey traditional, offline campaign methods, and how these methods impact elections. Guzzetta's (2006) study of modern campaign processes provides us with an excellent overview of traditional methods, especially the areas this research is focused on: messaging to existing and potential supporters, volunteer recruitment, fundraising, and event organization and promotion.

Guzetta (2006) provides a number of ways in which the typical political campaign will attempt to get its message out to both existing and potential supporters. These include: canvassing, phone banking, billboards and yard signs, direct mail, television and

radio advertising, press releases, and public appearances by the candidate (Guzetta 2006, 70).

There are a variety of ways campaigns have traditionally recruited volunteers according to Guzetta. Many take the form of the candidate and his or her existing supporters directly appealing to member organizations that may be likely to support the candidate (Guzetta 2006, 182). Such member organizations include local political parties, unions, trade associations, and college groups (Guzetta 2006, 182). Additional methods include canvassing efforts, both over the phone and on the ground, in an attempt to identify and engage individuals likely to support the campaign (Guzetta 2006, 173-4).

Guzetta (2006) identifies three areas where campaigns traditionally raise funds. Direct mail is seen to be one of the most effective methods, whereby candidates send letters of solicitation to individuals through the mail (Guzetta 2006, 248-250). A supplemental method to direct mail is telephone solicitation, whereby the candidate makes fundraising calls to individuals who have also been solicited by mail (Guzetta 2006, 259).

Lastly, Guzetta (2006) also discusses how and why campaigns organize events. For Guzetta (2006), events are mainly to be used to fundraising, but can also serve as vehicles for messaging and volunteer recruitment (Guzetta 2006, 269). Events are typically help in public spaces, restaurants, and auditoriums, with individuals alerted to their occurrence through invitations sent by mail, telephone calls, and press releases (Guzetta 2006, 269).

So what results can campaigns expect to see from utilizing traditional methods? According to two studies, traditional campaign methods aimed at reaching out to

potential supporters, lead to the increased likelihood of positive electoral outcomes for

the given campaign (Bergan, Gerber, Green and Panagopoulos 2004 and Hillygus 2005).

Direct mail is seen by Bergan, Gerber, Green and Panagopoulos (2004) to lead to an

increase in voting, with even slight differences in utilization between campaigns leading

to a decisive edge in regards to electoral outcomes (Bergan, Gerber, Green and

Panagopoulos 775).

      Hillygus (2005) looks further at how contacting different types of voters, in

different ways can lead to their increased involvement in, and vote for a campaign.

Unlikely voters are seen to have a substantial increase in likelihood of voting when

exposed to campaign advertising and recommendations from friends (Hillygus 59). In

fact when a politically uninvolved, unlikely voter comes into contact with a political

campaign, their likelihood becomes greater than 56% (Hillygus 63). On the other hand,

likely voters are more likely to be swayed if approached by the campaign itself, and see a

small increase in voting likelihood (Hillygus 62). These results of these studies cannot

underscore the importance of campaign communication and contact with voters enough.

      Critical to this research is how Internet based advocacy tools compare to their

traditional campaign counterparts. As such, it is necessary to take note of how traditional

methods have been brought online for campaign purposes. According Gulati and

Williams (2008) the Internet allows for traditional campaign methods to be adapted to the

online sphere for a multitude of purposes, including communication, organization,

mobilization across a given electoral district (Gulati and Williams 3). Expanding on

Gulati and Wlliams, Delany (2012) provides a comprehensive look into how political

campaigns are utilizing the Internet in ways similar to traditional, offline methods.

At present, campaigns use the Internet for a wide array of purposes, but Delaney sees the key areas involving the Internet and campaigning (Delany 5). First is recruiting, whether for volunteers, donors, or voters, second is mobilization in order to get those individuals the campaign recruits to take actions, and third is messaging, so the campaign can communicate to voters (Delaney 5).

Constituent relations management databases are used primarily for email, and are seen to be extremely effective in terms of fundraising, keeping supporters engaged, and motivating supports to take action on the campaign behalf, one such example being to vote (Delaney 7-8). Conversely, Twitter and Facebook are seen as primarily platforms for messaging and encouraging interaction between supporters themselves, and between supporters and the campaign (Delaney 13).

As political campaigns are now translating traditional methods to the online sphere, it is also important to look at how individuals are using the Internet in ways related to politics. Aaron Smith (2009) of the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project studied the Internet's role in the 2008 Presidential campaign. He found that 74% of Internet users, or 55% of the adult population of the United States went online for political purposes; with 59% of those users having used email or social media to send or receive political messages, doubling the numbers found in 2000 (Smith 3). Additionally, 37% of Internet users received emails form political campaigns, 11% of which received such emails daily (Smith 36).

Of particular interest are the findings relating to social media use. More than half of social media users used sites such as Facebook and Twitter for political purposes (Smith 43). Overall, Internet users used social media for getting information on

candidates, joining political groups, discussing politics with friends and family, and becoming friends or followers or candidates (Smith 80). That said only 12% of those individuals went so far as to take the additional action of "friending" specific candidates (Smith 43).

Having discussed traditional methods of campaigning, the translation of those methods to the online sphere by political campaigns, and how individuals now use the Internet for political purposes, it is important to look at the impact that brining campaigns online has had, and what that may be able to tell us for future use. This section surveys studies on the Internet and issue-based advocacy based campaigns as well as studies done explicitly on the Internet and political campaigns.

Brunsting and Postmes (2002) discuss the views of environmentalists in terms of online activism. They found that online activism is not only on the rise across all levels of activists, from hardcore to non-activists, but also that online activism was seen as equivalent to offline activism, especially among non-activists (Brunsting and Postmes 297-298). This study is of note as it not only identifies the rise of the Internet as a tool that can be used for advocates, but also that people generally view taking action online is equivalent offline. That finding suggests that campaign professionals should be comfortable in politicizing the Internet, as individuals who are interested in any level of political discourse or action will be open to taking part and being engaged by campaigns. One concern is that is focuses solely on environmental activists rather than multiple issue groups or political groups, potentially leading to an unrepresentative sample.

Bortree and Seltzer (2009) address the importance of dialogue between advocates and their constituents in any form of advocacy work, whether it is issued based or

political, and from there focus on dialogue on social media sites. Their study sought to identify the level of engagement environmental organizations are able to obtain on social networks from their visitors (Bortree and Seltzer 317). Their findings showed that on average, advocacy organizations do not use a wide array of methods to encourage dialogue, often making only minimal attempts, and when they do make attempts to encourage dialogue they see increased return visits (Bortree and Seltzer 318). Their key finding suggests that organizations should post more often on their own social media sites with interesting, engaging information to encourage discussion, and increased levels of engagement by potential supporters (Bortree and Seltzer 318). These findings, while limited to environmental organizations, should carry over to the realm of political campaigns, and campaign professionals may be wise to take note.

Lariscy and Weaver (2008) focus on the interactions between individuals and campaigns and candidates on Facebook. Their research was centered on the 2006 elections for House and Senate in the United States (Lariscy and Weaver 182). Through coding of comments, they were able to identify the types of relationships commenters believed they had with the candidate as well as quality and theme of the comment. There was found to be a high degree of perceived personal connections to candidates with an informal style, as well as interaction between commenters themselves (Lariscy and Weaver 186). This suggests that campaign professionals may be able to shape their online presence in such a way to encourage that personal connection and foster comments. At the same time Lariscy and Weaver's findings suggest that even with a high degree of personal dialogue, much of it is of little substance, mainly consisting of encouraging words, where serious, in depth political comments are few and far between

(Lariscy and Weaver 186). This suggests that there may be limits to what is possible to achieve on social media sites in terms of in depth communication as opposed to fostering simple, content free dialogue.

Research on the impact direct electoral impact of social media has been done by a number of individuals, with revealing results. Gulati and Williams (2007, 2008, 2009) have done a number of studies on the impact of social media on the outcomes of elections. Starting in 2007, they found that incumbents can expect to add 1.1% to their total vote share simply by doubling their number of Facebook supporters, while candidates in races where no incumbents are present can expect to add a 3% to their total vote share in the same fashion (Gulati and Williams 20). For the 2008 Presidential Primary election, Gulati and Williams (2008) found that the more Facebook supporters Barack Obama had in a given state, the higher his vote total in comparison to his primary opponents (Gulati and Williams 6). In 2009, Gulati and Williams' research showed that vote shares in the 2008 election were once again correlated, albeit weakly, to the total number of Facebook supporters, but on the whole, victorious campaigns had more supporters than losing campaigns (Gulati and Williams 4).

Following on the heels of the research done by Gulati and Williams, Olson and Burnett (2012), fund that there is a weak correlation between the number of likes a candidate received on Facebook in 2010, and the vote margin received in the general election (Olson and Burnett 4). In relation to Twitter, Sander, Sprenger, Tumasjan and Welpe (2010) performed a study on the number of tweets referencing a given candidate's campaign. They found that the number of tweets specifically mentioning a candidate or

his or her campaign closely lined up with electoral results and pre-election polling (Sander, Sprenger, Tumasjan and Welpe 104).

Literature on blog use is quite extensive, but said literature carries with it little applicability for the research that has been conducted here as there is little campaign specific literature. A consensus has been formed that there is lack of data available that can identify the effects of blog use in regards to politics (De Zuniga, Puig-I-Abril and Rojas 2009, 557). This has led to researchers to caution against making causal connections between a given campaigns' success or lack thereof, and its blogging acumen (Campbell 2009, 151). De Zuniga, Puig-I-Abril, and Rojas (2009) have found through their research that blog use can increase the level on an individual's online campaigning, but fail to find data suggesting a real world application in terms of volunteering, or voting. An additional caveat to De Zuniga, Puig-I-Abril and Rojas' findings is the fact that of blog users, only 27% view political blogs (De Zuniga, Puig-I-Abril and Rojas 2009, 555), which in turn begs the question of how large an impact political blogs can have when so few users view them. A 2010 study did show that blogging can be correlated with a given increase or decrease in polling numbers based, yet the authors did not pursue the matter further (Wattal, Schuff, Mandviwalla, and Williams, 2010).

CHAPTER TWO: THEORY AND HYPOTHESIS

These hypotheses that follow are all a part of an overarching theory on Internet based advocacy tools. It is clear that at present, political campaigns have completely adopted the digital realm, with nearly all campaigns having a presence online, and in politics, any tool at a campaign's disposal will most likely be seen as a useful one. This suggests that there should be no difference between political parties, or level of office being sought, as well as a general acceptance of Internet based advocacy tools as being useful within a campaign. Additionally, the literature suggests that individuals are quite open to accepting messaging from campaigns, and as such it presents an excellent opportunity for campaigns to make inroads to new supporters, current supporters, and the press alike. Widespread use of Internet based advocacy tools for political campaigns only dates back to 2004, whereas traditional, offline methods have existed, and been perfected over the course of centuries, suggesting that in terms of effectiveness, traditional methods will still be seen as being superior.

Several hypotheses were tested through this research study in order to determine how Internet advocacy tools such as Facebook, Twitter, Email databases, and campaign blogs are utilized and viewed by campaign professionals. The hypotheses are as follows:

> H1: Winning campaigns will have contacted their supporters more frequently than losing campaigns.
>
> H2: Winning campaigns will have a greater number of individuals associated with IATs, such as Facebook members, Twitter followers, and contacts in their email databases.
>
> H3: Similar usage patterns of Internet based advocacy tools will be seen between Democratic, Republican, and Independent campaigns.

H4: Campaign professionals will consider IATs to be less effective than their traditional, offline counterparts.

H1 is based on Guzetta's (2006) frequent discussion of the importance of having a large number of individuals a campaign can reach in order to run a winning campaign, particularly through the campaign's mail and telephone database, whether for messaging or fundraising. As such we can assume that Facebook members, Twitter followers, and email contacts can serve as a corollary for this research.

H2 is based on Gulati and Williams (2007, 2008, 2009) that shows correlation between total vote share and the number of social media supporters.

H3 assumes that as Guzetta's (2006) study observed common traditional campaign methods among modern political campaigns across the political spectrum, it can be concluded that those same patterns of use will be seen when campaigns are taken online.

H4 is born out of the idea that Guzetta's (2006) study covers methods that have been honed and perfected over a great deal of time to provide for the greatest level of effectiveness. In contrast, IATs are a new development to the world of political campaign, and their use has yet to be perfected, leading to the likelihood that they have not reached similar levels of effectiveness when compared to their traditional counterparts.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted to discover how Internet advocacy tools such as Facebook, Twitter, and Email databases are utilized and viewed by campaign professionals. The descriptive method of research was utilized in this study, specifically in the form of a survey distributed to participants, resulting in quantitative data analyzed to formulate conclusions.

For this study, a census was utilized in selecting participants. In order to reach conclusions on the research question, it was necessary to contact campaign professionals in order to obtain their views on Internet advocacy tools. The participants were selected from every campaign for the US Senate and US House of Representatives, for both the Democratic and Republican parties in the 2010 election cycle, totaling 1101 contacts, including 407 Democrats, 430 Republicans, and 264 Independents. The participants were identified through campaign press releases and website material. All participants were contacted via email within two weeks of the 2010 Congressional elections that took place on November 2, 2010. Respondents totaled 137 for a response rate of 12.4%, with 44 Democrats, 39 Republicans, and 54 Independents responding.

A survey was used as the main research instrument in obtaining data pertinent to this research. The survey consisted of six parts considered essential to obtain a full understanding of campaign professionals' views on Internet advocacy tools. The first section contained questions that are considered demographic in nature. The questions sought to answer what level of political office the campaign professionals' candidate was running for, the party affiliation of the campaign professionals' candidate, and which Internet based advocacy tools the campaign professionals' campaign utilized. These

questions were selected in order to effectively cross-tabulate results across levels of office, party affiliation, and degree of involvement in Internet advocacy tools to determine trends amongst respondents.

Sections two through five were specific to individual Internet advocacy tools. These tools were identified as Facebook, Twitter, Email databases, and campaign blogs. For each, participants were asked to identify the ways in which their campaign utilized the given tool. The options included general messaging to potential supporters, stimulating discussion and conversation with and between supporters, organizing and promoting campaign events, directly communicating to supporters, recruiting and retaining volunteers, and fundraising.

The participants were also asked the number of individuals they were able to contact or reach via that tool, and how often the campaign utilized that tool. The participants were also asked to identify how useful each tool was in regards to the ways in which their campaign utilized it on a scale of not useful, somewhat useful, very useful, and not applicable. Participants were also asked to assess Internet tools efficacy in comparison to comparable, offline methods on a scale of less effective, equally effective, and more effective.

Section six consisted of questions that were centered on the campaign professionals' views of Internet advocacy tools in relation to the outcome of their campaign. Participants were asked to assess how great a benefit Internet advocacy tools were to their campaign on a scale of very beneficial, somewhat beneficial, and not beneficial. Participants were also asked how great an emphasis they will place on Internet

advocacy tools in future campaigns on a scale of greater emphasis, same emphasis, less

emphasis.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

General Observations

Upon reviewing the data, the results show varied results in regards to the study's hypotheses, with two hypotheses invalidated, one validated, and one left somewhere in the middle. Hypothesis 1 was invalidated, with data showing that increased frequency of contact with supporters online did not result in increased victory rates. Hypothesis 2 was validated, with winning campaigns having greater numbers of IAT contacts, as shown by the data. Hypothesis 3 was invalidated, with the data showing, in fact, that there were significant differences in usage patterns of IATs between parties. Hypothesis 4 is left neither fully validated nor invalidated, as campaigns reported mixed opinions on the usefulness and effectiveness of IATs.

These observations are explored more fully below, and are followed by conclusions and recommendations for future research.

Table 4.1 - Descriptives

	Total	mean≥2.99	mean≥3.99	mean≥4.99	mean≥5.99
Responses by Party					
Democrat	44				
Republican	39				
Independent	54				
Won by Party					
Democrat	9				
Republican	22				
Independent	0				
Lost by Party					
Democrat	22				
Republican	19				
Independent	49				
Frequency of Use					
Blogs		>1 post/wk	=1 post/wk	=2-3 posts/wk	n/a
Twitter/Facebook		>1 post/day	=1 post/day	=2-3 posts/day	n/a
Email		>1 email/wk	=1 email/wk	≤2 emails/wk	n/a
Number of Contacts					
Email/Twitter/Facebook		1-500	501-1001	1001-2500	2501-5000
Usefulness/Effectiveness		Not	Somewhat	Very	n/a

Electoral Outcomes and Party Affiliation

First it is appropriate to provide an overview of the numbers relating to the electoral outcome of respondents' races. It is important to note that in the 2010 general election, Democrats lost a significantly higher number of races than their Republican counterparts (Jones and McDermott 2011, 297). This fact is not represented in the sample used for this study, as can be seen by observing Table 4.2, which provides the given won-loss records of respondents below.

Table 4.2

	Republican	Democrat	Independent or 3rd Party
Respondents	44	39	54
Won	22	9	0
Lost	19	22	49
Incumbent	7	12	0

Internet Advocacy Tools: Keys to Victory?

A key question posed in the study was whether or not Internet advocacy tools
(IATs) play a significant role in the outcomes of elections. By comparing both the
usage and membership rates of the varying IATs to electoral outcomes, this question
can begin to be answered. These results can be found in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3

	Won (mean)	Lost (mean)	P (sig)	Valid (total)
IAT: Use Frequency				
Blog	4	3	0.009	58
Email	3.2	3.1	0.435	111
Twitter	2.9	2.8	0.474	79
Facebook	2.9	2.9	0.902	118
IAT: # of Contacts				
Blog	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Email	6	3.6	.0001	111
Twitter	3.3	2.4	.0001	79
Facebook	4.7	2.9	.0001	117
Election Outcome: Benefit of IATs	3.5	3.3	0.52	120
Election Outcome: Future Use of IATs	3.4	3.5	0.25	113

The study showed that the frequency of use of a given IAT did not correlate with
electoral outcomes, save for blogging , which was more frequently used by winning
campaigns. This finding invalidates Hypothesis 1, which stated that winning
campaigns will have contacted their supporters more frequently than losing
campaigns.

Although the frequency of use does not appear to correlate with electoral outcomes, the number of individuals a campaign has in its email database, following it on Twitter, or members of its Facebook page does appear to be linked to victory. This finding validates Hypothesis 2, which stated winning campaigns will have a greater number of individuals associated with IATs, such as Facebook members, Twitter followers, and contacts in their email databases.

The total number of individuals in a campaign's email database is the most likely indicator of victory, followed by Facebook group members, and finally Twitter followers.

It was also of interest to examine the over all level of benefit attributed to IATs by respondents, and how respondents intend to use IATs in future campaigns. In each case there was a finding of no difference. Respondents for both winning and losing campaigns viewed IATs as being somewhat beneficial to their campaigns while also intending to place a slightly greater focus on IATs in future campaigns.

How The Parties Use IATs

One important question posed by this research was whether there was a difference between parties in the ways that they used IATs. The data shows (Table 4.4) that there is a statistically significant difference between Republicans, Democrats, and Independents in the ways they used email, Twitter, and Facebook, with Republicans using IATs for the most purposes and Independents the least.

Email

The data shows that Democrats and Republicans used email for the most purposes, whereas Independents used email for fewer purposes.

Blogs

The significance for the data collected on blogs is .6, meaning that the finding showing Republicans using blogs at a greater rate than Democrats and Independents may simply be random variation due to the finding of non-significance.

Twitter

The data shows that Republicans used Twitter for the most purposes, followed by Democrats, and then finally Independents. It was also used for significantly fewer purposes as compared to Email and Facebook.

Facebook

According to the data, Republicans, followed by Democrats, and then Independents, used Facebook for the most purposes. The number of purposes Facebook was used for mirror closely the ways in which email was used each party.

Table 4.4

IAT	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Significance(P)
Email	5	4.9	3.6	<.001
Blog	2.8	3.3	2.0	N/S
Twitter	2.3	3.3	1.9	.009
Facebook	4.6	5.1	4.4	.001

These findings invalidate Hypothesis 3, which stated that: Similar usage patterns of Internet based advocacy tools will be seen between Democratic, Republican, and Independent campaigns.

IATs: Usefulness and Comparative Effectiveness

This study focused extensively on how respondents' from different political parties viewed IATs both in terms of their usefulness for campaign purposes, and their effectiveness vis-à-vis comparative non-Internet based campaign methods. In the majority of cases, there was found to be no difference between parties in perceived usefulness and the comparative effectiveness of each IAT. That said, the data did provide several instances of significant differences between parties, which shall be looked at further below. The results are divided by IAT-type below.

Blogs

The data showed no significant differences between parties both in terms of perceived usefulness and comparative effectiveness of IATs.   The consensus view of all parties was that blogs are somewhat useful for campaign purposes, while being less than equally effective as compared to non-Internet based campaign methods.

Email Databases

Republicans were the most likely to consider email as being somewhat to very
useful whereas Independents found email databases to be considerably less useful
than their Republican counterparts (Table 4.5). The most striking examples of this
disparity can be found in the difference between Republicans and Independents in
relation to using email databases for fundraising and recruiting and retaining
volunteers.

Table 4.5

IAT/Purpose	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Significance(P)
Email: Messaging	3.37	3.71	3.48	.031
Email: Volunteers	3.35	3.47	3.00	.004
Email: Fundraising	3.50	3.50	3.00	.004
Email: Events	3.42	3.73	3.35	.008

Organizing and promoting campaign events was the only type of campaign activity
considered to be more effective through the use of email than through alternative
offline methods that was also statistically significant. This held true for Republicans
and Independents, while Democrats viewed email as merely being equally effective
(Table 4.6). For all other uses, there was effectively a finding of no difference,
showing all parties viewing email as being equally effective to non-Internet based
methods.

Table 4.6

IAT/Purpose-Effectiveness	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Significance(P)
Email: Events	3.03	3.47	3.37	.026

Twitter

Across party lines, respondents uniformly identified twitter as being not useful for

the majority of campaign purposes, leading to a finding of no difference in all but

one category.   The data shows a significant difference between the Democrat's view

of Twitter being more useful for stimulating conversation than Republicans or

Independents. That said, the Democrats still show little faith in Twitter for that

purpose, as to Republicans and Independents showing practically none at all. In

addition, the trend of Independents seeing less usefulness in IATs can be seen

carrying over from email to twitter (Table 4.7).

Table 4.7

IAT/Purpose-Usefulness	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Significance(P)
Twitter: Discussion	2.61	2.26	2.17	.005

In terms of Twitter's perceived effectiveness vis-à-vis non-Internet based methods

of campaigning, there was a finding of no difference showing all parties viewing

Twitter as being less effective for all purposes.

Facebook

The data shows Facebook as being the most divisive IAT in regards to its usefulness.

That being said, for most uses there was a finding of no difference between the

varying parties. Facebook was found somewhat useful by all parties for messaging

to potential supporters, communicating with existing supporters, and stimulating

discussion, while not being useful for fundraising. There were two uses where the

data shows a significant difference between parties, recruiting and retaining

volunteers, and organizing and promoting campaign events. In each instance

Independents viewed Facebook as being less useful than the other two parties,

continuing the trend of Independents less than favorable view of IATs (Table 4.8).

Table 4.8

IAT/Purpose-Usefulness	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Significance(P)
Facebook: Volunteers	2.80	2.87	2.53	.035
Facebook: Events	3.50	3.31	3.04	.004

Facebook's perceived effectiveness vis-à-vis non-Internet based methods of

campaigning showed no statistically significant differences between parties for any

purpose. It was generally found to be equally effective in regards to general

messaging to potential supporters, communicating to existing supporters,

stimulating conversation, and organizing campaign events, while being considered

less effective for recruiting volunteers, and fundraising.

The overall findings in regard to IAT effectiveness in comparison to traditional

methods, remains inconclusive, although the data suggests for the most part online

methods are seen as at best equally effective as their offline counterparts. This

finding does not fully validate or invalidate Hypothesis 4 that proposed that

campaign professionals will consider IATs to be less effective than their traditional,

offline counterparts.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As political campaigns have moved into the digital realm, so have their strategies. The data collected in the course of this research provided a valuable insight into the minds of 21st century campaign professionals, and the ways in which IATs can correlate with electoral outcomes. First and foremost, it is clear that simply utilizing IATs is not enough to win an election, no how much a campaign may use them. That said, winning campaigns did have more IAT contacts than their not-victorious counterparts. One question, much like that of the chicken and the egg, must be asked: Does a campaign win because it has more IAT contacts, or does it have more IAT contacts because it is expected to win and thus more people flock to its online presence? It is also possible other methods are drawing supporters to a campaign, and in so doing leading to supporters sign up for said campaign's email list, Facebook, or Twitter. Two telling data points related to this are the results showing respondents from winning and losing campaigns having similar views regarding the over all benefit of IATs to their campaign and their intentions for future use. With that in mind, this topic would be a particularly interesting for researchers to investigate in the future.

Running counter to the hypothesis that all campaigns, regardless of party affiliation would use IATs at the same rate, the data shows that Independents used IATs for significantly fewer purposes than their major party counterparts. Future research would be recommended to investigate the cause for this, as one might expect Independent candidates to utilize IATs for more purposes to make up for any financial and manpower related shortcomings in relation to their opponents.

Regarding differences between the majority parties' usage patterns, they were significantly less than between Independents, suggesting a uniformity between the two major parties approach to campaigning online.

A consistent theme was found throughout the data in relation to how useful IATs were for specific purposes. Immediately it was clear that Independents viewed IATs as being less useful than their major party counterparts in nearly every instance. Future research would be recommended to look into this, especially due to Independents' low usage rate of IATs to begin with. Do they view IATs as not being particularly useful due to their lack of experience with them, or do they no use IATs due to some inherent believe that they aren't useful. For all parties, the suggestion that Twitter is of little, and Facebook of only mild utility came as a surprise. Further research looking into why so many campaigns use it when they find little use in each would be recommended.

When looking at the comparative effectiveness of IATs vis-à-vis traditional, offline campaign methods, the respondents were more or less universal in their views of each IAT. The data indicates that both Twitter and blogs are viewed as being less effective in all respects when compared against traditional, offline methods of campaigning, with Facebook was considered to be equally effective for nearly all purposes. Email on the other hand was consistently rated as being of equal or greater effectiveness for all purposes in comparison to traditional, offline methods. The caveat for this is that Independents, much less likely to rate email as highly as their major party counterparts.

Despite the widespread use of IATs, and the coverage of their use and impact in the media, this study shows that political campaign professionals still have their reservations about them. Perhaps this is why this is why the data also shows that their use does not translate to victory. As we move forward in time, it is likely that IATs will continue to make strides in usefulness, and effectiveness vis-à-vis their offline counterparts, but at present it appears that in many ways, past techniques still represent the present for many political campaigns.

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APPENDIX

A. SURVEY

Online Advocacy Methods: Campaign Strategy in the Internet Age

1. Information Sheet For Participation In Research Study

Online Advocacy Methods: Campaign Strategy in the Internet Age

You are being asked to participate in a research study being conducted by Andrew Shapero, a master's student at DePaul University. I am asking you because I am trying to learn more about how Internet advocacy tools such as Facebook, Twitter, Email databases and Blogs are utilized and viewed by campaign professionals. This study will take about 5-7 minutes of your time. If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to fill out a brief anonymous survey. The survey will include questions regarding Internet advocacy tools and their place in your political campaign. We will also ask for the level of political office of your campaign and the political party of its candidate. You can choose not to participate. There will be no negative consequences if you decide not to participate or change your mind later.

If you have questions about this study, please contact Andrew Shapero via phone at 573-424-8243 or email via ashapero@gmail.com. This research is being supervised by Chris Einolf, who can be contacted via phone at 312-362-5521, or via email at ceinolf@depaul.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact Susan Loess-Perez, DePaul University's Director of Research Protections at 312-362-7593 or by email at sloesspe@depaul.edu.

At the end of the survey there is an email address listed that you can contact to show your interest in receiving the results of my research once complete. In no way will I be able to connect your own survey data submission to an email sent to that address.

If you wish to participate in this study, please click "next" below to begin.

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2. Demographic information

＊1. What level of political office was your campaign centered on?

○ United States Senate

○ United States House of Representatives

＊2. What political party was your campaign associated with?

○ Democrat

○ Republican

○ Independent/Third Party

＊3. Were you/was your candidate an incumbent?

○ Yes

○ No

＊4. Did your campaign have a staff member dedicated solely on Internet based advocacy?

○ Yes

○ No

＊5. Which of the following Internet based tools do you use for advocacy?

☐ Facebook

☐ Twitter

☐ Email databases

☐ Campaign blog

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3. Facebook

The following questions will focus on Facebook as a tool for Internet based advocacy

1. For this question, please identify the ways in which your campaign utilized Facebook. Select all that apply.

- [ ] Not applicable
- [ ] General messaging to potential supporters
- [ ] Directly communicating to supporters
- [ ] Stimulating discussion and conversation with and between supporters
- [ ] Recruiting and retaining volunteers
- [ ] Fundraising
- [ ] Organizing and promoting campaign events

2. How many Facebook fans/group members did your campaign have?

- ( ) Not applicable
- ( ) 1-500
- ( ) 501-1000
- ( ) 1001-2500
- ( ) 2501-5000
- ( ) 5001-15,000
- ( ) 15,001-25,000
- ( ) 25,001-50,000
- ( ) 50,001+

3. On average, how often did your campaign post items on your Facebook fan page/group's wall?

- ( ) Not applicable
- ( ) Less than once a day
- ( ) Once a day
- ( ) 2-3 times a day
- ( ) 4 or more times a day

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4. Please rate, in your experience, the usefulness of Facebook for the following purposes

	Not applicable	Not useful	Somewhat useful	Very useful
General messaging to potential supporters	○	○	○	○
Directly communicating to supporters	○	○	○	○
Stimulating discussion/conversation with/between supporters	○	○	○	○
Recruiting and retaining volunteers	○	○	○	○
Fundraising	○	○	○	○
Organizing and promoting campaign events	○	○	○	○

5. In comparison to traditional, non-Internet based strategies, how do you rate the effectiveness of Facebook for the following purposes

	Not applicable	Less effective	Equally effective	More effective
General messaging to potential supporters	○	○	○	○
Directly communicating to supporters	○	○	○	○
Stimulating discussion/conversation with/between supporters	○	○	○	○
Recruiting and retaining volunteers	○	○	○	○
Fundraising	○	○	○	○
Organizing and promoting campaign events	○	○	○	○

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4. Twitter

The following questions will focus on Twitter as a tool for Internet based advocacy

1. For this question, please identify the ways in which your campaign utilized Twitter. Select all that apply

- ☐ Not applicable
- ☐ General Messaging to potential supporters
- ☐ Directly communicating to supporters
- ☐ Stimulating discussion and conversation with and between supporters
- ☐ Recruiting and retaining volunteers
- ☐ Fundraising
- ☐ Organizing and promoting campaign events

2. How many Twitter followers did your campaign have?

- ◯ Not applicable
- ◯ 1-500
- ◯ 501-1000
- ◯ 1001-2500
- ◯ 2501-5000
- ◯ 5001-15,000
- ◯ 15,001-25,000
- ◯ 25,001-50,000
- ◯ 50,001+

3. How often did your campaign tweet?

- ◯ Not applicable
- ◯ Less than once a day
- ◯ Once a day
- ◯ 2-3 times a day
- ◯ 4 or more times a day

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4. Please rate, in your experience, the usefulness of Twitter for the following purposes

	Not applicable	Not useful	Somewhat useful	Very useful
General messaging to potential supporters	○	○	○	○
Directly communicating to supporters	○	○	○	○
Stimulating discussion/conversation with/between supporters	○	○	○	○
Recruiting and retaining volunteers	○	○	○	○
Fundraising	○	○	○	○
Organizing and promoting campaign events	○	○	○	○

5. In comparison to traditional, non-Internet based strategies, how do you rate the effectiveness of Twitter for the following purposes

	Not applicable	Less effective	Equally effective	More effective
General messaging to potential supporters	○	○	○	○
Directly communicating to supporters	○	○	○	○
Stimulating discussion/conversation with/between supporters	○	○	○	○
Recruiting and retaining volunteers	○	○	○	○
Fundraising	○	○	○	○
Organizing and promoting campaign events	○	○	○	○

Online Advocacy Methods: Campaign Strategy in the Internet Age

5. Email databases

The following questions will focus on Email Databases as a tool for Internet based advocacy.

1. For this question, please identify the ways in which your campaign utilized Email. Select all that apply

☐ Not applicable

☐ General Messaging to potential supporters

☐ Directly communicating to supporters

☐ Stimulating discussion and conversation with and between supporters

☐ Recruiting and retaining volunteers

☐ Fundraising

☐ Organizing and promoting campaign events

2. How many individuals did your campaign have in its email list database?

○ Not applicable

○ 1-500

○ 501-1000

○ 1001-2500

○ 2501-5000

○ 5001-15,000

○ 15,001-25,000

○ 25,001-50,000

○ 50,001+

3. How often did your campaign send out emails to supporters?

○ Not applicable

○ Less than once a week

○ Once a week

○ Two or more times a week

Online Advocacy Methods: Campaign Strategy in the Internet Age

4. Please rate, in your experience, the usefulness of Email for the following purposes

	Not applicable	Not useful	Somewhat useful	Very useful
General messaging to potential supporters	◯	◯	◯	◯
Directly communicating to supporters	◯	◯	◯	◯
Stimulating discussion/conversation with/between supporters	◯	◯	◯	◯
Recruiting and retaining volunteers	◯	◯	◯	◯
Fundraising	◯	◯	◯	◯
Organizing and promoting campaign events	◯	◯	◯	◯

5. In comparison to traditional, non-Internet based strategies, how do you rate the effectiveness of Email for the following purposes

	Not applicable	Less effective	Equally effective	More effective
General messaging to potential supporters	◯	◯	◯	◯
Directly communicating to supporters	◯	◯	◯	◯
Stimulating discussion/conversation with/between supporters	◯	◯	◯	◯
Recruiting and retaining volunteers	◯	◯	◯	◯
Fundraising	◯	◯	◯	◯
Organizing and promoting campaign events	◯	◯	◯	◯

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6. Blogs

The following questions will focus on Blogs as a tool for Internet based advocacy

1. For this question, please identify the ways in which your campaign utilized a campaign blog. Select all that apply

- [ ] Not applicable
- [ ] General Messaging to potential supporters
- [ ] Directly communicating to supporters
- [ ] Stimulating discussion and conversation with and between supporters
- [ ] Recruiting and retaining volunteers
- [ ] Fundraising
- [ ] Organizing and promoting campaign events

2. How often did your campaign publish a post to its blog?

- ( ) Not applicable
- ( ) Less than once a week
- ( ) Once a week
- ( ) 2-3 times a week
- ( ) 3-4 times a week
- ( ) 5 or more times a week

3. Please rate, in your experience, the usefulness of your campaign blog for the following purposes

	Not applicable	Not useful	Somewhat useful	Very useful
General messaging to potential supporters	( )	( )	( )	( )
Directly communicating to supporters	( )	( )	( )	( )
Stimulating discussion/conversation with/between supporters	( )	( )	( )	( )
Recruiting and retaining volunteers	( )	( )	( )	( )
Fundraising	( )	( )	( )	( )
Organizing and promoting campaign events	( )	( )	( )	( )

Online Advocacy Methods: Campaign Strategy in the Internet Age

4. In comparison to traditional, non-Internet based strategies, how do you rate the effectiveness of your campaign blog for the following purposes

	Not applicable	Less effective	Equally effective	More effective
General messaging to potential supporters	◯	◯	◯	◯
Directly communicating to supporters	◯	◯	◯	◯
Stimulating discussion/conversation with/between supporters	◯	◯	◯	◯
Recruiting and retaining volunteers	◯	◯	◯	◯
Fundraising	◯	◯	◯	◯
Organizing and promoting campaign events	◯	◯	◯	◯

Online Advocacy Methods: Campaign Strategy in the Internet Age

7. Closing questions

These questions focus on the overall role of Internet advocacy tools in relation to the outcome of your election. Please be sure to click "Done" when you have finished answering the questions on this page.

*1. Were you victorious in your campaign?

◯ Yes

◯ No

*2. How great of a focus do you intend to place on Internet advocacy methods?

◯ Not applicable

◯ Less focus

◯ Same amount of focus

◯ Greater focus

*3. To what extent do you view Internet advocacy methods as having been beneficial to your campaign?

◯ Not applicable

◯ Not beneficial

◯ Somewhat beneficial

◯ Very beneficial

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