



THE ROLE OF THE US MEDIA IN THE POLITICAL TRAJECTORY OF THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE DONALD TRUMP IN 2016: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Ali Ghafil Harby

The Iraqy Minsitry of Education/ Al-Qadisiyah Education Directorate
Email Correspondence: gahfielali@gmail.com

Abstract

The US media significantly shaped Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign, impacting his political trajectory in multiple ways. Heavy mainstream media coverage, especially in the early months of the primary season, amplified Trump's visibility and success. Often framing his campaign as a sensational spectacle rather than focusing on policies or qualifications, the media allowed him to dominate the narrative and appeal to his supporters. Trump also leveraged social media, particularly Twitter, to bypass traditional media and communicate directly with the public, controlling his message. The media's focus on his controversial statements and actions generated further attention, solidifying his anti-establishment image and enhancing his visibility.

Keywords: *Digital Learning Media, Curriculum Merdeka*

INTRODUCTION

The 2016 US presidential election was a watershed moment in American politics, marked by the unexpected rise of Donald J. Trump. Throughout his campaign, the role of the media cannot be underestimated. This essay explores the influential role that the US media played in shaping the political trajectory of Donald Trump as a presidential candidate in 2016. From the onset, Donald Trump's controversial statements and unapologetic style garnered significant media attention. The media outlets, both traditional and digital, found Trump's comments and actions newsworthy, leading to an unprecedented amount of media coverage. The media's inclination towards sensationalism contributed to the constant coverage, which not only elevated Trump's political standing but also increased his public recognition (Atkin, 2015).

Donald Trump masterfully utilized the media landscape to his advantage, capitalizing on the constant media coverage he received. Unlike other candidates who relied on paid advertisement, Trump received an extraordinary amount of free airtime,



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The Role...

estimated to be worth billions of dollars. The media spectacle he created cultivated an image of an outsider, a disruptor determined to challenge the political establishment.

The media played a significant role in amplifying Trump's message. The constant coverage helped disseminate his message and mobilize his supporters. Trump's ability to bypass traditional media gatekeepers through his Twitter account allowed him to directly communicate with his followers, amplifying his messaging and engaging supporters in a unique and unprecedented manner (Atkin : 2015).

While journalistic ethics call for fair and balanced reporting, the pursuit of ratings often veers media content towards sensationalism. In the case of Trump, his controversial statements and unpredictable behavior served as clickbait, drawing viewers and readership. This symbiotic relationship between the media's profit-driven motives and Trump's headline-grabbing persona further propelled his political trajectory.

Social media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook, provided Trump with a direct line of communication to his supporters and the wider public. Trump's team recognized the potential of these platforms as political tools and utilized them effectively. His tweets, often provocative and attention-grabbing, became headline news and brought further attention to his campaign (Burneko : 2016).

The media's incessant coverage of Trump contributed to the shaping of public opinion. By constantly staying in the spotlight, Trump's demeanor and views became more normalized, influencing voter perceptions and preferences. The media's dominant narrative often focused on Trump's unconventional style, highlighting divisions and controversies, which furthered his appeal to his base.

Despite the media playing a significant role in elevating Trump's political trajectory, there were accusations that the media failed to scrutinize his policies and qualifications thoroughly. Critics argue that the lack of rigorous examination led to a skewed portrayal of Trump as a viable candidate, ultimately shaping public opinion. The role of the US media in the political trajectory of Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election was undeniably substantial. From generating massive media attention, providing free coverage, and amplifying his message, to shaping public opinion, the media played a vital role in catapulting Trump's campaign. However, it is essential to examine the relationship between the media's profit-driven motives, the public's craving for sensationalism, and the rise of a political outsider when assessing the broader implications

Ali...

of media's impact on the democratic process(Burneko : 2016). Our project seeks to find out some answers to these questions, and perhaps more, thus uncovering an answer to the question of whether media and politics work together during an American presidential campaign. This is, in our view, a timely subject nowadays, when information is available to everyone, everywhere. The controversial nature of Donald Trump serves as a challenge for us as researchers, since controversy creates a variety of opinions regarding this topic. Also, we must state that our role in researching this topic strictly has to do with collecting and analyzing opinions in regard to the discourse of Donald Trump from various media sources, not expressing our own views on Donald Trump or his political or otherwise convictions(Nyan: 2016). The interpretations contained within our research only represent our views on what the views of various media sources are in regard to the political campaign of Donald Trump, and are not meant to be read as laudatory or critical towards Trump and his political views and strategies. We aim to offer an objective, if non-exhaustive view of how Trump and his campaign have been perceived by the American media since he announced his run for President (Gallacher, J., Kaminska, M., Kollanyi, B., Yasseri, T. & Howard, P. N. Social Media and News Sources during the 2017 UK General Election). What is the overall impact and perception of the media in regard to Donald Trump and his political campaign for the presidency of the United States of America?

RESEARCH METHOD

When researching Donald Trump, the word “ media” is of a crucial importance, since Donald Trump is, first and foremost, a media personality. As such, all of our analysis of Donald Trump and his campaign is grounded in sources found in the media. A public, vocal and controversial personality such as that of Donald Trump generates a great deal of media coverage, from a great deal of perspectives, which may complement or contradict one another. According to the design of our proposal, we select "case study" on how the US media deal with Donald Trump Campaign. Consequently, we have adopted these methods of data collection such as: YouTube "short clip videos" and some articles on the website. We have chosen the critical discourse analysis method (CDA) because our proposal focuses on the influence of media on the public concerning the campaign of the US Republican candidate "Donald Trump". Moreover, we would like to clarify how the public are influenced by the media in terms of the tendentiousness or bias and how the media have interpreted Donald Trump's Language, which is supposed to

The Role...

make a big impact on the public. The most important use of CDA is to assist us understand the structure of the internal discourse for the US Republican candidate Donald Trump. CDA is assisting us on how to comprehend Trump's speech in terms of Media and the influencing factors as well as the components of speech production. Whereas it is addressed in a way or another to the society. In addition, CDA aims to deconstruct the media and know more what is behind the text from assumptions and concepts. By following CDA, it is an attempt to see deeply how the media portray for the public Donald Trump's campaign in 2016. The sources we have selected offer, in our view, a great deal of insight into the mindset of Donald Trump and his political agenda, ranging from the neutral to the virulently contrary towards the Republican candidate and his political beliefs. We sought to select various sources in order to exercise a spirit of democracy and convey a certain sense of objectivity and lack of bias. While some of the sources can certainly be thought of as biased, our interpretation of them strives to remain as objective as possible, as our goal is that of simply researching the inner workings of a Republican electoral campaign. As stated before, the controversial nature of the candidate is meant to provide a challenge for us as researchers, stimulating us to maintain our objectivity and see beyond the controversy, thus uncovering its reasons at least partially. All of our sources are Internet articles, as they were the most accessible information sources for us. One is an article titled What Do Language Experts Find So Strange About Donald Trump, written by Emily Atkin, and published on the website thinkprogress.com, an article which analyzes the discourse of Trump from a linguistic point of view with the help of several sources in the field of language. Another one is a video titled How Donald Trump Answers a Question, which analyzes a talk-show segment of Donald Trump and Jimmy Kimmel discussing a question asked by the host of the talk-show to Donald Trump, and the answer that Trump gives, also from the point of view of linguistics. The third source is an article titled Did The Media Create Donald Trump? by Albert Burneko, published on the website deadspin.com. This article is a virulent criticism of Trump, denying the role of the media in the creation of his image, and accusing him of using the media to perpetuate that image. As stated before, the name of Donald Trump is one that generates various reactions from various individuals, and our aim with this research project is to provide insight into these reactions and their possible meaning for Trump and his political career, keeping in mind that objectivity is our first and foremost concern in this research

Ali...

project, in spite of, or maybe even due to its controversial and polarizing nature. Controversy has always been fascinating, and we hope to uncover at least some of the reasons for which a figure such as that of Donald Trump fascinates experts from all sorts of fields, from political journalism to linguistics. It is our aim to find out how and why figures such as Donald Trump generate so much informational content in our society, and all our research is motivated as such. The undeniable power of information seems to be growing more and more as society advances, and the world needs to be informed in an objective and thorough manner in regard to its current events. We aim to contribute to this information as much and as good as we can, however problematic our subject matter might be. We have decided to use document analysis as a research method for this very reason: it is probably the least problematic approach to such a controversial case as that of Donald Trump, who, as stated earlier means very different things for very different people, and is apparently omnipresent in the media nowadays. We are aware that our research thus becomes an interpretation of interpretations of the meaning of the discourse of Donald Trump, and as such, our aim to be as objective as possible finds further motivation. We are not here to question Trump or those who question him in our sources. We are here to raise questions about the manner in which Trump is perceived, and this is all that we aim to do. Whether we are partially or completely successful remains with those who read and interpret our research. We have strived for validity and accessibility in the selection of our sources, in all senses.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The involvement of Donald Trump in politics is fairly recent, which is a rather surprising thing to remark, given the number and variety of reactions that this involvement has generated over the course of just a few months. In researching this topic, we consulted numerous sources of information about Trump and his proposed political objectives. Of these sources, three were most helpful in our attempt to analyze the political discourse of Donald Trump.

The first is an article titled *What Do Language Experts Find So Strange About Donald Trump?*, published on the website thinkprogress.com, and written by Emily Atkin. This article analyzes the manner in which the discourse of Donald Trump comes across from a linguistic and meta-linguistic point of view, by comparing the manner in

The Role...

which Trump uses words and non-verbal elements to those of current president Barack Obama and fellow candidate Jeb Bush. The second source is a YouTube video of Trump answering a question, (simply titled How Donald Trump Answers a Question) regarding religious discrimination posed by Jimmy Fallon in relation to the proposal of Trump to temporarily ban Muslims from entering the United States, also from the point of view of linguistics. The third source is an article by Albert Burneko, titled Did The Media Create Donald Trump, which is very critical of the presidential candidate and his political experience, accusing him of using the media to rise to a popularity he has no actual credit for. We have used neutral to negative sources to highlight the aforementioned controversial nature of Donald Trump, a nature which overtly pro-Trump sources would not have been as helpful in revealing. We are fully aware that such a choice may be regarded as lacking in objectivity, but we made it with the aforementioned aspect of controversy in mind, which is a recurring theme in our research. Paraphrasing Trump himself, we intend to go to the root of the controversy which has been associated with his name in the media, and seems to accompany him on the road towards political prominence. Trump is a paradoxical figure, lacking in political experience in and of itself, but it is his notoriety as a media figure that keeps the media, and implicitly, the audience, interested in his words and actions. To state that Donald Trump is a public figure is quite an understatement, and it is this very public dimension of the Republican candidate that works as a proverbial double-edged sword. Our sources are meant to reflect this contrast between publicity and controversy that has characterized Trump from his days as a reality television icon to his current run for presidency, becoming synonymous with his name. The overarching purpose of our research is that of providing readers with a sort of meta-narrative about power, without necessarily using the techniques that are typical for narratives, for stories. Our project, in its essence, seeks the story of how others perceive the stories spun around a man with a storied career as a public personality. It aims to examine the manner in which an image works in relation with the concepts of power and influence, raising essential questions about the relationship between the two, questions which are ultimately relevant to each and every citizen of a free, open-minded and democratic world, which should ideally be grounded upon sharing accurate, objective information about anything in general, and about those who wish to become influential in politics. We aim to reveal why the relationship between power and public image

Ali...

concerns everyone, and we believe using a person who is highly controversial and polarizing in our attempt to reveal this is the most effective way of doing so. Trump is what Americans like to call a „ wild card” . No one seems to know exactly whether he has any real chances to become President, but the idea of analyzing the factors that lead to his belief in those chances sounds intriguing to analysts from various fields, more or less related to that of politics. Donald Trump stands, in our view, as evidence that politics should concern all of us, and we hope to show why we believe this to be true, with the highest degree of objectivity that is possible.

Preliminary Findings

The main factor that motivated our choice of Donald Trump and his political campaign as the subject of this research proposal is the contrast between the relatively recent news that he was running for president and the sheer amount of reactions, and therefore, information, that this news caused throughout the entire American and worldwide media. Our world is under the very powerful influence of what is known as “ celebrity culture” , and Donald Trump, as a reality television icon, is a prime example of this. This makes it clear that whenever his name is mentioned, immediate and clearly expressed reactions are sure to follow. He has never shied away from the public eye, and has always made sure every single gesture that he makes is seen by as many people as possible. As such, the fact that his run for presidency would cause reactions on a global scale was quite obvious, and the number of sources and angles from which information regarding Donald Trump and his political undertaking can be analyzed was clearly expected to grow exponentially over a very short period of time. As such, we were confronted, as researchers, with a dilemma: out of all the sources that discuss this very controversial personality, how were we supposed to know what to choose in order to “ do justice” to our research topic, so to say? Ultimately, we chose texts that present Donald Trump and his presidential campaign from points of view that are both intriguing and accessible to a wide audience, in the spirit of the man himself.

Thus, we chose an article titled What Language Experts Find So Strange about Donald Trump, written by Emily Atkin and published on the website thinkprogress.org, which analyzes Trump and his discourse from a linguistic and metalinguistic point of view, by comparing his manner of speech and his gestures to those of the current president Obama and fellow candidate Jeb Bush, with very interesting results that indicate the fact

The Role...

that the ideas of “less” and “more” are relative, and not what everyone would expect. Another source, the video called How Donald Trump Answers a Question revealed the fact that the Republican candidate has the ability to speak 200 words per minute and maintain himself on the readability level of a fourth-grade student, unlike his fellow candidates Hillary Clinton and Jeb Bush, who are at an eighth-grade level, and Bernie Sanders, who is at the level of a sophomore high-school student. Trump is shown to prefer simple words with a high level of impact (Parkinson : 2016).

Our third source, an article titled Did The Media Create Donald Trump, published on the website deadspin.com and written by Albert Burneko, is very critical in regard to the fact that Donald Trump is running for President of the United States, and answers the question in the title by accusing Trump of using the media to promote himself, and stating that the media only reports what Trump is saying or doing, and is not responsible for the fact that Trump is essentially a fraud with no actual political experience. This article was the most biased against that we found, whereas the other two sources were fairly on the neutral side of things. As we stated before, we only chose sources that highlight the controversy surrounding Donald Trump because our purpose was that of attempting to offer an understanding of said controversy as it is seen by and through the media. We chose the third article because of the contrast of tone between it and the other two sources. We wanted to have a source that steers away from neutrality, for a better reflection of the manner in which one representative of the media reacts to the question whether the media is responsible for the creation of Donald Trump as a political figure. Analyzing sources which deal with the controversies surrounding Donald Trump is also an interesting exercise because it leads people to thinking about the likelihood of the Republican candidate actually winning the presidential “race”, so to say. Trump is an interesting figure to analyze because there is so much about him that can be analyzed from so many different points of view, and our three sources represent the proverbial tip of the iceberg regarding him, given the potential for controversy that he has shown and will undoubtedly continue to show (Parkinson : 2016).

CONCLUSION

The political campaign of Donald Trump as a Republican presidential candidate stands out as one of the most extensively analyzed and commented upon events in American

media history. This prominence stems from Trump's polarizing and controversial presence, which has elicited a wide spectrum of reactions, from neutral observations to intensely negative critiques. This intense scrutiny reflects broader dynamics within American society, particularly the influence of "celebrity culture." Trump's campaign, marked by his unconventional approach and frequent media provocations, highlighted how contemporary American politics can be deeply intertwined with media sensationalism and public fascination with celebrity figures. The extensive media coverage and public discourse surrounding Trump's campaign underscore how celebrity culture shapes and often skews perceptions of political figures, revealing much about the nature of modern political engagement and the interplay between media, public opinion, and political power.

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The Role...

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