Public, but not too public: political campaigns, media, and relationship marketing

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Abstract

Fast and easy access to information via new forms of media has transformed how American election campaigns are conducted. Campaigns have also been affected by the marketing model of relationship marketing, which moves the focus of the seller-buyer connection beyond a one-time purchase to a longer-term set of interactions. In the context of a political campaign, relationship marketing focuses on going beyond just asking for a vote in that election, and instead focuses on presenting the candidate as a person and seeking to develop an ongoing personal relationship between the candidate and potential voters that may continue after the end of the campaign. Media are an important component of relationship marketing in election campaigns because they establish easily accessible communication between candidates and voters.

We examine the impact of media on relationship marketing in a political context by analyzing the 2012 Connecticut Senate campaign of Linda McMahon. McMahon's campaign is a particularly appropriate site for this analysis, because of McMahon's association with World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE): a company which has large amounts of favorable and unfavorable information about it online. Thus, the campaign attempted to present a positive personal image of McMahon while downplaying or recasting the business experience that was her major source of credibility. Our analysis of campaign messages in traditional and social media forms examines how the McMahon campaign attempted to create a relationship between McMahon and potential voters while controlling negative information about McMahon and the WWE.

Introduction

In May 2012, US presidential candidate Mitt Romney gave a speech at a private fundraising dinner. In that speech, he stated that "47 percent of the people…will vote for the president no matter what" and that those voters "believe that they are victims, [and] believe the government has a responsibility to care for them" (Corn, 2012). In earlier campaigns, the absence of media representatives at this event likely would have meant that these remarks would have been communicated only to those present. However, video and audio of Romney's speech were surreptitiously recorded by a hired worker at the event, using the video function of a pocket camera. Parts of the video were posted on YouTube, and then provided to reporters at *Mother Jones* magazine, who posted the complete video and transcribed audio on the magazine's website. Romney's supposedly private "47 percent" remarks were then widely distributed through print, broadcast, and social media, and were identified by many commentators as a major factor in his losing the presidential election (Blake, 2012).

This example illustrates how, in political campaigns, the boundaries between "private" and "public" information are now more blurred than ever before, because of changes in media technology. In the past, "private" information about candidates was usually shared informally and on a limited basis. For example, when John F. Kennedy was president, many print and broadcast media reporters were well aware of his numerous extramarital affairs (Flanagan, 2012), but chose not to write about that part of his life. Now, however, a wide range of media tools can easily be used by nearly anyone to create or capture information in multiple forms – a situation that is complemented by the ability of any user to quickly and widely distribute information through multiple media channels. These new network effects create great opportunities for political candidates, since they can exploit these tools and channels to disseminate their campaign messages much more widely than ever would have been possible before. Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign has been repeatedly cited as an example of how new forms of media can be effectively deployed to engage voters (Cogburn & Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011; Towner & Dulio, 2012). However, this situation also poses significant political challenges, since opponents or detractors can also use those same media tools and channels to disseminate contradictory information equally widely and quickly.

Additionally, in the past, voters were more passive recipients of information from traditional media outlets - information which candidates and campaigns attempted to control. Now, voters with access to the Internet or to other forms of social media can easily locate a wide range of "private" and "public" information about politicians. The power of this ability to search was demonstrated in February 2011, when a woman informed the Gawker website that married New York congressman Chris Lee had responded to her "women seeking men" personal ad on Craigslist, and emailed her shirtless photographs of himself (Fahrenthold & Blake, 2011). The

story and photos were posted on Gawker and then disseminated across a wide range of media, both social and traditional, and eventually Lee resigned.

In previous research (McQuarrie & Neilson, 2011), we have examined the interaction of social media and political campaigns by analyzing "Stand Up for WWE", a fan mobilization campaign using social media that took place during the 2010 election cycle. This campaign, initiated by World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE), attempted to motivate wrestling fans to respond to perceived inaccuracies in media coverage of WWE. The campaign was conducted while Linda McMahon, WWE's former Chief Executive Officer, and the wife of current CEO Vince McMahon, was the Republican candidate for Connecticut Senator. Although McMahon lost in 2010, she ran again in 2012, in a campaign that showed marked differences from her 2010 campaign.

Linda McMahon's 2012 campaign provides a particularly rich example within which to explore the political boundaries of "private" and "public" information, and the influence of media on those boundaries in a relationship marketing context. As a candidate, McMahon faces a paradox in that her business experience and her public persona are inexorably linked with WWE: an organization that is often perceived negatively because of its own actions and because of its dominance of the professional wrestling industry, which is also generally perceived negatively (Raney, 2004). We use a relationship marketing framework to analyze the use of media in McMahon's 2012 campaign. We contend that relationship marketing is a particularly useful framework for analyzing issues of "public" and "private" information because of its focus on creating an ongoing and personalized relationship with a potential consumer or voter. Establishing this relationship in a political context requires circulating information about the candidate that formerly might have been considered "private", or creating and sharing "public" information that gives the illusion of more personal insights about the candidate.

Politics, Relationship Marketing, and Media

While some authors insist that political marketing differs from product or service marketing in important ways (Baines and Lynch, 2005), the applicability of basic marketing strategy principles to political campaigns seems to be well accepted (Cwalina, Falkowski & Newman, 2011; O'Cass, 1996; Reid, 1988). Also, some political marketing research has advanced the idea of applying relationship marketing practices to political campaigns (e.g. Henneberg and O'Shaughnessy, 2009). Relationship marketing, according to the American Marketing Association (AMA), is "marketing with the conscious aim to develop and manage long-term and/or trusting relationships with customers, distributors, suppliers, or other parties in the marketing environment" (AMA, 2013). Focusing on mutually satisfying exchanges over the long term shifts marketers' attention away from customer acquisition and away from one-off sales for the sake of short-term profit. A relationship perspective focuses on customer retention,

trust and commitment-building, with the expectation that consumers will remain loyal, continue to purchase, and recommend the firm to others. The 'product' in a relationship-based transaction is considered to contain elements of both process and outcome, and the customer is conceptualized as a co-creator or active participant in the process of creating value (Johansen, 2005).

The relationship marketing paradigm can be applied to politics at multiple levels. Some authors (e.g. Bannon, 2005) argue that relationships are an important asset for any organization, and that therefore political parties need to focus on long-term strategies of developing and nurturing relationships with voters. Others suggest that maintaining ongoing relationships with voters benefits individual candidates (Williams, Ayleworth and Chapman, 2002), and that the relationship marketing paradigm also describes the efforts of political lobbyists (Harris, 2002; Harris and McGrath, 2012). Adopting a relationship marketing approach to an election campaign, with the candidate as the campaign's focal point (De Landtsheer, De Vries & Vertessen, 2000), would mean that the candidate would be present in and interacting with the market, and that information would flow not only out to potential voters but also back into the organization, as the candidate and campaign workers interact with voters (Johansen, 2005). With consistently decreasing voter turnouts and declines in political party memberships (Baines & Lynch, 2005), relationship marketing at the one-on-one, candidate-to-voter level might hold some promise of reversing this so-called 'crisis in democracy' (Johansen, 2005).

Social media can also be part of a political campaign built around the relationship marketing paradigm. Williams and colleagues (2002, p. 43) argue that the interactive nature of the Internet and related technologies facilitates "true relationship marketing, wherein marketers and consumers are able to maintain ongoing interaction to their mutual benefit." Garcia-Castañon and colleagues (2011, p. 118) contend that "the ability of voters to inject their views, voices, and values into the campaign environment has changed the ways campaigns mold and control their communication strategies." The decline of some social media forms (e.g., MySpace, FourSquare, Second Life) and the emergence of others (e.g., Pinterest) suggests that social media efforts within relationship marketing need to evolve as the forms of social media also evolve. However, regardless of what media are used, Towner and Dulio (2012, p. 96) argue that the communication goals of a campaign remain the same: "contacting voters, communicating with them, trying to persuade them to vote a certain way, and getting those voters to the polls." Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign has been identified as a 'watershed moment' that provided critical proof of the value of social media in a political campaign to fundraise, educate, communicate with, organize and mobilize voters (Garcia-Castañon, Rank & Barreto, 2011; Towner & Dulio, 2012).

Adopting a relationship marketing framework, Williams, Aylesworth and Chapman (2002), performed a content analysis of Senate candidates' websites during the 2000 US election. They found that while many sites included features promoting relationship building (collecting email addresses, allowing visitors to sign up for e-newsletters or to volunteer) very few

incorporated truly interactive features like live chats, and more than three-quarters of candidates' websites failed to include a privacy policy. These are particularly interesting findings in light of the results of a survey conducted by the Pew Research Centre in October 2012, which found that 66% of social media users (or 39% of all American adults) had performed at least one of eight civic or political activities using social media. Activities covered by the survey included: using the 'like' feature to promote material related to political or social issues; encouraging people to vote; posting their own thoughts on issues; reposting content; encouraging others to take action on issues; posting links to political stories or articles; belonging to a SNS involved in political or social issues; and following electoral candidates (Pew Research Centre, 2012c).

Background to the 2012 McMahon Campaign

In 2010, Linda McMahon ran for election to the position of Connecticut senator in the US Senate. She lost, despite spending $50 million US of her own money on the campaign (Keating, 2010). Nevertheless, she decided to run in the election for the same position in 2012, after another Connecticut seat in the US Senate became vacant with the retirement of Senator Joe Lieberman.

After losing the 2010 election, McMahon ran television ads and made public appearances in which she suggested that she wanted to serve in public office to "give back" (Lomuscio, 2011). Some commentators suggested that McMahon was being encouraged to run again by campaign consultants whose only interest was in being paid from some of her apparently unlimited personal funds (Hladky, 2012). However, it was apparent from McMahon's 2012 Connecticut Republican primary campaign that she and her advisers had learned some lessons from her previous loss. Campaign polls in 2010 indicated that women voters did not respond positively to McMahon, so her 2012 campaign materials de-emphasized her business executive experience, and instead emphasized more strongly her and WWE's financial struggles, her small-town upbringing, and her role as a mother (De Avila, 2012). After investing $12 million US in her primary campaign, compared to her opponent's $1.2 million US (De Avila, 2012), McMahon won the primary election in August 2012 (Grynbaum, 2012) and was named the Republican candidate for the vacant Senate seat for Connecticut.

The 2012 Campaign: Using Traditional Media

Because of WWE's innovative media strategies (Puopolo, 2011) and its considerable online presence - both through its own activities and through dissemination of information about it by fans and detractors – there is a large range of information available about McMahon and WWE, and not all of it is positive.

From reviewing the McMahon campaign's official 2012 video advertisements, which were broadcast on Connecticut television and posted on the campaign's YouTube channel, it is apparent that the campaign made a conscious decision to downplay McMahon's association with WWE. The 2010 campaign ads directly addressed her involvement in WWE– for example, showing two women dismissing professional wrestling as "soap opera" and describing McMahon as "taming" the wrestling industry (McMahon, 2010a), and even incorporating footage of McMahon in the WWE ring (McMahon, 2010b). In her 2012 ads, WWE was only referred to as an "entertainment company" (McMahon, 2012a) and "[creator] of jobs in Connecticut" (McMahon, 2012b). The 2012 campaign ads also continued with the 2010 campaign theme of McMahon's lack of political experience as an asset rather than a liability, since she was not a "lawyer or a career politician" (McMahon, 2012c). The criticisms of McMahon's personally funding most of her 2010 campaign were addressed by her statements that she spent the money to "give back…as a grandmother" and that doing so proved that she "could not be bought" by "special interests" (McMahon, 2012e). However, likely in response to criticisms during the 2010 campaign that McMahon was "out of touch" with ordinary people (Becker, 2010), the 2012 campaign also emphasized more "private" dimensions of McMahon's life. Her televised ads emphasized that she is a grandmother (McMahon, 2012c) and characterized her as "like your next door neighbor, someone you could have a cup of coffee with…she doesn't put on airs" (McMahon, 2012d). These messages are all consistent with a framework of relationship marketing.

The 2012 McMahon campaign ran ads more than 2,000 times on Connecticut broadcast and national cable channels (O'Leary, 2012), and the Pew Research Center indicates that more than half of voters in the 2012 US election watched election videos online (Pew Research Center, 2012a). However, it is worth noting that McMahon's YouTube channel for her 2010 election campaign had 1,017 subscribers and recorded 967,226 views of 75 uploaded videos, but her channel for the 2012 election campaign had only 168 subscribers and 1,100,659 views of 62 uploaded videos – so while there was definitely a change of messaging between 2010 and 2012, it is difficult to ascertain how many voters those messages reached, or what impact they had on voting choices.

However, there were other actions outside the campaign apparently also designed to distance McMahon's public persona even further from WWE, yet still using WWE to build support for issues relevant to her campaign. In September 2012, WWE announced, via an email to media, that it was removing "dated and edgier footage" of WWE shows from YouTube and other online services (Christofferson, 2012). It stated that the footage was not consistent with its "current family-friendly brand of entertainment" and that some of the footage had been "misused in political contexts" (Christofferson, 2012). WWE spokespersons denied that the company's action was related to McMahon's campaign; one said "the campaign doesn't make decisions for WWE", and another asserted that coordination between WWE and the McMahon campaign would violate Federal Election Commission regulations (Altimari, 2012).

Two days after WWE's announcement about removing online videos, the company announced a partnership with the Susan G. Komen Foundation to "honor…breast cancer awareness month" and to conduct an initiative called "Rise above Cancer" (WWE, 2012). The press release announcing this initiative stated that "approximately five million women - more female viewers than the top rated shows on women's networks - watch WWE's weekly programming" (WWE, 2012a) and indicated that, in addition to using WWE's "assets" to encourage awareness and involvement, the initiative would sell specially-branded WWE merchandise, with 30% of proceeds being donated to the Komen Foundation (WWE, 2012a). News and events involving the initiative were regularly featured on *Monday Night Raw* and *Smackdown*, WWE's two major weekly television broadcasts.

 "Rise above Cancer" was associated with a single WWE wrestler, John Cena, who, according to WWE, was chosen as the initiative's representative because of his large number of female fans and because of his own family's experience with cancer (Barrasso, 2012). WWE created and ran a number of web video ads featuring Cena and the slogan "five million women watch WWE", and also promoting WWE's anti-bullying campaign (Dixon, 2012).

Although the "Rise above Cancer" initiative was positioned as focusing on motivating WWE fans to join the struggle against breast cancer, the opportunities presented for them to do so - beyond buying "Rise above Cancer" merchandise - were limited. Fans were encouraged through online and television advertisements to participate in Komen's Run for the Cure fundraising races, but according to the Komen website, only $150 was raised by WWE-affiliated participants in these races (Susan G. Komen, 2012).

WWE denied that the "Rise above Cancer" initiative was related to McMahon's candidacy. However, there were clearly common themes between the McMahon campaign and the "Rise above Cancer" campaign – the emphasis on WWE's female audience, and the focus on a health issue primarily of concern to women. The theme of "five million women watch WWE" was consistently mentioned in association with "Rise above Cancer", which seemed somewhat at odds with the purposes of the campaign; it is reasonable to assume that breast cancer would be perceived as a "women's issue", but the specific number of female WWE viewers seemed irrelevant to the overall theme of the campaign. Nevertheless, WWE issued an online video by that title and featuring Cena - in which, in addition to mentioning the "five million women" figure, he also oddly noted that WWE was a "Connecticut-based company".

Although the Komen website listed December 31, 2012, as the end date of the "Rise above Cancer" initiative, the last time the initiative was mentioned on WWE television programming was on the Oct. 29, 2012 *Monday Night Raw* television broadcast – one week before the US elections on November 6. On that show, Cena announced that 100%, rather than 30%, of the revenues from "Rise above Cancer" merchandise would be donated to the Komen Foundation, and presented a $1 million US cheque to Komen officials (WWE, 2012b). WWE claimed that during the initiative, "WWE generated an astounding 500 million impressions for

Susan G. Komen, including more than 300 million impressions during TV broadcasts in the U.S. and 200 million global digital impressions" (WWE, 2012b). WWE did not specify what it meant by "impressions", but it also emphasized that its involvement with breast cancer fundraising would continue "with additional plans for the partnership being made around Mother's Day and beyond" (WWE, 2012b). However, Mother's Day 2013 is May 12, and as of mid-April 2013, neither WWE or Komen appear to have announced any joint initiatives related to that date.

The 2012 Campaign: Using Social Media

The McMahon campaign launched a "Women for Linda" social media-based integrated network, with its own Facebook page and Pinterest site (Applebome, 2012a), to improve McMahon's appeal to women voters. A McMahon campaign official claimed that "Women for Linda" had nearly 4,000 members (McShane, 2012).

The visual image of McMahon that was presented through these media was clearly designed to portray her not as an elitist businesswoman, but as an accessible and friendly person who was suitable to hold political office. Rosenberg, Kahn, Tran & Le (1991) and De Landtsheer, De Vries, & Vertessen (2000) have identified components of a female candidate's image that influence voters to see her as 'politically suitable'. In an American context, Rosenberg and colleagues (1991, p. 357) identified factors such as bright and visible eyes, thinner eyebrows, thinner lips, short hair, smiles, a formal white blouse or suit jacket and blouse, and simple jewelry. De Landtsheer et al (2000) added to this list: light make-up (versus no or heavy make-up), light colored clothing, a combination of light/dark colours in jackets and blouses, and facial skin with few irregularities and light wrinkles. It is interesting to note that in many of the images and videos available through the campaign's social media sites, McMahon wears pink, purple, dark peach, beige and other 'feminine' colours instead of a traditional black or navy blue business suit. She usually wears some well-applied make-up and coordinated, although not ostentatious, jewelry. However, in some photos (especially those on the home page of her campaign's website) McMahon appears in more casual dress.

Although none of the images reviewed during this research could be called 'private' in the sense that they were taken in private moments at home, there were quite a few that appeared to have been taken in campaign offices or campaign tour stops – moments that might be considered less formal than posing for a campaign poster. In these images, McMahon is seen in less formal clothing, perhaps signaling her positioning as 'a friend you can talk to.' Since social media in general tends to be less formal, its effects on political image-making and efforts at impression management may be at odds with the traditional advice.

In looking at specific examples of social media usage by the McMahon campaign, we first examined the campaign's site on Pinterest. Pinterest is "a virtual bulletin board containing images and links that a user finds interesting or inspiring" (Laird, 2012). It is the digital

equivalent of the scrapbook, where members "pin" images on "boards" organized by theme. It is one of the fastest growing social media sites. An August 2012 survey conducted by the Pew Research Center reported that 12% of online adults said they used Pinterest, with almost a fifth of online women (19%) saying they used Pinterest (Pew Research Center, 2012b, p.2). With women comprising over 60% of Pinterest members (Jacques, 2012), the McMahon campaign's use of Pinterest aligned with the campaign's focus on winning over female voters.

Since Pinterest is still relatively new, many businesses are still trying to figure out how to use it to best advantage. McMahon's Pinterest site included photographs of her with her grandchildren, strengthening her positioning as a mother and grandmother - but although her daughter appeared in at least two of the images on the "Family" board, she was not identified, and her granddaughters' faces were never fully shown. Some of the pins also seemed very contrived. For example, on the "Recipes" board, the comments did not say that her family members like the cookies, but that they *probably* would like them. The same holds true with the pins on the "Health & Fitness" board, which obviously are not from McMahon's own workout routine. This makes the pins and accompanying comments seem not to be genuine, and that any campaign staffer could have pinned them. There also was not much activity on the site in terms of the number of pins or repins (other members "pinning" an image from the board to their personal boards).

The content of the site was also somewhat strange in the way the pins attempted to appeal across political divides. Eight images on the "GOP" section of the board showed support for the Republican party, whereas five images on the "online" section of the board represented "women for Linda", "veterans for Linda", "students for Linda", "Independents for Linda", and "Democrats for Linda". As of early February, 2013, McMahon's Pinterest site had 119 followers and 51 pins, with only a few repins and likes. None of the "online" images suitable for repinning by followers had been repinned. (McMahon's opponent, Chris Murphy, does not appear to have engaged with Pinterest as part of his campaign.)

In the weeks leading up to the election, McMahon's Facebook site was very busy, with multiple posts every day. Many of the posts immediately preceding the day of the election took the form of public service announcements related to Hurricane Sandy. But the site was also quite active with posts of campaign messages and photographs of supporters, and all of the posts received some support (e.g. "likes" numbering from 100 to over 2,000) from followers. Comments that were posted by staff were noted as such, to distinguish them from comments posted by the candidate.

Interestingly, McMahon and Murphy took different approaches to facilitating interaction on their Facebook site. All of the original posts on McMahon's site were by either the candidate or her staff. Supporters or other voters could comment on items posted on the site, but didn't appear to be able to initiate a new posting. Murphy's Facebook site contained posts by the

candidate as well as by supporters. While both sites contained negative comments about the competition, the negative comments are more evident on Murphy's Facebook site because they appear as original messages. On McMahon's site, users have to click the "comment" button to reveal comments made by others.

Both candidates included images of themselves with supporters and other individuals while campaigning. They also include images of themselves in "quiet moments" with family members (e.g., the caption accompanying an image of McMahon and her granddaughter explained she was taking the day off campaigning to celebrate her granddaughter's birthday). But none of these images could really be considered "private", because they were posted with the candidate's consent. Similarly, anyone posting a comment to either candidate's site was doing so in order to make their support of the candidate publicly known.

Discussion

McMahon's support, as measured by poll numbers, gradually declined throughout the campaign. The last few days of the McMahon campaign were marked by McMahon's attempts to align herself with Barack Obama's presidential campaign, even though she was running as a Republican and he was running as a Democrat. "Obama/McMahon" T-shirts and doorhangers were distributed, as was a sample ballot sheet in which McMahon's party affiliation was listed as "independent" (Bazelon, 2012). McMahon had been named as a Senate candidate by the Independent Party of Connecticut – the state allows candidates to be listed as representing more than one party – but had not emphasized her dual affiliation up to that point. Nevertheless, McMahon was defeated in the November 6 election, receiving 45% of the vote to Christopher Murphy's 57% (Applebome, 2012b). McMahon spent a total of nearly $100 million US of her own money on her two campaigns – the most that any individual has personally invested in campaigning for federal office in the US (Mitchell, 2012).

It is difficult to assess the impact of relationship marketing on the success of the McMahon campaign, in the context of how "public" and "private" information are distributed or controlled through media. McMahon's election loss likely stemmed from many factors other than the campaign's successes or failures in these areas, or from an ineffective distinction between what was "public" and what was "private". Additionally, social media are changing so quickly that it is difficult to assess its impact even over the relatively short time period between US elections. For example, social media studies conducted by Pew Research during the 2008 election focused on Facebook and MySpace, but in 2012 the same studies were focused on Facebook, LinkedIn and Google+.

We instead emphasize a theme that consistently emerged during our investigation: although the McMahon campaign used interactive media in a manner consistent with relationship marketing, there was little actual interaction, and a lack of response to negative interaction.

Highly fragmented media not only offers many ways to reach the electorate but also complicates the task of integrating marketing communications (Baines & Lynch, 2005), and this includes responding to negative communications to re-emphasize the positive themes of a campaign. Williams et al. (2002, p. 53) emphasize that "to fully engage voters' interest at a site, the campaign must allow them to do something"; we contend that for an interactive-based strategy such as relationship marketing to be effective, the campaign must not only allow visitors to do something but must also actively engage with what they do.

When WWE withdrew its online "dated and edgier" videos, many wrestling fans responded with negative comments – on YouTube, on podcasts, and on blogs - suggesting a link between the videos being withdrawn and McMahon's election campaign. These comments condemned the withdrawal as hypocritical, since WWE had shown no inclination to withdraw the videos, some of which had been online for several years, prior to the start of the election campaign. These comments usually also called for a return to WWE's "Attitude" era of "edgier" wrestling storylines. However, some commentators also advanced the opinion that the move had more to do with WWE's desire to be perceived as more family-friendly so as to attract sponsors for its televised wrestling programming. It is possible that McMahon's campaign was hit by the negative effects of fan disapproval for a strategic action WWE independently chose to take. Nevertheless, since neither WWE or McMahon answered the fan criticism or further explained the motivations for the decision, McMahon's campaign may have been affected simply because of the very public nature of the discussion.

Most of the research concerning the effects of negative online comments has been conducted in a product or service context. For example, a proprietary survey by Convergys Corp. revealed that 62% of people who learned about a bad customer experience via social media intentionally stopped doing business or avoided doing business with the offending company (Harris, 2011). A survey by the same organization conducted in 2009 revealed that a negative review or comment on Twitter, Facebook or YouTube could result in the loss of 30 customers (Shannon, 2009). It could be argued that the McMahon campaign was aware of this tendency since they chose to disable comments on the videos on McMahon's YouTube channel, and make users have to actively search for comments on McMahon's campaign Facebook page. However, these choices also removed much of the possibility for interactivity that is essential to relationship building. Similarly, the majority of McMahon's Pinterest pins are uploads related to her campaign, and not "repins" from other user pages, indicating a somewhat one-way relationship in the use of this medium. Towner & Dulio (2012, p. 102) note that campaigns using social media would need to create enough content to keep each site not only informative but also "fresh"; the McMahon campaign may have accomplished this with its Facebook site, but seemed less successful in doing the same with its Pinterest site.

De Landtsheer and colleagues (2008, p. 218) argue that since the candidate is the focal point of the campaign, the candidate's image as "a distinct and unambiguous profile conveyed to

voters" is of critical importance. The authors argue further that politics has been transformed by the rules of media logic into "perception politics" in which "[s]tyle has become increasingly important, at the expense of content" (p. 219), and that "[p]erception politics encourage voters to form intuitive impressions of political candidates based on certain cues such as language style, appearance characteristics, and nonverbal behavior instead of well-considered opinions based on arguments" (p. 220). Political impression management then must focus not only on the content of verbal messages, such as arguments enunciated during campaign speeches, but also on appearance characteristics, perceived personality traits and nonverbal behavior. The lack of true interactivity and any real participation on the Pinterest site may not have supported McMahon's positioning as a mother/grandmother caring for herself and her family.

Although both McMahon and WWE stated that the WWE "Rise above Cancer" initiative was not related to McMahon's election campaign, the fact that both emphasized themes of interest to women and their simultaneous timing could only lead to perceptions that there was some form of connection between the two. Lack of interactivity was also an issue in this campaign, as indicated by the almost non-existent participation of WWE fans in the Komen fundraising races, despite being encouraged to do so. And while WWE's $1 million US donation to Komen was portrayed as representing revenues from "Rise above Cancer" merchandise sales, it is difficult to know whether some, all, or none of that amount actually came from that source.

This emphasizes an important point in relationship marketing as applied to political campaigns; part of the value of relationship marketing is in establishing an ongoing connection, and whether the 'product' is a consumer good or a political campaign, the relationship cannot be one-way. McMahon's campaign may not have been any better or any worse than other political campaigns in using media, but it demonstrates the inherent pitfalls of presenting a candidate through interactive media yet being reluctant to be truly interactive. This challenges the "public" and "private" dichotomy in that, because of the exchange and distribution of information through media, a candidate using relationship marketing cannot unilaterally determine what information about them is "public" and what is "private". In a relationship marketing context, candidates might be advised not to ignore or suppress negative information, or to challenge "public" or "private" information distributed or communicated inappropriately, but instead to use media interactivity to directly respond to such information and/or to re-emphasize the positive themes in their campaign. McMahon has expressed an interest in running in the 2014 Congressional elections (Gurliacci, 2014); if she does run again, it will be interesting to see whether her relationship marketing strategy evolves or whether her use of media within that strategy will differ.

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