The Media

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Introduction

The media has a large influence on day-to-day life. The citizenry has become dependent upon media sources to inform them of current events and provide information about issues of importance to their daily lives. Media have evolved quite a bit over time and have become incredibly influential in our political system. For instance, American presidents now have the ability to communicate freely with the public and have direct ties to news media. We can continue to expect to see the growth of the media in both the political world and our daily lives.

Question 1: How has the media evolved?

Mass communication to the public first took off in the beginning of the twentieth century with the introduction of broadcasting. Broadcasting is "the electronic transmission of radio and television signals that are intended for general public reception." This form of communication began in the form of radio programs. The first commercial radio station, KDKA, aired on November 2, 1920 and focused attention on the presidential election that year. The station’s success led to the growth of this form of communication and by the end of 1921, eight similar stations were operating in the United States.

Later in the twentieth century, broadcasting through cable news developed. The Cable News Network, now known as CNN, was first broadcast in 1980 and was a medium to provide constant news coverage. With already developed evening television programs, Cable News received harsh criticism. It wasn't until the First Gulf War that the dynamic changed. CNN’s exclusive coverage drew attention from the public and became an acclaimed broadcasting source. The appearance of FOX News along with several other cable news networks provided increasing choices for American viewers.

Since the twentieth century, the media has continued to evolve. People often rely on social media platforms to get their daily news making it much more accessible. Advances in digital technology have made getting news quicker and has provided people with more sources of information. From Myspace, to Facebook, to Twitter, today’s public is able to access news in one click and can communicate with one another regarding the world around them. This has both benefits and pitfalls.

Question 2: How does the media influence politics?

With the increasing reliance on media, the political world has evolved as well. Politicians used to have to rely on scheduled television broadcasting or newspaper articles to release in order to
spread their message to the public. Today, they can speak with the public almost instantly and anywhere through the use of social media. A recent study shows that 18% of adults in 2020 got their political news from social media, and 60% of young people use social media to understand political news. Generation Z is especially known for going to social media to get their information. This can be very beneficial, as it is easily accessible. However, it is important to be cautious and skeptical about the information one reads on social media. This is particularly true given the role of big data, algorithms, and the curation of information.

The three most recent United States presidents have taken advantage of the simplicity and accessibility of social media. Barack Obama was the first president to use social media during his campaign and he developed a large Facebook following. Donald Trump is likely the most well-known president when it comes to his social media use. He was very active on Twitter throughout his campaign and continued to use it throughout his term as president to stay engaged. Now, although not as prominent as Trump’s usage, we can see President Joe Biden using social media to communicate with the public.

**Question 3: What role should we expect the media to play in the future?**

The media is constantly changing and evolving. It can be hard to predict how the media will impact our future, but we are certain that it will continue to play a pivotal role in politics. In the future we can expect for elected officials to become even more present on social media outlets. This will be an important tool in future campaigns because many Americans are easily reachable through social media. The use of social media could also allow third party candidates to gain more traction in elections. Since candidates can have a direct line of communication, we can expect that third party or minority party candidates will turn to this form of communication.

The expansion of the media influencing policy could be a good or bad thing. Sixty-one percent of technology innovators, business and policy leaders, and researchers believe that in the future digital spaces will change to significantly serve the public good. There are many issues that will need to be overcome (e.g., misinformation and toxic discourse) for social media to become a sustainable source of political news. Some are hopeful that in the future there will be a way to resolve these things, yet others believe that they will only get worse over time.

**Conclusion**

The media has the ability to communicate information to mass amounts of people quickly. Americans are living in the digital age, where we are able to obtain information with the click of a button. This flood of information from the media can be beneficial to the betterment of society, but it also has its downsides. In the past couple years a lot of misinformation has been spread throughout social media platforms, but a majority of people are still getting information from these platforms. It is crucial that our society learns to use social media in a way to help people gain credible information and connect with each other. As we have seen, social media can be a great way for politicians to reach citizens. Using and controlling the media is a tricky process that will only get more difficult as time goes on.