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**Tweets Win Votes: A Persuasive Communication Perspective on Donald
Trump's Twitter Use During the 2016 US Presidential Election Campaign**

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Abstract

Twitter, a microblogging platform, has been increasingly used as a tool for political election campaigns. In an attempt to persuade people to vote for them, candidates and political parties worldwide have begun to incorporate Twitter in their campaigns to disseminate campaign information, promote themselves, and mobilize voters. In the 2016 U.S presidential election, Donald Trump had actively utilized Twitter to promote his campaign and convince voters to support him, which helped him earn a strong presence and huge popularity on Twitter. Eventually Trump even successfully got elected as the 45th US president. Although the rise of Twitter in political campaigns has been studied by researches from different disciplines, there have been very few studies focusing on Donald Trump or his communication performance on social media in the 2016 US presidential campaign. Besides, it is found that there is a lack of studying candidates' social media use from the perspective of persuasive communication. In order to reveal how Donald Trump was making use of Twitter to influence audiences' attitudes, this paper will present a content analysis of Donald Trump's Twitter use from the perspective of persuasive communication. Specifically, the study will investigate the characteristics of messages demonstrated from Donald Trump's tweets, and examine whether his messages placed an emphasis on certain aspects. The aim of this study is to offer insights into Donald Trump's Twitter use, particularly about his persuasive communication on Twitter during the political election campaign.

Keywords: Twitter, Donald Trump, social media, political campaigns, persuasion, persuasive communication

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

On November 8th, the result of the 2016 US presidential election was finally unveiled. Republican Donald Trump defeated Hillary Clinton and won the presidency. As a candidate without any prior political experience, Donald Trump had achieved one of the most improbable political victories in modern American history. It is not an exaggeration to say that Donald Trump was everywhere in 2016. Media had given him a tremendous volume of coverage and people all over the world were talking about him. It is reported that Trump garnered around 5 billion dollars' free media coverage, more than twice that received by his opponent Clinton (Miere, 2016). In addition to dominating traditional media coverage, Trump also took social media as a battlefield to promote his campaign over the election period. He has a strong presence on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and has over 46 million followers accumulated on these platforms. Actually, Donald Trump is not the first candidate to harvest the benefits of social media use in political campaigns. Back in the 2008 U.S presidential election, Barack Obama widely used social media as integral parts of the political campaign to craft his image, communicate and build relationships with voters, which made him eventually succeed in getting into the White House (Conway et al., 2013). Barack Obama's successful use of social media in the U.S presidential campaign denotes that social media have begun to play a significant role in political campaigns (Bimber, 2014). Since then, more politicians worldwide were inspired and have begun to integrate social media into political campaigns for mobilizing voters and promoting themselves.

The rise of social media in political campaigns is based on its advantages in allowing politicians to communicate with citizens directly, and also enabling the public to engage in political issues in a transformative way (Grant et al. 2010). The emergence of social media not only brings a variety of new political communication opportunities, but also helps carry out fundamental tasks of political campaigns, such as fundraising, recruiting volunteers, canvassing voters, etc. (Cogburn & Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011). Among all kinds of social media platforms, Twitter is the one that attains exceptional attention. Twitter is a micro-blogging platform allowing users to post text, pictures and videos. With millions of users worldwide, Twitter has advantages of spreading short messages

swiftly and reaching a large number of audiences. As Twitter has been increasingly applied in political election campaigns, many researchers from different fields have been digging into Twitter's role in political election campaigns from diverse perspectives. Previous studies have mainly addressed issues about the content, usage patterns, functions, interactions, engagement, and effects of Twitter use in political campaigns (Caplan 2013; Jungherr 2014; Vergeer et al., 2013).

As of now, studies about candidates' Twitter use in the context of the latest 2016 US presidential election are still very limited. Since the use of Twitter in election campaigns is changing and evolving continuously, it is necessary to examine the situation of the latest elections. In this study, Twitter use by candidates during election campaigns is a particular interest. Specifically, the paper will focus on one of the most controversial candidates in the 2016 US presidential election, Donald Trump, to investigate his Twitter use in the 2016 US presidential election campaign. The reason for choosing Trump is that he used Twitter frequently during this election campaign. It seems that Twitter is a perfect tool for Trump to attack, brag and disseminate simple messages to engage voters (Kellner, 2016). Besides, Trump used Twitter in a quite unique way that greatly differentiates his style from other candidates. Instead of sending out carefully crafted messages that are advised by professional media consultants, Trump prefers making outrageous speech, attacking people aggressively, and even distorting facts on Twitter (Wells et al., 2016). However, all these controversial behaviors did not prevent Trump from successfully persuading voters to support him, which can be best proved by his improbable election victory. Known as a successful businessman, Trump has accumulated rich experience in influencing others. For example, Trump's strategy for influencing media is well illustrated in his book, *The Art of the Deal*, "The point is that if you are a little different, or a little outrageous, or if you do things that are bold or controversial, the press is going to write about you" (1987, p.56), which is exactly the case he demonstrated in this election campaign. This phenomenon makes people wonder, how could Trump manage to persuade people to vote for him with such an untraditional and controversial communication approach?

Political election campaigning is a process trying to influence voters' attitudes and persuade them to support for a certain candidate or a political party. In the traditional

media era, this persuasion process is mainly achieved through holding rallies, having debates, or running campaign advertisements etc. Nowadays, social media has become a major battlefield of political campaign communication, but it is still the same case concerning the significance of persuasive communication. No matter it is trying to mobilize voters, interact with users, or attack opponents, candidates' final goal in political campaigns is still to persuade the electorate to vote for him or her. Political persuasion is defined as "a process in which communicators try to convince other people to change their attitudes or behavior regarding a political issue through messages, in an atmosphere of free choice" (Perloff, 2003, p.34). It is not an exaggeration to say that persuasion is an integral part of pursuing political power. It is reported that modern candidates have been significantly relying on persuasion techniques to maximize voter support (Newman, 1994, p.10). Therefore, in order to gain a better understanding of Donald Trump's Twitter use, the study will adopt a persuasive communication perspective to examine his Twitter use in the 2016 U.S presidential election campaign.

1.2 Research questions, aims and contributions

As all that said, there are not many up-to-date studies applying a persuasive communication approach to study candidates' social media use in the context of the latest political campaigns. Miller (1980) defined the persuasive communication as "any message that is intended to shape, reinforce, or change the responses of another, or others". Thus, this study will delve into Trump's Twitter use in the 2016 presidential election campaign from the perspective of political persuasion. To make the study more specific, two detailed research questions are formulated as follows:

Q1: What are the characteristics of Donald Trump's messages on Twitter from the perspective of persuasive communication?

Q2: What is the emphasis of Donald Trump's messages on Twitter from the perspective of persuasive communication?

In detail, message characteristics in the Q1 refer to three dimensions identified by Perloff (2003): message structure, message content and message style. The "message emphasis" in the Q2 refers to whether Trump's tweets depended more on message quality to persuade the people or relied more on peripheral cues (mental shortcuts), to

facilitate persuasion (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). To answer the questions, firstly, previous studies of Twitter use by candidates for political campaigns will be reviewed, then a content analysis will be conducted to examine Trump's Twitter usage pattern and his messages on Twitter based on the persuasion theoretical framework. The primary purpose of this thesis is to investigate how Donald Trump used Twitter for persuasive communication during the political campaigns. Specifically, the study aims to explore the characteristics and emphasis of persuasive messages reflected from his tweets. The contribution of this study is fourfold. First, it could add new updated empirical case studies to the field of social media use by candidates in political campaigns. Second, it offers a creative perspective, persuasive communication, to examine the messages candidates delivered on social media for campaigning. Thirdly, the political persuasion techniques identified from Donald Trump's usage could provide guide or experiences for future candidates in terms of making persuasion on Twitter for election campaigning. Lastly, the investigation of Donald Trump's Twitter use may also contribute to a better understanding of his campaign communication approach and provide a possible explanation for his stunning success in the 2016 U.S presidential election.

1.3 Thesis structure

This thesis includes seven chapters. The first chapter starts with the general introduction of the study, which contains the research aims, questions, contributions and also the outline of the thesis.

Chapter 2 offers some background knowledge that is needed for gaining a better understanding of this topic. Specifically, Donald Trump's election campaign, Twitter and Trump's Twitter use history will be briefly introduced.

Chapter 3 is the literature review part that combs through and reviews the previous studies of Twitter use in political campaigns, especially by candidates and in the context of the United States. At the end of the chapter, the research gap of the field is identified.

Chapter 4 presents the theoretical framework of this thesis. It starts with the introduction of the background and development of persuasion. Next, the factors

influencing peoples' attitude change in the process of persuasion will be addressed. Furthermore, the emphasis of Trump's messages will be evaluated based on two concepts, message quality and peripheral cues derived from a classical persuasion model, Elaboration Likelihood Model.

Chapter 5 describes the methodology and the research design applied in this thesis. As the main method of this study, content analysis is introduced. The data collection, samples and analysis of data are explained explicitly. Next, the limitations and ethical considerations are discussed at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 6 provides the analysis based on the data collected from Donald Trump's official account. First, Trump's Twitter use pattern will be presented. Then, the content of tweets will be analyzed based on the theoretical framework addressed before.

Chapter 7 provides the conclusions of the study. In this chapter, the answers to the research questions will be concluded based on the analysis in chapter 6 and the main arguments of the thesis will be presented. In the end, the limitations and the directions of future researches in this field will be discussed.

2. Background

This chapter provides relevant background information that is needed to gain a better understanding of this research. Specifically, it offers a concise introduction to Donald Trump's election campaign journey in the 2016 US presidential election, including the uniqueness or controversies embodied in his campaign. Besides, as this study specifically focuses on the platform Twitter, it is necessary to give a brief introduction to Twitter, including the unique features of this platform and the reasons behind its popularity as a political communication tool. In addition, Donald Trump's history of Twitter use and his attitude to Twitter are briefly addressed as well.

2.1 Donald Trump's campaign in the 2016 US presidential election

Donald Trump has many titles: businessman, billionaire, real estate developer, author, television producer. On Nov 8, 2016, he got a new title: the 45th President of the United States. After announcing his candidacy on June 15, 2015, Donald Trump officially started his presidential campaign with the slogan, "Make America Great Again". During the primary election, Trump travelled around the country to seek support among voters, giving speeches on rallies, having a series of debates within the Republican party and so on. In 2016, there were 17 candidates declaring candidacy on the side of the Republican party, which became the largest presidential primary field in American history (Linshi, 2015). On May 3, 2016, with a decisive victory in Indiana and the withdrawal of his last two competitors, Ted Cruz and John Kasich, Trump became the presumptive nominee of the Republican Party. After the national party conventions held in the summer, Trump was declared as the official nominee for the President. Later in July, Trump chose Mike Pence as his running mate (the candidate for vice president). As the general election process kicked off, the campaign also shifted into high gear. The competitor Trump faced was Hillary Clinton from the Democratic party, the first female presidential nominee of a major party in American history. As a well-known politician, Hillary Clinton has been active in the US political arena for a long time serving as First Lady, Senator, and Secretary of State. Compared with Clinton's rich political experience, Donald Trump participated in the election race as a political outsider without any experience of political office before (Lilleker et al., 2016, p.8). However, despite the distinct disparity between two candidates, the competition between them was very fierce, which even created a significant division among the

electorate. Trump's supporters regard Trump as a populist candidate who truly has the American people's interest at heart and can make America prosperous again with his considerable business experience (Fishwick, 2016). But according to Hillary supporters, Trump is accused of being a narcissist, racist, and sexist who is used to making offensive and outrageous speeches (Khalid, 2016). Nevertheless, the fact is that both candidates were widely disliked, especially when the FBI reopened the investigation on Clinton's email controversy¹ days before the election and Trump's tape scandal was exposed in October.² As a poll showed close to the election day, Clinton's likeability was 41.8 percent, while Trump was even worse, 37.5 percent (ibid.). After months of campaigns, the election was held on November 8, 2016. Before the election, nearly all polls indicated a sustained but narrowing lead for Hillary Clinton (Kirk & Scott, 2016). However, Donald Trump performed surprisingly well in some key swing states, including Florida, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin. Eventually, Trump secured 304 electoral votes, more than the majority of total 538 electoral votes in the Electoral College, which meant he defeated Clinton and became the president-elect of the United States. Trump's unexpected victory shocked the US and also the rest of the world.

The Trump campaign was certainly one of the most unconventional political campaigns in recent American election history, and it turned out his campaign worked effectively, at least from the result level (Zurcher, 2016). The uniqueness of the Trump campaign is not just based on the stunning election result, but more on his controversial image, behaviors and political positions presented during the campaign (ibid.). His atypical campaign behaviors can be represented from constantly offending or even attacking people, such as stating Obama as "the founder of ISIS", Hillary Clinton as "the most corrupt person ever to seek the office of the presidency" (Marcin, 2016). On top of that, Trump's political policies on certain issues are also regarded as untraditional. For example, he proposed building a wall on the border between America and Mexico; he called for "a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering America" (ibid.). Under the circumstances, people are trying to figure out the reasons behind this remarkable

¹ Hillary Clinton's email controversy refers to that during her tenure as United States Secretary of State, she used her family's private email server for official communications, rather than official email accounts from the federal servers. On October 28, 2016, the FBI reopened its investigation on this case.

² Donald Trump's "tape scandal" means that a video recorded Trump having a lewd conversation about women was leaked to the public in October, 2016.

election success. All kinds of explanations from different perspectives were offered: American's anger to the corrupted political system and elites; the climate of fear and anxiety over crime, immigration and terrorism issues; the failure of two major parties, the Democratic party and the Republican party, in selecting better candidates; voters hunger for change; and Trump's expertise in media (Morris, 2016). No matter what the right answer is, Trump's shock win reveals deeper changes in American society. Over the past several decades, American society has undergone significant changes: the slow economic performance, the growing disparity between the rich and poor, the increasing unemployment, and the declining industry due to competitions from countries with cheap labor (McChesney, 2016). On top of this, the corruption of the government means that it can hardly represent the interests of the majority of the American people, and many problems cannot be solved in an efficient and just manner. All of these problems could be factors that favored Trump's victory in the 2016 US presidential election. Thus, Trump's victory is not only based on his extraordinary performance in the election campaign, but also closely related to the current state of America (ibid.).

2.2 Twitter

Founded in 2006, Twitter is a microblogging social broadcast medium, where people can post messages, known as "tweets", in a public online space and also follow and interact with other users. Twitter experienced rapid initial growth, and it has accumulated 313 million monthly active users by 2016 (Twitter, 2016). On average, around 500 million tweets were tweeted per day in 2016 (Sayce, 2016). There are several unique features that distinguish Twitter from other social media platforms. One is the restriction of 140 characters, which means users cannot post texts exceeding 140 characters. This feature makes Twitter very compelling in the instant, short and frequent communication. However, it also brings limitations to Twitter as it is usually difficult to deliver comprehensive information or explain complex issues within only 140 characters. Another unique characteristic of Twitter is its open source. Twitter allows non-reciprocal social relations, meaning that users can access others' feeds freely or also interact with other users even without following them. Anyone can view others' profiles or tweets unless the messages are set to private. The way users participate in communication is mainly by posting information. A tweet could contain texts, hashtags (a word or phrase preceded by a hash sign (#)), embedded pictures or videos, and

hyperlinks to other resources on the internet. As to interactive activities, retweeting, replying or liking others' tweets and mentioning other people are various ways to engage in interactions. According to Java et al. (2007), the main intentions users hold for using Twitter are four types: daily chatter, sharing information, conversations, and reporting news.

As of February 2017, Twitter was ranked as one of the ten most visited websites worldwide by SimilarWeb rank analysis (SimilarWeb, 2017). There are several reasons that might explain the popularity of Twitter among people. The first thing that attracts audiences is the massive amount of content created by millions of users and first-hand information provided by many organizations (Cutler, 2016). Thus, in this sense, Twitter is like a home to never-ending information. Hashtags, trending topics and newsfeed make it easier for audiences to navigate in the sea of information. Moreover, Twitter is not only famous for the huge volume of information on it, but also for the fast spread of real-time updates. Twitter has advantages in disseminating information about the most recent events as they happen. For example, when emergencies or disasters occur, users on the front line can share the latest news or even live tweet the situations. The real-time updates on Twitter could satisfy people's need of acquiring the newest information. Another great thing about Twitter is the easier access for ordinary people to reach prominent figures, such as celebrities, political leaders, artists and so on. Many public figures are present on Twitter, and it becomes possible for ordinary people to communicate with these hard-to-reach people. The direct and interactive communication characteristics give Twitter the reputation of "an authentic personal communication tool" (Trent et al., 2011, p.307).

2.3 Donald Trump on Twitter

Donald Trump joined Twitter in March 2009, taking @realDonaldTrump as his domain name. Although Trump has been present on Twitter for several years, his Twitter was not so influential until his campaign journey started. Before the election campaign, his tweets were mostly about his quotes, family pictures, his appearances on some events, and promotions for the show he produced-*The Apprentice* (BBC News, 2016). At that time, there was also a team that helped him manage his Twitter account, but if the tweets were written originally by Trump himself, there would be a sign of "from Donald

Trump”. Since June 2011, his tweets no longer made a distinction on whether the content was directly from him or was posted by his team (ibid.). According to the search results on Trump Twitter Archive (2017), Trump had total 22,140 tweets and 2.9 million followers before he announced his candidacy. There is a significant shift in his tweeting frequency after the campaign started. In the year of 2016, Trump had an average of 352 tweets per month, and received an increase of followers from 5.5 million to 18.2 million (Twitter analytics, 2017). Besides, Trump chose to make many important announcements first on Twitter, such as introducing his running mate, Mike Pence; hence, it can be seen that Trump attached great importance to Twitter for promoting his campaign. When asked why he used Twitter so intensively, Trump answered, “Twitter does allow me to go around the dishonest media”, “I get very dishonest media, very dishonest press. And it’s my only way that I can counteract” (Hirschhorn, 2017). Trump even directly expressed his love to Twitter in a tweet posted, saying “I love Twitter... it’s like owning your own newspaper--without the losses” (Trump, 2012a). Thus, it came as no surprise that Trump used Twitter heavily during the campaign. Moreover, Trump has the ability to command attention or create buzz with some contentious tweets (Novak, 2016). Trump even tweeted to appreciate people’s praise on his masterful use of Twitter, “Thanks- many are saying I’m the best 140-character writer in the world” (Trump, 2012b). Media also took Trump’s Twitter as an important political news source and gave a great amount of coverage on Trump’s tweets during the campaign, which created a phenomenon of “Trump tweets and the media chases” (Obeidallah, 2016). However, many people have concerns and worries about his Twitter use. It is reported that 69 percent of Americans consider Trump’s frequent Twitter use as a “bad thing” due to a range of security risks, especially after he took the office (Boorstin, 2017). Despite the disapproval of the majority of American people, Trump declared that he would keep using his personal Twitter account as president, as he said: “I’ve got 46 million people right now – that’s a lot, I’d rather just let that build up, it’s working” (Roberts, 2017). At the same time, he would also inherit the account of @POTUS, an official account for the President of the United States (Boorstin, 2017).

3. Literature Review

To better understand Donald Trump's Twitter use, it is important to have an overview of the development of Twitter as a political communication tool based on previous relevant research. In this chapter, the field of Twitter use in political election campaigns will be reviewed with a general-specific pattern. This chapter will start with a comprehensive review on the use of Twitter in politics by politicians, publics and its use in some mediated events. Then, the section will place the focus on candidates' use of Twitter for political campaign communication, including which candidates choose to adopt Twitter, how candidates use it and the effects of their Twitter use. Lastly, the topic will be further narrowed down to studies in the context of the US presidential election campaigns, because this thesis specifically focuses on the case of a presidential candidate in the US presidential election. After a systematic review, the research gap in this field will be identified.

3.1 Twitter use for political communication

Due to the growing use of Twitter in politics by politicians, parties and publics, scholars from many different fields, such as communication, politics and computer science, have addressed the topic from different perspectives. The previous research on the role of Twitter in political communication can be mainly grouped into three topical categories: Twitter use by politicians or political parties; the use of Twitter by publics during election or issue campaigns; and how various actors use Twitter when some mediated political events occur (Jungherr, 2014, p.2). As to Twitter use by politicians and parties, some researchers have explored the motivations for them adopting Twitter in politics. According to Aharony (2012, p.587), by using Twitter, politicians aim to increase their transparency and outreach, as well as to establish a stronger connection with voters. Besides, Twitter enables politicians or parties to convey their independent messages to an audience without being filtered, which allows them to keep control of their own storytelling and even place influence on mass media (ibid.). Svensson (2014) argued that there are three rationales for politicians to use social media: voters targeting, communicative deliberations and images negotiation. Furthermore, the eager of building a good image is also a motive for politicians to embrace Twitter, as using Twitter could be seen as a symbol of being open and approachable, and also being in

step with the times (Jungherr, 2016). Additionally, Enli and Skogerbø (2013) identified three motives for politicians to use Twitter: marketing, mobilization and the opportunity for interacting with users. The functions of using Twitter in politics have also been researched. Jungherr (2014) summarized four kinds functions of Twitter use in politics: distributing relevant information; discussing issues of interest to politicians or parties; mobilizing followers for political events; and creating positive media coverage. In an another study, Graham et al. (2013) identified very detailed functions of political tweets for campaigning: updating campaign activities, promoting the campaign, call to vote, expressing political positions, criticizing. Thus, it can be observed that these scholars share some common views concerning the functions of Twitter in politics, including disseminating information, mobilizing voters, marketing campaigns, etc.

The use of Twitter by publics is another major focus of academic research. According to Jungherr (2014, p.50), publics, in the case of Twitter use, refer to “users who posted messages about politics with relevant keywords or hashtags and those who followed accounts of politicians and parties”. One question that has been explored by many studies is who are the users that actively post political messages on Twitter. Jürgens and Jungherr (2014) examined the case in Germany, showing that the most active users were famous communication consultants, influential bloggers and so on. As to the motives for publics to use Twitter in politics, Parmelee and Bichard (2012) deduced several reasons based on surveys, including “information guidance, self-expression, entertainment, social utility and convenience”. In another study conducted in the USA, the survey data revealed the reasons behind users following politicians on Twitter, claiming that users want to feel more connected to politicians, to acquire the up-to-date political news directly from the reliable source – politicians (Gainous & Wagner, 2014). Another issue addressed in many studies is publics’ behavior on political Twitter use. Feller et al. (2011) found that supporters of a certain political party were more likely to follow or interact with other supporters of the same party. Besides, it also suggested that people who use Twitter do not only tend to hold a more extreme political view, but also have a higher possibility to join offline political groups (ibid.). Regarding the content of tweets posted by users, an analysis of posts and comments made by publics showed that most messages were classified as negative (Dang-Xuan et al., 2013; Jungherr, 2013).

Studying the use of Twitter by various actors during mediated events is another interest in academic circles. The mediated events mainly refer to party conventions, candidate debates, election day, and some other crucial political events. As to the use patterns, a number of studies have shown that the number of tweets rises significantly during mediated campaign events, and spikes can be detected in correspondence with the vital stages of the events (Hanna et al., 2013; Shamma et al., 2009). The users' commenting activity is highly skewed, with the majority of users only posting a small percentage of tweets, while a small number of users dominate the discourse by contributing a large number of messages (Anstead & O'Loughlin, 2011). In addition, hashtags, references, mentions and retweets are also used more frequently during the events (Lin et al., 2013). Concerning the content of messages posted by users around political events, the results from different studies show remarkably similar patterns. First, most tweets commenting on the events express negative sentiments (Diakopoulos & Shamma, 2010). Besides, these comments in most cases refer directly to the events, but sometimes posts offer contextual information by including links to other sites (Anstead & O'Loughlin, 2011). Another finding is that during the mediated events, politicians and journalists have used Twitter as a tool to detect public opinion (Mitchell & Hitlin, 2013).

3.2 Twitter use by candidates for political campaign communication

Political elections are not just a process to ensure the peaceful transition of power, but also a basis of democracy which grants people the rights to choose their leaders. With Twitter recently evolving as a powerful communication tool, it comes as no surprise that candidates, a crucial actor in political elections, have been increasingly applying Twitter for campaigning so as to attract a broad base of support. Some academic studies have addressed various factors, such as gender and incumbency, that could influence the propensity of a candidate to adopt Twitter in election campaigns. Evans et al. (2014, p.456) examined the situations of US House candidates using Twitter in their 2012 campaigns. It was found that women, incumbent candidates and major-party candidates appear more likely to use Twitter for election campaigns. Many studies in other countries showed a similar result. Vergeer and Hermans (2013, p.399) investigated the situation in the Netherlands, claiming that candidates of established parties are more likely to adopt Twitter than those from small parties. A study conducted by Grant et al.

(2010, p.586) also found that in Australia incumbent politicians were more likely to actively use Twitter. However, the findings could be divergent across different countries or election types. Several studies in the context of the UK and Brazil showed that male candidates were more likely to use Twitter than female candidates (Jackson and Lilleker 2011; Gilmore 2011). Besides, candidates that are relatively young are more likely to embrace Twitter for political campaigns (Peterson 2012; Vergeer and Hermans 2013, p.413). Campaign budget is another factor that has a connection with candidates' inclination of adopting Twitter (Gilmore 2011; Peterson 2012). Concerning the political parties, it was found that the opposition parties have a stronger presence on Twitter than the governing parties. The possible explanation for this is that the opposition parties with fewer resources would have more incentives to increase their publicity, and social media is a cost effective communication tool for them to achieve it compared to the traditional media (Vergeer et al., p.2013).

With respect to the general use pattern, the findings of many studies are congruent in various aspects. Grant et al. (2010, p.585) emphasized that the use of Twitter varied strongly between different users, indicating that only a few candidates would use Twitter intensively and the majority use it sparingly. Similarly, Macnamara (2011) also found that the popularity of candidates on Twitter was highly imbalanced, showing that only a small number of candidates have a great number of followers, while the majority of candidates only have few followers. Furthermore, many researchers from different countries found that candidates predominately use Twitter as a one-way communication tool to distribute campaign information, and the dialogical communication and interactions between candidates and users are only seen sparingly (Grant et al., 2010; Macnamara 2011; Grussel & Nord 2012). Analyzing the content of tweets posted by candidates is another research focus. The study about House candidates in 2012 campaign has shown that one third of tweets are about candidates' personal lives, such as pictures of their family. Tweets related to campaigns are mainly about mobilization and attacking their opponents, and only a small percentage of tweets are interactions between candidates and users (Evans, Cordova & Sipole, 2014). Most of the information is related to campaign activities, and the discussion about policy is rarely seen (Graham et al, 2013).

The strategies that politicians adopt on Twitter is another major focus of academic research. One strategy applied by many candidates is the personalized communication approach. Specifically, politicians seem inclined to share more information about their private lives and personal emotions so as to establish connections with their electorate (Kruikemeier 2014, p.132). Similarly, a study in the context of Canada shows that party leaders tended to personalize their messages, such as offering glimpses of their family life, while political parties' communication on Twitter still retains official style (Small, 2010). Another strategy that has been mentioned in some studies is creating more visibility and interactivity. The characteristic of interactivity enables Twitter to facilitate two-way communication between politicians and users. In order to better motivate and activate citizens, politicians would employ tactical strategy of enhancing interactivity on Twitter, such as requesting actions and reacting to users' comments or concerns (Caplan 2013, p.5)

Another subject for research is the effects of Twitter use by candidates. Some studies investigated the connection between the use of Twitter and election success. It seems that the study results are divergent according to different electoral contexts. Gilmore (2011) claims that candidates who have an active presence and a high popularity on Twitter are more likely to gain a favorable impression from voters and also have a higher possibility of winning an election. This finding corresponds with the evidence from two studies based on Korean elections, which shows that candidates using Twitter are more likely to receive positive image and higher credibility from the public, and further affect their election result in a positive way (Lee & Shin, 2012; Hwang, 2016). However, another study states that there is very little evidence showing a connection between Twitter use and election success, so the effect of using Twitter to predict election results is very limited (Gayo-Avello, 2013).

3.3 Twitter use by candidates in the U.S presidential elections

Although there have been a number of studies based on the context of diverse countries, the United States is still the country that has been examined most by researchers. Due to the significance of presidential elections, candidates' Twitter use in the US presidential elections has been explored by many scholars. In the context of 2008 US presidential election, Abrams and Lefebvre (2009) found that Barack Obama's

campaign mainly used Twitter to update campaign information, recruit volunteers, and encourage involvement in the campaign. In another study, Solop (2009) identified more detailed content elements of the use of Twitter by the Obama campaign, including “location information, the reference to the campaign website, online streamed live event, campaign announcement, policy statement and vote mobilization”.

With the successful Twitter use by the Obama campaign in 2008, more candidates followed his step to harness the power of Twitter in the 2012 US presidential election. Conway et al. (2013) examined the Twitter feeds of presidential primary candidates from different parties, concluding that candidates’ presence on Twitter is not consistent in use and content. Moreover, the frequent tweeting activity does not necessarily result in increased followers, suggesting that popularity on Twitter is significantly influenced by factors outside the Twitter network (*ibid.*, p.1607). Another study compared the Twitter use by two candidates, Barack Obama and Mitt Romney. The authors found that Obama was actively tweeting through his personal account, while Romney had lower tweet frequency and mainly depended on his campaign team account (Bruns & Highfield, 2016). Similarly, Enli and Naper (2016) also examined Obama’s and Romney’s Twitter use in the 2012 election campaign, describing that compared to Romney, Obama possessed incumbency advantage in the social media campaign. Apart from focusing on candidates from two major parties, the Democratic party and the Republican party, Christensen (2013) assessed if and how “third party” candidates use Twitter to increase outreach and attract public attention. The results showed that there was a wide variation regarding candidates’ tweets volume and the most retweeted messages were mainly about the military, human rights and the problem of the two-party system. Christensen (2013) argued that a “third party” made successful use of Twitter in enhancing its presence and offering different views. Hwang (2016) combed through American presidential candidates’ social media use in the 2008 and 2012 election campaign. She argued that Obama not only used Twitter to disseminate campaign related information, but also tried to empower his supporters and encourage engagement for raising money, recruiting volunteers, etc. In 2012, Obama had a much more active presence on Twitter, overshadowing Romney notably in terms of the number of followers, tweets and responses (*ibid.*).

As for the US 2016 presidential election, many studies focused on the two competitive candidates, Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. Hwang (2016, p.35) found that Donald Trump had been using Twitter to show off his authentic personality, and create a sensational, outrageous and even controversial voice, which would help him relate to his audience and establish an emotional connection to his followers effectively. In contrast, Hwang (2016, p.39) argued that Clinton's Twitter voice cannot reflect her actual personality and labeled her style as superficial and too calculated. Clinton used Twitter in a traditional way, as her tweets were carefully crafted and safe, avoiding any gaffes and mistakes (ibid.). However, it has to be admitted that Clinton put some efforts in encouraging voters' participation on Twitter. For example, Clinton let some of her supporters to take over her Twitter for sharing their stories that coincide with her campaign platform (Hwang 2016, p.40). In addition to Hwang's study, Balsley and Karavanov (2016) did a content analysis of Trump's Twitter use during the primary election, which demonstrates that the majority of Trump's tweets were about self/campaign promotion, then talking about his opponents came to the second place. As to the tone of Trump's tweets, although offensive and defensive tones occupied almost half of messages, the majority of posts still had a positive tone (ibid., p.3). In another study, Vegas et al. (2016) monitored the Twitter activity of candidates, showing that a burst of tweets volume is usually associated with a mediated event. Besides, Candidates from the Democratic Party seem inclined to include more topics in their tweets. The majority of candidates' supporters on Twitter were male except for Clinton's. Donald Trump has the largest number of followers in most of the states, while his influential supporters were not as many as Clinton's (Vegas et al. 2016, p.18).

3.4 Current progress and research gap

In reviewing the previous research, it is shown that the studies discussed here are in agreement over the crucial role of Twitter in facilitating political campaign communication. Besides, it becomes apparent that most studies are data centered and focus on describing the empirical evidence of Twitter use in politics. Specifically, many studies examined the propensity of politicians' and publics' use pattern on Twitter, such as tweeting frequency, content, interactions, followers' responses, and so on. The findings of the studies further acknowledged Twitter's advantages in enabling candidates to reach a greater number of users at low economic cost, communicating

directly with voters, mobilizing participation in campaign activities. Although these studies provide an elementary overview of Twitter use in politics by various political actors, there is still a lack of deeper investigation on Twitter use by candidates with theoretical discussions. Even though there is a small number of studies that tried to examine the political Twitter use with some theoretical discourses, the theories they take are mainly agenda setting, framing, political polarization, image management and so on (Jungherr 2014, p.6). The analysis that these studies have focused on is that of candidates' specific communication activities on Twitter, such as their interactions, mobilizations, and discussions of political issues, etc. There are few studies choosing the perspective of persuasive communication to examine candidates' Twitter use. Political campaigns fundamentally depend on communication, especially persuasive communication. It is not even an exaggeration to say that politics is about persuasion at its core. Whether the object is to discuss gun control, convince a legislative body to pass legislation, lobby politicians to give endorsements, or push the electorate to vote, persuasion is constantly involved in these political interactions. Thus, persuasion has played a large role in politics, and it is also the central aim of political activities. For instance, in election campaigning, candidates rely on persuasive communication to influence voters' opinion on issues, to convince constituents to vote for candidates. However, the available studies of Twitter use by candidates mainly focus on "what candidates say", rather than "how candidates say it". To fully examine candidates' political campaign communication on social media, it requires a specific inquiry into how candidates establish persuasive communication on social media to obtain the most votes and win campaigns, which is also the identified research gap that this study intends to fill in. Moreover, within the context of the United States, although many studies have examined Twitter use in the US political elections in 2008 and 2012, as of now, there are not many academic studies specifically focusing on Trump's persuasive communication on Twitter in the 2016 US presidential campaign. Therefore, this study will examine Donald Trump's Twitter use from the perspective of political persuasion.

4. Theoretical Framework

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive review of theories and concepts related to persuasion. Firstly, the development of persuasion theories and several important relevant concepts will be introduced. The second part will discuss how different actors in the process of persuasion affect the effectiveness of persuasion. Next, the Elaboration Likelihood Model, put forward by Petty and Cacioppo (1986), will be introduced and two concepts, message quality and peripheral cues derived from the model will serve as dimensions to evaluate the emphasis of persuasive messages. Since this study departs from Donald Trump's Twitter use in the election campaign, the theoretical basis will be specifically placed on the "message" part, which is Trump's tweets in this case. Although the focus of discussions is primarily on messages, Trump's tweets could involve messages that are associated with his personality traits as a persuader or are influenced by the nature of the channel, Twitter. Hence, this chapter will still include theoretical discussions regarding communicators and channel in the process of persuasion. At the end of the chapter, a customized framework developed for this study will be explained.

4.1 Foundations of persuasion

Persuasion has become a ubiquitous part of contemporary life, as people's daily life is besieged by persuasive communication, ranging from political lobbying, religious missionary to millions of advertisements. According to Perloff (2003, p.8), persuasion is defined as "a symbolic process in which communicators try to convince other people to change their attitudes or behaviors regarding an issue through the transmission of a message, in an atmosphere of free choice". The definition might seem clear and simple, but actually there are many wrestles with persuasion dilemmas in its long history. One issue is distinguishing persuasion from other borderline cases. First, persuasion differs from coercion, as persuasion grants receivers with free choice to either accept or reject persuaders' attempts to influence, while coercion depends on force to gain others' compliance. In addition, although many art works offer information or new perspective that can significantly influence readers' worldview, these activities can still not be simply categorized into persuasion. This is because what these art creators do is to express their concerns or views of life, and their intent is not simply influencing others or attitude change, but contains broader and more complex motives (ibid., p.12).

Furthermore, persuasion is not just an activity placing influence on others, but also could be the form of self-persuasion. As Whalen (1996, p.5) argued, all communicators can do is to provide people with the arguments and activate their desire, but cannot force people to be persuaded. Receivers need to convince themselves, especially when they need to do things they usually do not want to do.

In fact, the long history of persuasion scholarship traces back to ancient Greece. One Greek who made a great contribution to this field is Aristotle, who was even regarded as “the first scientist of persuasion” (Perloff, 2003). Aristotle’s treatise, *Rhetoric*, is regarded as “the most significant work on persuasion” (Golden et al., p.2). Aristotle proposed three main modes of persuasion: ethos, pathos, and logos. Ethos deals with the nature of the persuaders, such as credibility, competence, etc. Pathos involves stirring up people’s emotions. Logos emphasizes using logics, reasoning and arguments to persuade people. When Greek civilization passed to Rome, rhetorical theorist Cicero attached importance of emotional appeals to persuasion. However, Greeks, Romans and early Western scholars mainly took a rhetorical approach to philosophize the science of persuasion. Later in the 20th century, as persuasion blossomed into other subjects, such as psychology, communication, and marketing, social scientists began to adopt developed scientific approaches, such as experiments and surveys, to conduct many empirical studies. Social scientists tried to answer several important questions in this field: what makes a person persuasive? what kind of persuasive communication is most effective? what factors influence receivers’ processing of persuasive messages? For finding out the secrets of persuasion, a wealth of concepts related to persuasion were produced from the 1960s onwards, including attitude, cognitive processing, compliance and so on (Perloff, 2003, p.25).

In order to fully understand persuasion, the term “attitude” is very crucial because attitude is the one that persuaders wish to shape, reinforce or change (Miller, 1980). It is believed that only when the processes of attitude change and decision making are figured out, can persuasive communication exert more powerful effects. Attitude refers to “a learned evaluation of issues that influences thought and action” (Perloff, 2003, p.39). As the definition emphasizes, attitude is the outcome of a learned process rather than a naturally inherited trait, which is also the basis of employing persuasion to influence attitudes. Researchers have explored the main functions of attitudes, finding

out that attitudes help understand knowledge, serve social-adjustive, ego-defensive, social identity, and value-expressive functions (Katz, 1960; Maio & Olson, 2000). However, the functions of a certain attitude vary from person to person, so it is suggested that persuaders should probe targets' initial attitudes on certain issues and what functions the attitude serves for an individual, then communicators could customize the message to satisfy audiences' needs. Although it is believed that there is a connection between attitudes and behaviors, it was found challenging to predict people's behaviors due to the complexity of human attitudes (Perloff, 2003). Attitude measurement plays a critical role in examining the effects of persuasion. For example, a political poll is an approach to assess public opinion of political preferences, and also a way to evaluate the result of political persuasion. The questionnaire is the instrument that has been used commonly in tapping into people's attitudes. But for increasing the accuracy in assessing attitudes, it is important to ask clear and thoughtful questions, and also to use appropriate scales. As to the effects of persuasion, Miller (1980) proposed three persuasive effects: shaping, reinforcing, and changing responses. Shaping means that people's attitudes are formed or influenced preliminarily. Reinforcing, the next degree of effect, focuses more on enhancing people's pre-formed attitudes. In political campaigns, candidates desire to strengthen supporters' loyalty and commitment to them through persuasion, so as to make it certain that these people would definitely vote for them on the election day. The third persuasive impact would be changing. This indicates that persuasive communication has received a desirable result, successfully influencing attitudes and behaviors.

4.2 The dynamics of the persuasion process

For demonstrating theoretical discussions built on a complete persuasion process, a time-honored template of "source-message-channel" will be used to examine the various factors that have an impact on the effectiveness of persuasion.

4.2.1 Communicator characteristics

As the source of information, communicators play a significant role in affecting the effectiveness of persuasion. Although there are no definite standards about what a perfect communicator should be, three fundamental characteristics have been proven

quite important for becoming an effective communicator: authority, credibility, and social attractiveness (Kelman 1958; Giffin 1967; McCroskey & Young, 1981).

Authority

Authority mainly makes use of power to persuade people to comply with certain behaviors or rules. Individuals choose to go along with authority figures not because they truly agree with the content but for gaining approval or rewards (Perloff, 2003, p.53). The reasons that authority can exert influence on human behaviors include early socialization and the trapping of authority (Milgram, 1974). When people grow up in an environment that values obedience, they will be socialized to respect and obey authority (Miller, 1995). The aura of authority can be created with various peripheral cues, such as famous institutions, positions with absolute power, formal wear, etc. However, authority in persuasion does not equal to coercion, as persuaders cannot threaten or force an audience to do things against their will (Perloff, 2003, p.156).

Credibility

The concept of credibility can be traced back to Aristotle who used the term “ethos” to describe source quality that can promote persuasion (Perloff, 2003). According to McCroskey (1997, p.87), credibility is defined as “the attitude toward a source of communication held at a given time by a receiver”. An important feature of credibility is that it is a receiver-based construct, which means credibility exists in the eye of the receiver rather than in the source (Gass & Seiter 2015, p.77). Communication researchers have done a lot of work on finding out the attributes that can make a person credible. As of now, the most three important characteristics that a credible speaker should possess are expertise, trustworthiness and goodwill (Perloff, 2003; Gass & Seiter, 2015). Expertise refers to skills or knowledge in a particular field (McCroskey, 1997). In general, individuals would usually grant people with expertise a higher credibility and have a greater tendency to believe their opinion, which is also why credible communicators have an chance of persuading others successfully (Maddux and Ronald, 1980). Another core component of credibility is trustworthiness, which refers to the quality of being perceived as honest, trusted, and reliable (Ohanian, 1990, p.41). McGinnis and Ward (1980) found that even if the person is not an expert, the communication is still persuasive as long as he is trustworthy, which stresses the decisive role trustworthiness plays in constructing a person’s credibility. The third

factor influencing the degree of credibility is goodwill. McCroskey and Teven (1999) identified goodwill as perceived caring. A communicator with goodwill would genuinely care about receivers. To show goodwill, persuaders need to display understanding and empathy for people's ideas and feelings, and also respond to receivers' needs (Perloff, 2003). As three dimensions of credibility play an essential role in constructing a person's credibility, communicators often make use of these determinants to build a credible image so as to maximize the persuasion effect.

Social attractiveness

The third factor that affects communicators' persuasion is social attractiveness, which refers to communicators' likeability, similarity to message recipients, and physical attractiveness (Perloff, 2003, p.6). There is evidence from studies showing that a likeable persuader is more influential in changing others' attitudes, because a likeable persuader can evoke people's positive thoughts and good mood. Besides that, similarity can also facilitate persuasion under some conditions. Similarity means that communicators share some things in common with recipients, such as values or experiences. If receivers feel similar to the persuader, favorable cognitive responses can be promoted while they process the message delivered by the communicators (Perloff, 2003). Besides, receivers would assume that communicators similar to them could better understand or empathize with their concerns, which is also why they are more open to accept the proposals from similar communicators (ibid.). Physical attractiveness also makes an impact on attitude change because people are always fascinated by beauty. Attractive speakers are more likely to grab attention. Besides, feelings of pleasure raised from attractiveness can be associated with the message, leading to an overall favorable impression on the information (ibid.). This works quite effectively, especially when the communicator's physical attractiveness is closely relevant to the product that they try to endorse. Nevertheless, the physical appeal has its limits while trying to change core values and its effect also tends to be short-lived. All in all, it becomes apparent that many of communicators' attributes can influence attitude change and determine the effect of persuasion.

4.2.2 Message characteristics

In persuasive communication, the message is the significant content that is being conveyed to audiences. This mainly concerns what persuaders say and how they say it.

Contemporary scholars have explored how different message characteristics influence receivers. Perloff (2003) identified three types of message factors: message structure, message content and message style, which can be used to evaluate the persuasiveness of messages.

Message structure

Message structure concerns how to organize and package the message. It is common that in rational persuasion there are different sides to every story, so persuaders can decide whether to present opposing viewpoints and how much attention they should give. Hovland (1959) found two ways to present information: one-sided message and two-sided message. The one-sided message means only presenting arguments in favor of a source's position. For instance, many advertisements are one-sided messages because they usually only adduce arguments of their sides. Solely presenting one-sided arguments enables receivers to spend the precious time focusing on the point you want to persuade, instead of being distracted by some contradictory information (Perloff, 2003). In this way, persuaders have better chance to maintain clarity and conciseness. Concerning the two-sided message, it refers to not only presenting the arguments of a particular position, but also considering the opposing arguments. After involving discussions about opposing viewpoints, a two-sided message is usually followed by a refutation or counterarguments of the mentioned opposing views, but it can also have no refutations. Although it sounds complicated, two-sided messages can make an impression of being honest and rational to receivers (ibid.). It has been shown in many studies that the one-sided message is more persuasive if receivers have already agreed with the message, but in many other situations, two-sided messages have a greater impact on attitude change than one-sided messages, especially for educated audiences (Allen, 1998; O'Keefe, 1999). Whilst using two-sided message structure, it is not enough just mentioning the counterarguments, but also need to refute the opposing points by offering cogent arguments to convince people that your proposition is better than the opposing side. This also involves another message structure: compare and contrast. Instead of just giving arguments about your side, comparing also involves evaluating the opponent's viewpoint. In most cases, the information about your side is presented as positive, but the information about the opposing side is usually portrayed as negative. By doing this, a contrast is created, which can make your advantages more distinct and the conclusion more convincing (Larson, 2012). For example, in many

political advertisements, a candidate would show off his or her strengths and at the same time criticize or attack the opponents so as to indicate that he or she is more eligible than other candidates.

In addition to the message sidedness, conclusion drawing is another issue that arises broad discussions. One choice is giving an explicit conclusion, indicating clearly what you wish audiences to do. The other solution is to give an ambiguous and indirect conclusion that lets audience members find out the answer on their own. Both sides have got good arguments. An explicit conclusion can make them stand firm on their points and feel less confused, but some people might prefer to draw the conclusion by themselves rather than being told exactly what they should do. O'Keefe (1997) found that messages with an explicit conclusion are more persuasive than those without a clear conclusion articulation. Another factor is the message repetition, a strong and powerful persuasion tactic. According to the mere exposure theory, merely repeating a message many times can serve as a neutral stimulus to induce a liking attitude, because repetition can reduce uncertainty, and enhance people's impression of the message (Zajonc, 1968). Psychological studies have found that low to moderate levels of repetition can enhance people's reception and agreement with a persuasive message, but too much repetition might lead to boredom and tedium (Cacioppo & Petty, 1979). In political campaigns, candidates and parties are also prone to repeat their propaganda and advertising again and again, aiming to shape voters' attitudes and earn a better chance to win elections (Grush, McKeough & Ahlering, 1978).

Message content

In order to persuade people, the message is supposed to include ample arguments as evidence to support the claims. McCroskey (1969, p.170) defined evidence as "factual statements or opinions that are used to support speakers' points". Many studies have confirmed the significance of evidence in persuasive messages. Reynolds and Reynolds (2002) declared that offering evidence in messages can produce stronger persuasive effects than those omitting the evidence. There are also skills in choosing evidence. It has been found that vivid case studies, testimonials, and interesting narratives are more effective than tedious statistics (Nisbett et al., 1976). If providing evidence is a rational approach to persuade, utilizing emotional appeals is to facilitate persuasion through tapping into underlying emotions and building connections with receivers. Among all

kinds of emotional appeals, fear appeal is the one that has been used frequently in various persuasive communication. It tries to scare people into changing behaviors and attitudes by stressing the potential negative consequences if they do not turn to the recommended actions (Perloff, 2003, p.187). However, fear appeals are not as easy as it seems. On the one hand, fear appeals may fail to reach the expected effect if the level of fear is not strong enough to get people frightened. Besides, there is evidence showing that people intend to think that they are less likely to experience bad things than others (Weinstein, 1980). On the other hand, using fear appeals sometimes might even lead to opposite results, especially when the degree of fear is too exaggerated and makes people revolt the fear message. Thus, it is important to control the degree of fear caused by the message. In addition, the fear appeal is regarded as a negative communication strategy to some extent, so it might cause a backfire to communicators' image and also damage the persuasion effect. Therefore, in order to avoid the failing fear appeals, it is necessary for persuaders to clearly point out both threats and recommendations. By offering good solutions on how to prevent the negative outcomes, people are more inclined to accept advice, especially after being scared and feeling vulnerable (Witt, 1976). Apart from the negative emotional appeals, there are also appeals that arise positive emotions in persuasions. Many studies have shown that positive emotions, such as enthusiasm, can increase the chance of accepting persuasive messages (Griskevicius, Shiota, & Neufeld, 2010).

Message style

Every writer has his or her unique writing style, which is constructed by word choice, sentence structure and together with the mood, visuals included in the text. In persuasive communication, the message style is significantly influenced by language use and visual elements. In written text, language intensity plays a significant role in delivering persuasive messages. When applying intensifiers on language, the message will have a stronger tone and a greater extent of difference from a neutral position (Blankenship & Craig, 2011). According to Perloff (2003, p.202), the most common language intensifiers include "metaphor, strong and emotion-laden words, and humor". A metaphor is usually expressed in the form of "A is B", so as to connect the attributes associated with B to A (Sopory & Dillard, 2002, p.407). By comparing the known to the unknown, metaphorical statements enable audiences to understand new concepts or ideas by relating to the information that is already planted in their minds. In this way,

it is not only easier for receivers to process information, but also more effective for communicators to explain abstract content in a concrete and intriguing way. As to the effectiveness of metaphors for persuasion, it is revealed that messages consisting of metaphors perform much better than those without metaphors in terms of changing attitudes (ibid., p.417). In addition, intense language also includes the relatively strong emotion-laden words, such as “extremely”, “terrible” etc. Humor is also widely used as an aid to persuasive messages, which can take many forms, such as jokes, ridicule, satire and so on. The effectiveness of humor in persuasion is based on the viewpoint that people in a good mood are more prone to agree with an argument (Moran, 1996). Besides, it has been suggested that humor can also contribute to persuasion by increasing liking and trust in the source (Lyttle, 2001, pp.207-208).

4.2.3 Channel

As McLuhan said (1967), “the medium is the message”, meaning that the form of medium also contains specific information and can influence how people perceive the message. For instance, print media are usually perceived as more authoritative and reliable, and also more likely to entice deep thinking. In contrast, the information from social media has a higher possibility to contain fake news and the quality of information on it is also not guaranteed. Thus, channel choosing is closely related to the source credibility, which would further influence persuasion effectiveness. Additionally, the channel can also affect the modality of information. For example, print media only allows texts and pictures, while new media make it possible to incorporate audios or videos into the message. Besides, messages with different degree of complexity also need to choose channels that make a message relatively more compelling than on other platforms. It is suggested that simple persuasive messages are more appropriate for TV, while complex ones are more suitable via print (Chaiken & Eagly, 1976). Since the advent of social media, the processing of persuasive messages and receiver elaboration are also changed (Newman & Perloff, 2004). One important feature of social media is interactivity. If persuaders incorporate interactive elements in persuasion, it is more likely to increase audiences’ involvement in processing persuasive messages, and further help persuaders to adjust their persuasion process based on the feedback (ibid.). In addition, since every channel has its unique characteristics and has accumulated different user groups, it is important for communicators to consider which people are

targets and through which channel they can reach the largest number of the targeted audience.

4.3 Message emphasis

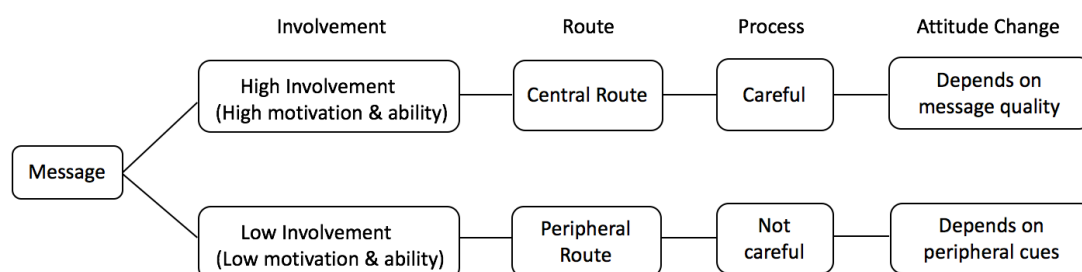
4.3.1 Two routes to persuasion

In order to advance knowledge of how messages influence people, Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo (1986) developed the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which is a dual process theory describing how people process information and have an attitude change. *Elaboration Likelihood* refers to the possibility that individuals process information with careful consideration and rational argument (ibid.). The ELM claims that there are two routes people use to process messages, central and peripheral routes (ibid.). The central route means that people would carefully scrutinize message arguments, critically examine the implications of the ideas, and thoroughly evaluate the merits of the information contained in advocacy. In contrast, when people process messages through a peripheral route, they depend more on simple cues or decision rules to process information. The two key factors that determine which route a person prefers to choose are motivation and ability. When people' motivation and ability are encouraged under some conditions, then the elaboration likelihood is high, and they incline to be a deep thinker. On the other hand, when people are in lack of motivation or ability to seriously ponder the message, they would be more likely to take the peripheral route to process information. The second determinant of information processing choices is the person's ability, which refers to the relevant knowledge needed to evaluate the availability of cognitive resources. People with comprehensive knowledge are more capable of analyzing information logically and skillfully. However, people's ability of processing messages varies under different conditions. For instance, people's ability to process issue-relevant information can be reduced when they encounter some distractions from the environment (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986, p.137).

When a person has relatively high motivation and ability to process message arguments, message quality will be a crucial determinant of persuasion (ibid., p.152). Conversely, when the elaboration likelihood is low, people are more susceptible to peripheral cues rather than the quality of message arguments (ibid.). According to Petty and Cacioppo (1986, p.153), the peripheral cues can be categorized into three sorts: source cues,

message cues and additional cues. Source cues include persuader's attractiveness, expertise, endorsements, exposure, etc. Take the political campaign as an example, low-involved voters can be influenced by candidates' appearance, celebrity endorsements for the candidate, and even candidates with high exposure or euphonious names. Besides, due to the lack of political knowledge, they have a tendency to grant more trust on experts' or celebrities' opinion so as to guide their attitude (Perloff, 2003, p.138). As to message cue, it is found that moderate repetition can enhance people's ability to examine arguments analytically (Cacioppo & Petty, 1979). Another message cue is the modality of message presentation. In general, compared to print text, pictures and video presentation deliver messages in a more direct way and can easily attract attention and provoke emotion. In this circumstance, people have less probability to process the arguments deeply (Chaiken & Eagly, 1976). Moreover, the nature of the message is also a determinant that affects information processing when people are under low involvement. Studies indicated that vague or ambiguous messages could increase people's acceptability because it reduces people's ability to process critical arguments (Witt, 1976). However, the issue is that a particular variable could be seen as an argument by some people and also can serve as a peripheral cue in other situations. For example, the endorsement can be a peripheral cue for people taking a shortcut in making decisions, while people could also take it as an argument while conducting a careful analysis. Thus, a particular variable can serve different functions, and it depends on situations and people (Perloff, 2003, p.144).. But on the whole, the ELM is still an insightful framework that sheds light on how receivers process persuasive messages and the aspects of messages that persuaders should pay attention to while making persuasion.

Figure 1. The illustration of the Elaboration Likelihood Model



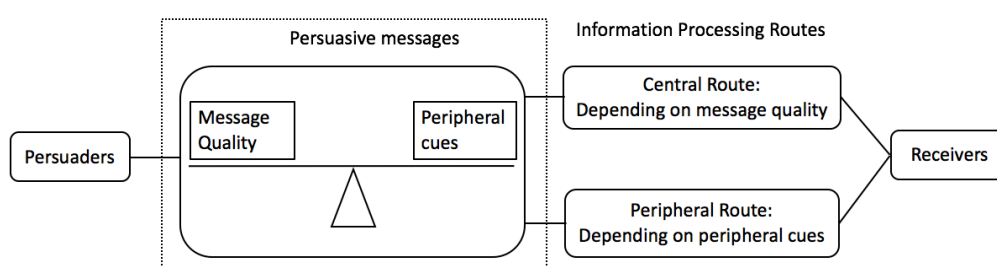
Source: based on Petty and Cacioppo (1986)

4.3.2 Two concepts for examining the message emphasis

In essence, the ELM not only offers insights in understanding how people process information in many situations, but also serves as a way to show how communicators use two different persuasion methods, in hopes of influencing others' attitude and behaviors. The 'central route' of persuasion aims to convince others with solid evidence and logical reasoning, which would be an adequate persuasion method if audiences have high motivation and ability to process the given information intellectually. The 'peripheral route' of persuasion focuses on creating simple peripheral cues to evoke audiences' positive feelings (ibid.). According to the ELM, 'message quality' and 'peripheral cues' are two crucial components of persuasive messages that receivers need while taking different routes to persuasion. Based on this, persuaders could formulate persuasive messages with these two elements and also place emphasis on one or the other. One significant indicator of message quality is evidence. In other words, solid evidence is indispensable for formulating persuasive messages with high quality, including considerable factual statements, backup information, credible source (Perloff, 2003). The other kind of persuasive message attaches importance on offering various 'peripheral cues'. As the ELM indicates, 'peripheral cue' refers to "an aspect exterior to the merits of an argument which can serve as a shortcut impact factor in decision making" (Psychology Dictionary). For instance, in election campaigns, candidates are able to adjust the emphasis of messages faced with different groups of audiences. Specifically, if the target audiences intend to scrutinize information thoughtfully and rely more on the message quality to process information, candidates could lay the emphasis on improving the quality of message arguments. As to the approaches of upgrading message quality, compelling evidence and key information are essential elements needed to be offered in messages (O'Keefe & Jackson, 1995). Whereas, if target receivers are more inclined to take the peripheral route to persuasion, communicators could increase their chance of successful persuasion by creating various peripheral cues. The peripheral cues vary depending on situations. For example, the body language is a common form of peripheral cues in face to face persuasion, while it is no longer a cue in written persuasion. It is also normal that persuasive messages might involve both of these two crucial elements, but there is still a high possibility that these messages have a particular emphasis on one certain aspect. Examining message emphasis could not only help reveal the focus of persuasive messages, but also

contribute to understanding whether the messages are more persuasive to audiences who take the central route to persuasion or those who take the peripheral route to persuasion. Therefore, this study decides to make use of the two concepts derived from the ELM, ‘message quality’ and ‘peripheral cues’, to examine the emphasis of persuasive messages (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Two concepts derived from the model of ELM



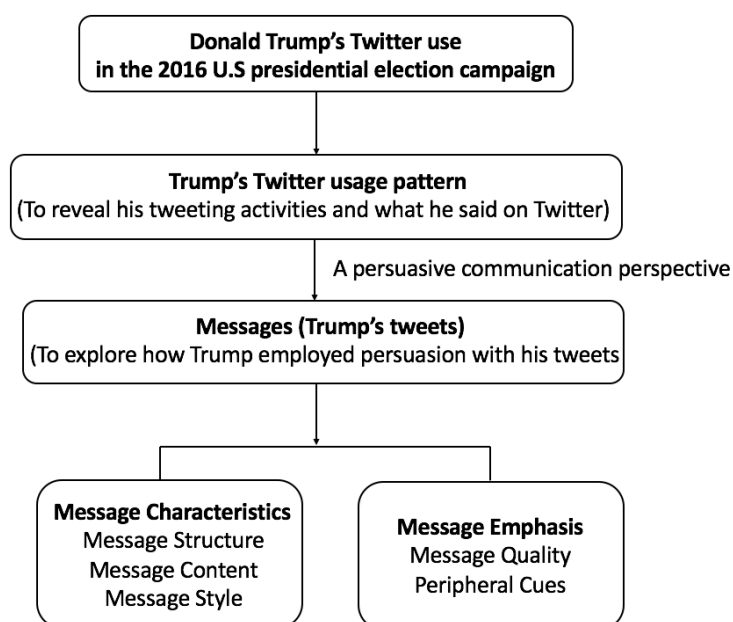
4.4 A customized framework for studying Donald Trump’s Twitter use

Based on the Perloff’s (2003) theories regarding the various persuasion actors and the two concepts derived from the Elaboration Likelihood Model introduced above, a customized analytical framework is created, so as to better fit the need of this study. Since the materials this study intends to examine are Donald Trump’s tweets, it is reasonable to place the focus on the messages of persuasive communication. In other words, this study will mainly examine the message part of the persuasion process, so discussions about Donald Trump’s personality characteristics as a communicator and the effect of Trump’s persuasive communication on Twitter are not in the scope of this study, even though sometimes it might be difficult or even impossible to clearly divide the various parts in the process of persuasion. For example, the content of messages could contain information that builds up a communicator’s characteristics, or the modality of messages could be influenced by the nature of channels. Hence, it is possible that the communicators’ characteristics and the channel, Twitter, would be addressed while analyzing tweets, but the primary focus would still be placed on the message part.

The framework starts with examining Trump’s general Twitter usage pattern, aiming to reveal his tweeting activities and what he said on Twitter. This is also the significant part that previous research has attached importance on while studying candidates’ Twitter use. It is necessary to have a look at Trump’s general Twitter usage pattern, not

just because it can provide readers with an overview of Trump's Twitter use and what he said on Twitter, but also paves the way for a deeper discussion about his tweets from the persuasive communication perspective afterwards. Next, the messages, Trump's tweets will be examined from two dimensions. One is message characteristics (see section 4.2); specifically, message structure, content and style will be analyzed step by step based on the theories regarding dynamic persuasion actors put forward by Perloff (2003). Another analytical focus is the emphasis of messages, to explore what emphasis Trump placed more on the formulation of persuasive messages. In detail, two crucial elements of messages identified from the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986), 'message quality' and 'peripheral cues' will serve as analytical points to investigate the message emphasis of Trump's tweets. If Trump's tweets display a stronger presence of high quality arguments than peripheral cues, then his message emphasis in persuasion will be seen as placed on message quality. In contrast, if it was found that peripheral cues have a much stronger presence in his tweets than the existence of solid evidence, his message emphasis will be seen as putting more on creating peripheral cues to employ persuasions. It is believed that this analytical framework is effective in presenting a deep understanding of Trump's tweets with persuasion knowledge and indicating how the messages make a profound impact in facilitating Trump's persuasive communication on Twitter during the 2016 US election campaign.

Figure 3. A developed framework for studying Donald Trump's Twitter use from the persuasive communication perspective



5. Methodology

This chapter aims to explain the research methodology and research design applied in this study. First, content analysis is the primary method of this study, and will be introduced explicitly. Besides, the reasons for using content analysis are provided. The next part clarifies the selection of data and justifies the choice of the sample. More detailed information concerning how to operationalize the analysis of data is illustrated as well. At the end of this chapter, the limitations and ethics of this study are also discussed.

5.1 Content analysis as a method

In the area of media and communication, content analysis has been effectively utilized as one of the main research techniques over the past decades (Riffe & Freitag, 1977). Toward the beginning of the 20th century, content analysis was broadly applied in quantitative newspaper analysis, due to the immense boom of the journalism industry. Later it was massively employed in analyzing propaganda, especially during World War II. It can also be clearly ascertained that early content analysis is primarily used as a quantitative method for measuring evaluative dimensions of texts that cannot be observed directly. Berelson (1952, p.18) defined content analysis as “the systematic, objective, quantitative description of the content of communication”. Content analysis is also commonly used for analyzing textual data, which include interview transcripts, observations, speeches, online posts, etc. (Julien, 2008, p.120). The data of this thesis are mainly concerned with Donald Trump’s tweets; thus, this method is highly relevant and suitable for this particular study. Moreover, quantitative content analysis is a process of categorizing texts into conceptual categories, so as to identify the pattern and correlations between variables (ibid.). Thus, in order to have an in-depth evaluation regarding Trump’s persuasive messages, quantitative content analysis is applied in this study, so as to examine different dimensions of Trump’s tweets in a quantitative manner. Specifically, the quantitative content analysis is used when it needs to acquire frequencies of various variables, including the themes, message sidedness, emotional appeals, etc. By producing frequencies of conceptual categories associated with variables, the statistical results will be presented through tables or figures; then a relevant deductive analysis will be applied, so as to uncover the latent content. It is believed that quantitative content analysis is appropriate for conducting this study.

As the use of content analysis has spread to different disciplines, the utilization of content analysis from the qualitative approach has gradually emerged. Krippendorff (2004) claimed that, text reading is fundamentally a qualitative process; even when scholars code certain dimensions of qualitative textual data into numbers, they are still not able to avoid the process of describing, interpreting, and drawing conclusions with a qualitative analysis. Krippendorff posited a relatively broad definition of content analysis, “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaning matter) to the contexts of their use” (ibid., p.18). Therefore, content analysis can be applied either from a quantitative or qualitative approach. Quantitative content analysis aims to answer “what” questions by presenting the numerical feature of texts, while qualitative content analysis assists in effectively interpreting data and reflecting meanings (Julien, 2008, p.120). Therefore, quantitative and qualitative approaches of content analysis will be utilized together in this study. Quantitative content analysis was applied in demonstrating the numerical features of Donald Trump’s tweets, such as message sidedness, emotional appeals, evidence categories, etc. However, the study relies more on the qualitative content analysis to examine Donald Trump’s persuasive communication on Twitter, which will mainly focus on the characteristics and emphasis of the messages. The persuasion principles embodied in different actors of the persuasion process and the messages emphasis derived from the ELM will serve as the theoretical framework in which Trump’s tweets were systematically analyzed. The qualitative content analysis is used throughout the thesis by seeking messages relating to persuasion theories, making relevant inferring, description and summarization based on the tweets and the processed quantitative results, so as to answer the research questions.

5.2 Research design

5.2.1 Data selection

This thesis focuses on Donald Trump’s Twitter utilization during the 2016 US presidential election campaign, and the data consist mainly of Trump’s tweets during the election campaign period. However, from the time of Trump announcing his candidacy to the Election Day, he had more than 7000 tweets, which are well beyond the author’s ability of managing such a massive amount of data within the limited time frame for conducting this research. Therefore, this study selected a more concise period of Trump’s tweets as samples to more precisely examine his persuasive communication

on Twitter for the campaign. Specifically, the author collated all Donald Trump's tweets from September 26, 2016 to October 19, 2016 as samples. There are numerous reasons for justifying the choice of this particular time period. First, this period covers three presidential debates as well as one vice presidential debate. During the general election debating period, candidates must face a highly publicized head-to-head competition, which is a crucial time in which to convince voters and distinguish themselves from their opponents. Second, the debate period generally attracts a substantial audience, especially since the focus is on election issues; thus, it is assumed that candidates would actively utilize Twitter to persuade voters to support them during this strategic period. Furthermore, during the chosen time period, Donald Trump had a total of 395 original tweets and 66 retweets. This massive amount of data is a representative sample for exploring the answer to the research questions. Moreover, as the study focuses on the perspective of political persuasion, it is believed that original tweets can more effectively represent Trump's persuasive communication performance. Thus, the retweets and replies were excluded when analyzing Trump's persuasive communication; however, these have been included to describe his general tweeting activity.

With respect to data collection, this study largely relied on manually collecting tweets from the timeline feed of Donald Trump's official Twitter account, @realDonaldTrump. In order to accurately collate the tweets during this period, the time zone on Twitter was set to North American Central Time, so as to avoid collecting certain posts inaccurately, brought about by differences in time zones. Each post was screenshot and taken as a unit; then various aspects of the posts were examined, based on the theoretical framework. In addition to manually collecting tweets from Trump's official Twitter account, a Twitter analytical website (Tweetchup.com) and a Trump Twitter archive website (trumptwitterarchive.com) were utilized as a secondary method. This method allows for the acquisition of tweets and certain numeric values of Trump's Twitter use activities, such as user mentions, hashtags and linking practices. These tools can not only save extra time for processing the data, but also can double check the accuracy of the manually collated data.

5.2.2 Analysis of data

In order to better understand how the analysis is conducted, the precise and detailed procedure of employing content analysis in interpreting data is described in detail. First, before evaluating the tweets from the persuasive communication perspective, an overview of Donald Trump's Twitter usage pattern during the chosen period presented, which includes the number of tweets posted, hashtags, user mentions, themes of tweets and the average likes/replies/retweets accumulated. This information does not only offer a basic understanding about how Trump utilized Twitter during the campaign, but also helps detect the persuasive communication embodied in his tweeting activities and paves the way for further investigation relative to his persuasive communication. In order to appropriately categorize the themes of the tweets, the study adopted the categories of tweets' focus identified from a comparative study regarding Barack Obama's and Mitt Romney's Twitter use in the 2012 presidential election (Enli & Naper, 2016). However, after reading Trump's tweets, small adjustments are made so as to better suit this particular study. Specifically, the category of "live speech" is deleted due to its low frequency in Trump tweets, but "express gratitude" is added to the categories because of the repetitive appearance of this topic in Trump's tweets. Eventually, the themes of the tweets were modified as follows: mobilization, attacking others, campaign information, political remarks, achievements, express gratitude, human touch, and other. The descriptions for coding the themes are illustrated in the Table 1. Considering that one tweet could contain more than one theme, it allows each tweet to be coded into different server-themed categories.

Table 1. The descriptions of coding the themes of the tweets

Categories of themes	Coding descriptions
Mobilization	Tweets encourage actions of participating in campaign activities, supporting, voting, donating, or volunteering.
Attacking others	Tweets include obvious negative comments against others or use aggressive remarks to insult, or make direct criticism to others.
Campaign information	Tweets provide factual campaign information, such as informing the hosting of campaign activities, Trump's presence in events.

Political remarks	Tweets in which Trump expresses his political stands, political arguments, proposed policies, political promises or visions, or have political comments or opinions on certain political issues.
Achievements	Tweets show off the large number of supporters he gained, or display his past successful deeds or endorsements others gave for him, or self-promote his advantages or accomplishments.
Express gratitude	Tweets express Trump's gratitude to others, such as saying "thank you".
News sharing	Tweets only share news coverage from media agencies without offering any extra remarks.
Human touch	Tweets show Trump's sympathy to others, or show his personal life, such as his families.
Other	Tweets that are excluded from the mentioned themes above.

Examining message characteristics

For exploring Trump's persuasive messages on Twitter, firstly, the message structure will be analyzed in terms of its sidedness. The tweets were coded as a one-sided or two-sided messages according to the definition provided by Hovland (1959). One-sided messages refer to tweets that only contain information of Trump's side. In contrast, two-sided messages are the ones that consist of not only information benefiting Donald Trump, but also include arguments of his competitors. By examining the numerical results, it can reveal the characteristics of the message structure Trump used and how this structure tends to influence the persuasiveness of his messages. Besides, comparison and contrast were also examined, so as to determine if it was used to distinguish Trump's point of view or opinion, or to make the messages more persuasive. As for the two-sided messages, the author also examined whether refutations were provided after involving counterarguments. Furthermore, conclusion drawing is another issue of interest, which requires further investigation on whether Trump inclined to offer explicit or implicit conclusions in his tweets.

The next analysis sequence focused on the message content. It needs to be clarified that the "message content" here is not about the topics or information contained in Trump's tweets. As the themes of Trump's tweets presented before have provided readers with knowledge of what Trump said on Twitter, the "message content" here refers to the two

crucial elements of persuasive messages identified by Perloff (2003), evidence and emotional appeals, which have been discussed previously in the 4.4.2 section. Concerning the evidence, the author examined this aspect to discover whether Donald Trump provided any factual statements or supportive information in his tweets that tended to support his arguments. From this perspective the extent of him using a pragmatic approach to persuade can be illustrated. Specifically, this analysis was utilized to classify the evidence into two groups: evidence stressing the reasons for supporting Trump; evidence stressing the reasons for not supporting Trump's opponents. In order to concisely present the evidence, a message box created by O'Connell et al. (2013, p.17) was adopted and adapted as below (Table 2), so as to systematically display the specific evidence provided in the tweets.

Table 2. The message box for categorizing the evidence contained in messages

Evidence Group 1 (The reasons people should support Trump)	Evidence Group 2 (The reasons people should support against Trump's opponents)
What Trump says about himself	What Trump says about his opponents
What others* say about Trump	What others say about Trump's opponents

*"others" here refers to other politicians, media or voters, etc.

Additionally, emotional appeal was another important aspect which was inspected. Moreover, the comprehensive emotions evoked in the tweets were coded into three types: positive, negative, mixed and other. According to Frederickson (2009), the most common positive emotions include joy, gratitude, hope, pride, inspiration, serenity, amusement, awe, interest and love. In contrast, negative emotions would include fear, anger, panic, etc. In this study, a neutral emotion simply means that the tweets were only objective, in other words, stating facts without involving any emotions. By analyzing the emotions displayed on Trump's tweets, it helps to reveal whether Trump applied emotional appeals, and if so, how he made use of it in his persuasive communication. The third part of the message characteristics was based on the message style. The dimension of language intensity in Trump's tweets was also examined, including the application of rhetorical devices, as well as strong and emotion-laden words. The following table provides a detailed description regarding how to code and examine these variables (Table 3).

Table 3. The descriptions of coding and examining message characteristics

Message characteristics	Coding variables	Coding categories/Examining descriptions
Message structure	Sidedness	<p>One-sided: Tweets contain only Trump's side of information.</p> <p>Two-sided: Tweets contain information involving both Trump side and his opponents' side, or tweets directly refute the opposing side.</p> <p>Other: Situations do not belong to the two categories above.</p>
Message Content	Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Examining the evidence Trump provided to convince people to support him ●Examining the evidence Trump provided to convince people not to support his opponents
	Emotional appeals	<p>Positive emotion: Tweets deliver positive statements or evoke people's pleasant feelings.</p> <p>Negative emotion: Tweets deliver negative comment about someone/something or evoke people's unpleasant feelings.</p> <p>Mixed emotion: Tweets deliver both positive and negative sentiment.</p> <p>Other: Situations do not belong to the two categories above.</p>
Message Style	Rhetorical devices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Examining whether Trump used rhetoric devices in his tweets or not. If yes, what tropes did he use it?
	Strong and emotion-laden words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Examining which strong and emotion-laden words Trump used in his tweets and it affects his persuasive communication.

Examining message emphasis

After examining the characteristics of messages, the researcher investigated Trump's persuasive messages on Twitter from a broader point of view. Specifically, this section

intends to explore whether Trump's persuasive message on Twitter was based on substantial evidence or whether he, instead, tried to affect receivers' attitudes by creating a considerable number of peripheral cues. In detail, the message quality will be evaluated from two aspects; one is the quality of evidence. Since it is impossible to execute a fact check on the extensively broad range of evidence in this study, the quality of Trump's persuasive messages will be carefully evaluated based on the type, volume, and the source of the evidence as well as the availability of key information. If Trump had provided abundant logical and convincing evidence from credible sources in his tweets, the message quality would be reckoned as high, and further regarded as persuasive in influencing voters. After reading and observing Trump's tweets, the types of evidence used in Trump's tweets were identified and analyzed based on persuasion knowledge. The volume of evidence here refers to the number of tweets that contained relevant evidence for support Trump's arguments. The evidence refers to factual statements or supportive information. After scrutinizing Trumps' tweets and counting the number of tweets containing evidence, the numerical value was summarized and discussed. The source of evidence was coded into two categories: internal and external. Internal source is from Trump and his campaign team, while the external source is from other people or organizations. The detailed examining approaches are illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4. The descriptions of examining the message emphasis

Message emphasis	Examination descriptions
Message Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The type, volume and source of evidence Types: the forms of evidence detected in Trump's tweets. Volume: the number of tweets that contain relevant evidence. Source: Internal or external. • The availability of key information Examining whether Trump answered the questions as follows: Q1: What problems is he running to solve? And How will he solve these problems? Q2: What makes him a better choice than his opponent?
Peripheral cues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source cue: Tweets contain information that build up Trump's attractiveness

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Message cue: Tweets contain information that could be shortcuts for audiences processing messages • Additional cue: cues excluded from the above two categories
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The other aspect is the availability of key information. It is normal that voters might have doubts or questions while making decisions of voting. Providing essential information can satisfy individuals' need for key information and further guide people to take actions in line with persuaders' wishes. Specifically, this study observed whether Trump's messages can answer the crucial election campaign questions voters usually have, which were identified in a campaign communication handbook (O'Connell, Smoot & Khalil, 2013, p.13). The first question is "what problem is he running to solve? And how will he solve these problems"; the second one is "What makes him a better choice than his opponent". By reading Trump's tweets carefully, the authored examined whether Trump's tweets could answer these two significant questions. If the key information is covered in Trump's tweets, the quality of message is seen as being increased. Additionally, three different kinds of peripherals cues will be observed and examined. As to source cue, the author examined whether social attractiveness is built up and served as cue to influence people's opinion on the messages. Message cue will be examined from dimensions of message repetition and modality. The rest of detected cues is categories as additional cues.

5.3 Limitations

Although it is believed that the research design is able to answer the research questions, there are still some limitations. First, due to the time limitation, the study would only examine a short period of Trump's tweets rather than all the tweets during the election campaign. Although the sample is supposed to be representative, it is still a risk to generalize the whole situation of Trump's Twitter use during the campaign, as there might be some changes concerning his communication on Twitter during the different stages of the election campaign, but the answer provided by this study is based on data from general election dates phase. In addition, as meaning making can be context dependent and subjective, multiple coding is a valuable strategy to ensure the objectivity and quality data interpretation (Barbour, 2001). However, since this is an independent study, manually coding work is conducted only by the author without

involving any other researchers to double check the coding result or have a reliability test. Therefore, the validation of data could be damaged due to the subjectivity or manual mistakes levelled at the process of coding. Furthermore, with limited resources and time, the study decides to primarily focus on examining the message part of Trump's persuasive communication on Twitter. As a result, there would be a lack of discussing other elements involved in the persuasion process, such as the characteristics or communicators and receivers, which could limit the comprehensive evaluation of Trump's persuasive communication, especially the effects of persuasion.

5.4 Ethics

Ethics are foundational to all research, which requires to consider various aspects of the study for ethical implications (O'Leary, 2004). Respecting participants and protecting their privacy are central to ethics. Although this study focuses on Donald Trump, there is no direct contact with him, so there is no ethical issue concerning the involvement of participants. All the data for analysis is mainly from Donald Trump's Twitter feed. Twitter is an open source platform, which means Trump's tweets are public content without password protected and are accessible to everyone. Besides, it does not require any permission to study Donald Trump's tweets. In addition, the perspective this thesis takes to study Trump's Twitter use is the persuasive communication. Persuasion is a relatively neutral theme, without involving any significant sensitive issues. Thus, there should be no concern about privacy and confidentiality. Furthermore, researchers are unconditionally responsible for pursuing the integrity and objectiveness of research (ibid.). It is well known that Donald Trump has a very controversial image during the campaign and the attitudes many people hold towards him are also quite polarized. However, as the author of this study, I hold a very neutral attitude to Donald Trump and have no personal preference to the US election result and American political issues. This thesis aims to be as objective and unbiased as possible, so it will neither contain any judgements about Donald Trump's personality traits nor involve any discussions regarding his political stands or policies. It is Trump's persuasive communication on Twitter that is to be examined rather than his political positions.

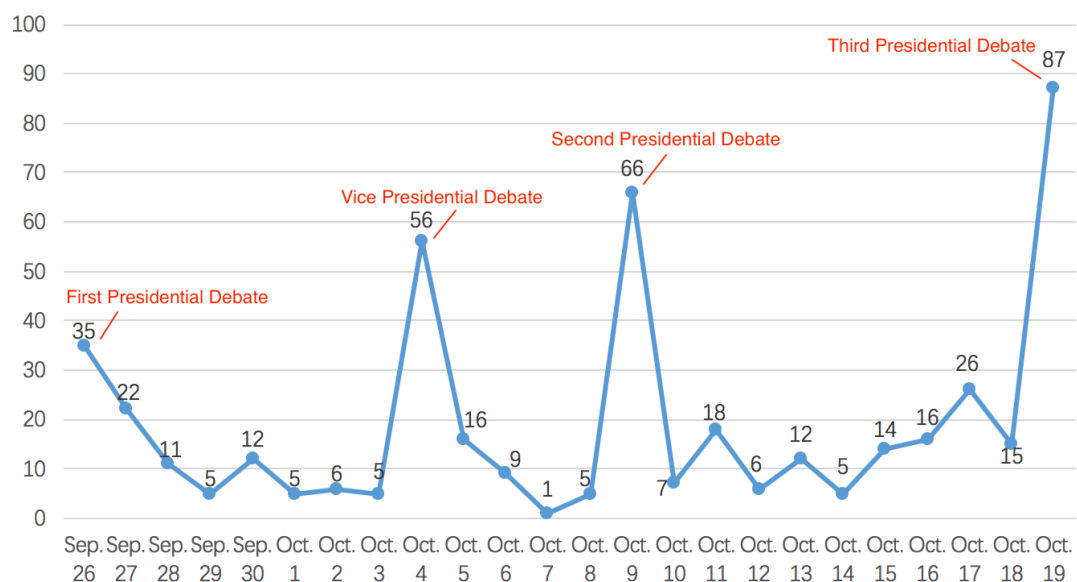
6. Analysis

This chapter aims to find out the answer to the research questions raised in the introduction: 1) what are the characteristics of Donald Trump's messages on Twitter during the 2016 US presidential election campaign? 2) what is the emphasis of Donald Trump's messages on Twitter during the 2016 US presidential election campaign? In order to answer the questions, Donald Trump's tweets during the chosen campaign period were examined based on persuasion principles. Next, the analysis continued by analyzing the characteristics and emphasis of the messages, so as to better comprehend his persuasive communication on Twitter.

6.1 An overview of Donald Trump's Twitter use pattern

From September 26th to October 19th, 2016, Donald Trump had 460 tweets in total, including 394 original tweets and 66 retweets. The original tweets accounted for over 85 percent of tweeting activity; thus, it seems that Trump prefers to use his own voice on Twitter, instead of simply sharing others' content. The average tweets per day during these 24 days were approximately 19. However, Trump's tweets were not distributed evenly over this period. As Figure 4 reflects, Trump posted increasingly more tweets on the general election debate days than on any other days (Figure 4).

Figure 4. The number of Donald Trump's Tweets from Sep 26 to Oct 19, 2016



This result is also in line with the findings from previously reviewed studies, which confirm that the number of candidates' tweets rises significantly during mediated

campaign events (Hanna et al., 2013; Shamma et al., 2009). General election debates in the US are some of the most paramount events during presidential election campaigns, and can, thus, draw significant national and worldwide attention. It has been reported that on the first debate night on Sep 26, 2016, over 80 million viewers watched the debate via TV or live streams on the Web, which established a new record in the history of televised presidential debates (Stelter, 2016). With the huge influence of general election debates, it is assumed that actively posting, especially on the debate days is an excellent timing strategy, that is, in terms of reaching a wider audience and increasing the circulation of tweets.

Mentions use

As related to the user mentions, Donald Trump had a total of 252 mentions within the tweets of the period being investigated. As Table 5 reflects, five of the most mentioned users were all crucial actors in this election, including Donald J. Trump, Official Team Trump, Hillary Clinton, and two participants of the vice presidential debate, Mike Pence and Tim Kaine. The reason that Trump himself was mentioned 48 times (19%) in his tweets is that Trump quoted some tweets from other users, in which he was mentioned many times. Trump's official team and his competitor Hillary Clinton were both mentioned 45 times (18%). Trump's running mate, Mike Pence, and Clinton's running mate, Tim Kaine were mentioned 18 times (7%) and 11 times (4%) respectively. It was discovered that, on the one hand, Trump attempted to strengthen the cooperation and interaction within his official team in terms of promoting his campaign; on the other hand, Trump made substantial efforts to frequently discuss his opponent in his tweets.

Table 5. Users most mentioned in Donald Trump's tweets

Display Name	Username	Mentioned times (N)	Percentage (%)
Donald J. Trump	@realDonaldTrump	48	19%
Official Team Trump	@TeamTrump	45	18%
Hillary Clinton	@HillaryClinton	45	18%
Mike Pence	@mike_pence	18	7%
Senator Tim Kaine	@timkaine	11	4%

Hashtags use

Regarding the utilization of hashtags, Trump used 33 different types of hashtags in his tweets, but many hashtags were used repetitively. All hashtags can primarily be

categorized into four topics: promoting the Trump campaign; general election debates; Hillary Clinton; political policies and other. As Table 6 indicates, hashtags that are related to the debates were used 134 times, accounting for the largest number of tweets at 44.8 percent; hence, it seems apparent that Trump placed tremendous importance on the debates. Hashtags related to promoting Trump campaign appeared 97 times (32.4%), while hashtags associated with Hillary Clinton were used 52 times (17.4%). Furthermore, it was observed that the sentiment of hashtags Trump used under different topics were completely distinct. The sentiment of hashtags regarding the debates were basically neutral, but hashtags promoting Trump's campaign were totally positive, such as #MakeAmericaGreatAgain, #AmericaFirst and #ImWithYou. Trump's campaign slogan "Make America Great Again" was repeated numerous times in the form of hashtags, which tended to strengthen people's recognition of his brand and encouraged voters to naturally associate it with Trump's campaign. Additionally, Trump used a total of 11 times (3.7%) of hashtags that are related to some political policies, such as Obama health care, terrorist organization ISIS, etc. Lastly, several hashtags appeared 5 times (1.7%) that are excluded from the topics discussed above, such as #FacebookLive. Although Twitter's 140-character limit prohibits having detailed discussions, the existence of hashtags enables Trump to deliver more compact information in a short form of messages. With the advantages of being brief, these hashtags contributed to generating a positive image of Trump's campaign, and also enabled voters to easily remember the core of Trump's campaign message, such as Trump's claim to offer benefits to the American people as a number one priority of his administration.

On the contrary, hashtags associated with Hillary Clinton had negative meanings. For instance, #CrookedHillary was a nickname Trump gave to Hillary. Moreover, labeling other people with negative adjectives was also a persuasive trick, especially since the negative characteristics tended to be connected to the person automatically, and were even effective in making it stick to the person. For instance, as Trump repeated "Crooked Clinton" constantly, the notion that Clinton is crooked could be continuously reinforced in the minds of audiences. This demonstrates Trump's intention to repeatedly use such phrases about his political opponent so as to negatively shape audience attitudes of Clinton. Another hashtag, #Followthemoney was also an adverse label Trump created as a strategy, so as to connect it with Clinton for the sole purpose of reminding people of Clinton's corruption. As he also stated in one tweet "Remember-

everything you need to know about Hillary – just #FollowTheMoney”. By connecting negative meanings with the Clinton campaign, Trump intended to create a stereotype in the mind of voters that Clinton is corrupt and crooked. Stereotypes can exert significant influence over others’ judgments, as it encourages people to rely on fixed or oversimplified ideas in making decisions (Abbate, Boca, & Bocchiaro, 2004). Thus, Trump used stereotypical information in his hashtags, aiming at shaping voters’ individual attitudes toward the two candidates.

Table 6. The statistics of hashtags use in the tweets

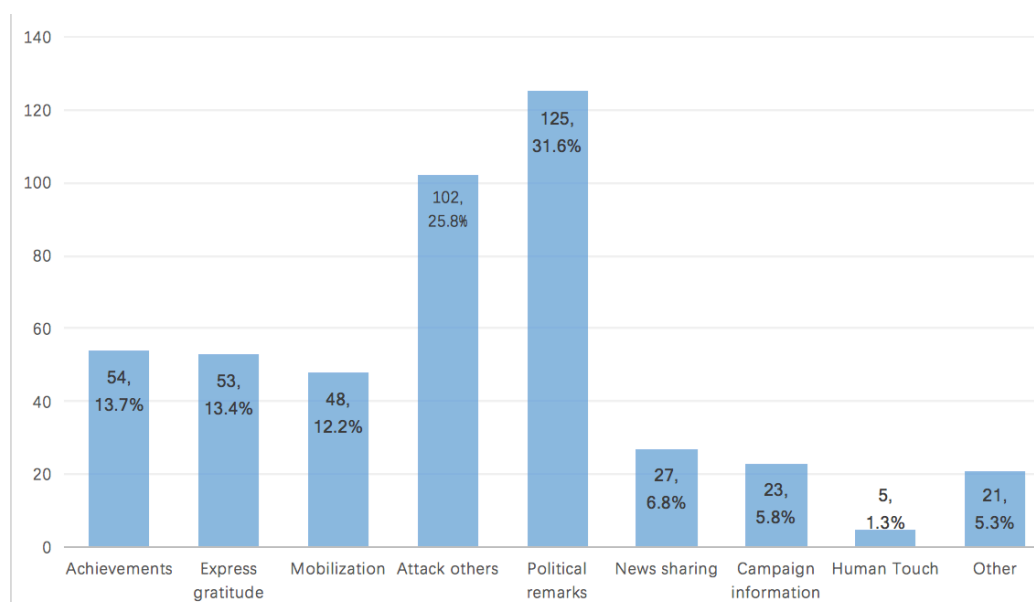
Hashtags topics	Number	Percentage	Examples
Trump campaign	97	32.4%	#MAGA; #AmericaFirst; #TrumpPence16; #TrumpRally; #VoteTrumpPence #ImWithyou; #TrumpTrain; #Trumpwon
Debates	134	44.8%	#BigLeagueTruth; #Debate; #Debates2016; #VPDebate; #DebateNight; #Debates
Hillary Clinton	52	17.4%	#DrainTheSwamp; #CrookedHillary; #Followthemoney; #RattledHillary
Political policies	11	3.7%	#ObamaCare; #ISIS; #TPP; #SecondAmendment; #2A
Other	5	1.7%	#FacebookLive; #ICYMI #OhioVoteEarly; #November8th

The themes of tweets

In order to garner a more precise idea regarding what Trump said on Twitter, all tweets have been coded in terms of the themes contained in each tweet. As illustrated in Figure 5, the theme that appeared most in the tweets was devoted to “political remarks”, which referenced various political platforms or arguments such as Trump’s political promises he made and his opinions on certain political issues. A total of 125 tweets contained the theme of “political remarks”, accounting for 31.6% of all tweets. Among these political remarks, some were about Trump making political promises, and some were concerned with Trump stressing his stand on key political issues, including believing in America first, opposing Obamacare, strengthening control of illegal immigration, etc. Furthermore, it is observed that Trump focused much of his attention toward discussing Clinton’s political policies; however, the opinion Trump held concerning Clinton’s

politically motivated strategies was all negative. Hence, it seems that Trump's primary strategy was to convince people that his policies could lead to their desired lifestyle demands by creating a prospect of the future that was innovative and full of hope. Meanwhile, he insisted that Clinton's political positions were problematic by providing a variety of dissenting opinions.

Figure 5. The distribution of themes contained in the tweets



On top of this, Trump even directly criticized and insulted his opponents in many of his tweets. About 102 (25.8%) of his tweets were related to the theme of “attack others”. The biggest target of Trump's attack continued to be Hillary Clinton. Specifically, Trump criticized Clinton for failing many countries, because of her impractical and flawed policies, and accused her of being responsible for various domestic problems, due to her failure in fulfilling her duties in a responsible manner. Moreover, Trump accused the media of being dishonest and biased in covering election stories, especially CNN news. Additionally, Trump also attacked some other significant political figures in many of his tweets, such as Barack Obama, Bill Clinton etc. In addition, 54 tweets (13.7%) detected the theme of Trump showcasing his achievements, in the form of presenting leading poll numbers, mentioning past business successes, etc. Demonstrating his achievements could be viewed as an act of proving his professional and economic accomplishments and assets, in an attempt to garner more voters to pledge their vote to him. While manifesting the considerable support he gained, Trump, at the same time, often expressed his gratitude to his supporters in 53 tweets (13.4%).

Although Trump's general way of expressing his gratitude is simply saying "Thank you", this expression of gratitude helped build a friendly relationship between persuaders and receivers, which further contributed to persuasive communication.

Another related theme is mobilization, which means trying to call on voters to participate in certain actions. Within a total of 48 tweets (12.2%), Trump mobilized his audience to participate in some of his political campaign events, such as campaign rallies, live speeches, etc. The way Trump mobilized voters was simply by making requests as follows: "Let's make America safe and great again with the American people", or "Join the movement". The persuasiveness of these mobilization tweets was relatively low, as the actions he requested were rather broad. Apart from this, Trump also shared some news coverage from the media; in his tweets he only copied news headlines as content, without offering any additional remarks. It is worth noting that among these 27 news sharing tweets (27%), 19 tweets represented negative news coverage regarding Hillary Clinton, and 5 were related to positive coverage about Trump himself. Therefore, it is evident that Trump selectively chose news that was favorable of his views, so as to positively frame his campaign, while, at the same, he made excessive use of negative news to damage Clinton's image for the purpose of facilitating persuasion effectiveness. Furthermore, there were also 23 (5.8%) tweets focusing on disseminating factual campaign information, which were primarily relating to Trump publicizing the upcoming events he would attend, or disseminating information about election issues, such as voter registration. Only 5 tweets (1.3%) were related to the theme of "human touch", which were mainly concerning Trump expressing his condolences to victims of some disasters or other incidents. Moreover, the rest of 21 tweets (5.3%) that were excluded from the themes discussed above, which were mainly concerned with some random discussions Trump made to express his feelings or general opinion.

Response activities

As to the receivers' response activities to Trump's tweets, the average number of retweets, likes, and replies per tweet gained were 11.6k, 28.1k, and 3.7k, respectively. Furthermore, it was discovered that there was a significant overlap concerning tweets that were most retweeted and most liked. Although these popular tweets, Trump displayed his strong resolution and perseverance in striving for success in this race. One

tweet posted on October 8th, “Here is my statement”, hit both the highest retweets (51.7k) and likes (119.8k). The reason that this short tweet received a profound reaction from audiences is that the video embedded in this tweet reflected Donald Trump’s reply to his “tape scandal”. On October 5, 2016, the Washington Post released a video clip, in which Trump made some lewd marks about women back in 2005. Unlike other situations, proceeding persuasion after a crisis needs to minimize the negative influence of the specific crisis, and convince supporters to remain on your side. In this tweet, Trump applied the inoculation theory, which is a persuasion approach that helps build resistance to various forms of attack (Newman & Perloff, 2004). To detail this, Trump firstly acknowledged and apologized for this publicized blunder; however, he refuted it from several different aspects. On the one hand, he argued that he is just a normal individual who is not perfect, and these words do not accurately reflect his actions or who he really is. On the other hand, Trump refuted it by shifting the focus toward criticizing his opponents. He argued that people should not be distracted by this insignificant incident, as this world has more serious issues that need to be tackled, while Hillary Clinton and her kind were not qualified to solve the real problems. In this way, Trump’s preemption of criticism prevented his supporters from defecting to the opposition, and perhaps even helped him win many undecided voters.

To sum up, persuasive communication was detected in various aspects of Trump’s Twitter usage. First, the utilization of timing strategy on tweeting activity enables its persuasive messages to reach a large number of its audience. Mentions and hashtags use demonstrate his intention of arising negative sentiments towards his opponents. Furthermore, the examination of themes clearly indicate the viewpoints Trump intended to convey, so as to convince the people to believe him, and highlight the actions he persuaded voters to follow. Showing off achievements and attacking others reflect the approach he applied, so as to be more persuasive and projecting himself in a positive light, while, at the same time, citing negative criticisms and accusations toward his opponents. The analysis of his popular tweets reveals some persuasion techniques he employed. Thus, persuasive communication is embedded in Trump’s Twitter use. The next two parts will further delve into his persuasive communication by examining the message characteristics and emphasis of Trump’s tweets, based on the persuasion theories addressed in chapter 4.

6.2 Examining the characteristics of persuasive messages

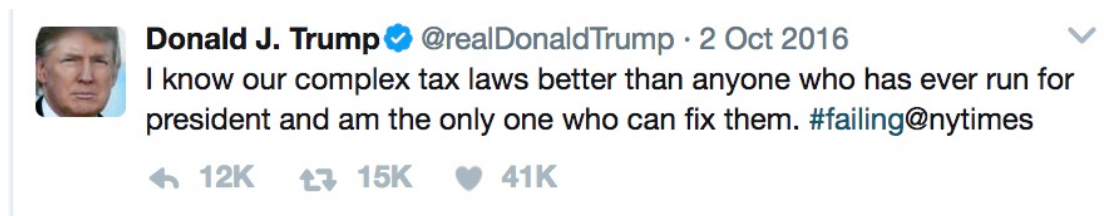
6.2.1 Message structure

It is normal that people might hold different views regarding any particular issue. Hence, communicators engaged in creating a persuasive message have to determine what structure to utilize, so as to arrange their viewpoints and whether to consider opposing arguments. Concerning the persuasion topic of who should be elected as president in the 2016 US presidential general election period, Donald Trump and his competitor Hillary Clinton held opposing persuasive arguments. On Donald Trump's side, he aimed to convince voters that he is more qualified than Hillary Clinton for winning the presidency. In contrast, the opposing view held by Hillary Clinton's campaign claimed that she is a better choice than Donald Trump in this race. Faced with two opposing views, it is necessary to examine how Donald Trump arranged his messages to persuade voters into agreeing with him, rather than the Clinton side, and whether he considered the opposing arguments in his tweets. As Table 7 presents, 83 tweets (21%) used a one-sided message structure, in which Trump solely offered arguments that helped promote his image, justified the rightness of his political positions, and declared his devotion in serving America and its people. As the example below shows (Figure 6), Trump emphasized his expert knowledge of tax laws accumulated from his considerable business expertise and experience, and even used words like "only one" to stress the exclusiveness of his competence as a candidate. According to Cialdini (2001), people perceive products as becoming more valuable and attractive when the availability of these products is limited, which is also known as the "scarcity principle". In this tweet, Trump applied the persuasive power of scarcity to win voters' recognition regarding his ability and further boost general support for him. On the whole, these one-sided tweets enable the audience to focus on the advantages of Donald Trump. According to Allen (1991), one-sided messages are more appropriate for a favorable audience, because the messages focus on agreeable arguments. Furthermore, the nature of Twitter also gives one-sided messages a clear advantage over two-sided messages, because it is assumed to be challenging to include two sides' view in a tweet with no more than 140 characters.

Table 7. The sidedness of Donald Trump's tweets

Sidedness	Tweets	Number	Percentage
One-sided Messages	Tweets provide arguments that build up Trump's qualification for being elected.	83	21%
Two-sided Messages	Tweets provide arguments concerning both Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, or follow with refutations to the opposing views.	40	49%
	Tweets only have refutations and counterarguments of supporting Hillary	154	
Other	Situations excluded from the above categories.	118	30%

Figure 6. A tweet with the one-sided structure



Concerning the 194 (49%) two-sided tweets, Trump did not only present his point of view, but also involved the opposing side, Hillary Clinton's campaign, in his tweets. The result reveals that the number of two-sided tweets are twice as much as the one-sided structure, taking up almost half of all the tweets. These two-sided tweets can be divided into two types. One type is Trump mentioning both his points and the situations of the opposite sides in his tweets. At the same time, he would compare them and counter the opposing side, so as to demonstrate how he outdistances his opponents. The most common method is to present the results of polls conducted by various organizations. In demonstrating Donald Trump's and Hillary Clinton's approval ratings, it illustrates how much public support each of them gained; at times the approval ratings between Trump and Clinton were quite close, which indicates the highly intense competition in this election. Although Trump provided information about Clinton's popularity, all the poll results presented in Trump's tweets indicate that Trump received higher approval ratings than Clinton. However, according to the polling data records during the 2016 US presidential general election period, numerous polls presented that Hillary Clinton achieved higher approval ratings than Trump (Real Clear Politics).

Therefore, it appears that Trump selectively selected polls where the results were in his favor to showcase his popularity. Although he used no direct explanation to refute Hillary Clinton's popularity, the comparison of the rating numbers clearly revealed that Trump outperformed Clinton. Furthermore, making use of pictures to deliver two-sided messages is a way to avoid Twitter's message length limit. The other type of tweets do not mention anything related to Trump nor his campaign, but instead, Trump opted to directly refute the opposing views presumed by his opponents, while mainly targeting his opponent, Hillary Clinton. Although these tweets only involved Clinton's side, they were still categorized as two-sided messages because it serves as the refutations of two-sided messages based on the definition provided by Hovland (1959). In these tweets, Trump exposed Clinton's scandals; thus, tainting her reputation, while criticizing her political policies, and denied her ability to bring about positive changes to America. These are all arguments that attempt to rebut the opposing view, and totally overturned the idea that Clinton is more qualified than him in competing for the presidency. In addition to countering his competitor Clinton, in some two-sided tweets Trump also refuted views that might have jeopardized his odds of being elected. For instance, Trump frequently accused the media of having biased and dishonest coverage about him, and also reminded voters not to believe these stories. It is apparent that Trump provided ample refutations in his tweets to counter opposing viewpoints. According to O'Keefe (1999), compared with one-sided messages, two-sided messages which include refutations enjoy significantly greater persuasiveness and credibility, especially on non-advertising topics. Therefore, it is believed that Trump's refutational two-sided messages could be viewed as a persuasion approach that contributes to distinguishing his side of the arguments, while downplaying and denigrating the opposing side. As for the "other" group, it mainly includes tweets that do not have preference to neither sides, such as tweets disseminating factual information about upcoming campaign events, expressing gratitude or making mobilizations, etc.

Examining every tweet's structure facilitates the understanding of how Trump developed and arranged different aspects of information in his tweets. However, since there is a high consistency regarding the content of the messages Trump attempted to convey, it is necessary to examine these tweets as a whole to discern the overall message structure Trump displayed on Twitter. It depicts that on the one hand, Trump provided various evidence in his favor, so as to enhance the acceptance of his point of

view, thereby aiming to convince voters that he is the candidate who truly cares about the American people and is competent in changing the unsatisfied status quo. On the other hand, Trump actively refuted any opposing views held by his rivals, including the Clinton campaign, some media, etc. Therefore, it can be concluded that the overall message structure of Trump's tweets is two-sided, as he did not only present his side of the arguments, but also heavily refuted opposing viewpoints. Allen (1991) posited that a two-sided message with refutation is more persuasive than a one-sided message, because the content appears more informative and pragmatic. It is believed that, by involving refutations, it should give Trump's messages a more persuasive tone and position, and further make it more possible to shape the audiences' attitudes, especially when it comes to undecided voters.

In addition, among these two-sided messages, a comparative structure is frequently utilized to demonstrate that Trump's abilities and policies are superior to those advocated by his opponent, Hillary Clinton. Comparisons can serve to distinguish differences between two subjects and persuade receivers that one subject is preferable over another (Larson, 2012). As the example in Figure 7 depicts, Trump argued that he has the ability to reach all these goals, but he denied Clinton's possibility in achieving any of them. In the embedded picture, Trump's portrait is chromatic and coupled with several check marks. Conversely, Clinton's image is black and white and clearly associated with "X" marks. The direct comparison provides a sharp contrast between Trump and Clinton, which also makes the message highly distinct, memorable, and convincing. This example also draws upon another aspect of message structure, namely, conclusion drawing. In this tweet, Trump drew an explicit conclusion that the choice is clear and voters should vote for him instead of Clinton. In other tweets, Trump also offered explicit conclusions, in terms of what he wishes the audience to do, or the viewpoints he wants the voters to believe. Specifically, Trump distinctly expressed his requests for voters to take specific action, including joining his campaign activities and voting for him on Election Day. Apart from calling for specific action, Trump's tweets were focused more on attempting to influence the audience's attitude towards himself and Clinton with a variety of arguments, which all explicitly led to one conclusion, that Trump is the right choice for president, rather than Clinton. According to O'Keefe (1997), messages with a clear or explicit conclusion are more persuasive than those

omitting a conclusion. On a microblogging platform, like Twitter, which requires a clarifying persuasion intention within just 140 characters, it is believed that explicit conclusions are more effective in clearly delivering persuasive messages and substantially enhancing or shaping voters' attitudes.

Figure 7. A tweet with the compare structure



6.2.2 Message content

After examining the message structure, this part will evaluate the message content. This section will specifically investigate the content of Trump's persuasive messages in terms of evidence and emotional appeal. Moreover, adequate and solid evidence is nearly indispensable in implementing successful persuasion. Therefore, in order to persuade voters to accept the proposed viewpoints, it was necessary for Trump to provide relevant evidence to support his arguments. Firstly, the message box was used to present the primary arguments Trump presented in his tweets as well as the related evidence he provided to justify his arguments. According to his tweets, there were two main arguments Trump aimed to sell to the voters. One highlighted that individuals should support Donald Trump and his running mate, Mike Pence, in this election. The

second argument was that people should not choose to support the Clinton campaign. In order to ascertain how Trump developed the arguments, several crucial questions will be systematically addressed based on Trump's tweets. Specifically, questions such as "what Trump says about himself" and "what others say about Trump", will serve as clues to determine the evidence Trump provided for persuading people to support him. In addition, questions such as "what Trump says about his opponents" and "what others say about Trump's opponents" will be discussed to gather the evidence Trump offered to convince voters not to support his opponents in this election. The summary of the main arguments and relevant evidence contained in Trump's tweets are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. A summary of main arguments and the relevant evidence in the tweets

<i>The reasons people should support Trump</i>	
What Trump say about himself? 1. Competent 2. Received a lot of support 3. Won the presidential debates 4. His political policies make a difference	Relevant Evidence 1. Successful business records 2. Presenting leading polls numbers 3. Poll numbers; compliments from audience 4. <u>No clear evidence provided</u>
What others say about Trump? 1. Some voters expressed their loyal support and recognition to Trump 2. Some politicians expressed their firm support to Trump 3. Some media gave positive coverage about Trump	Relevant Evidence 1. Compliment remarks from voters; approval rating 2. Endorsements from politicians 3. Relevant news coverage shared in tweets
<i>The reasons people should not support Trump's opponents</i>	
What Trump says about his opponents? 1. Hillary Clinton's past political records are bad; she profits off the rigged system; all talk no action; liar; corrupt, a Wall Street puppet, her political policies are unworkable 2. Kaine lost the debate to Pence 3. Some Media is biased and rigged in the election	Relevant Evidence 1. Clinton supported various political issues which led to negative consequences, such as Iraq war; illegal email use; negative press release 2. Quoted tweets from users that support the argument of Pence wining the dabate 3. <u>No clear evidence provided</u>

<p>What others says about Trump’s opponents?</p> <p>1. Some voters expressed their disapproval to Clinton</p> <p>2. Some media revealed Clinton’s bad behaviors</p>	<p>Relevant Evidence</p> <p>1. Criticism remarks from audience</p> <p>2. Relevant news coverage shared in tweets</p>

Concerning the reasons as to why individuals should support Trump, firstly Trump proposed a very high and positive self-evaluation. He regards himself as fully competent in being elected president. For example, in one tweet, Trump boasted, “I have created thousands of jobs and will bring back great American prosperity” (Trump, 2016a). Although Trump was new to the political arena, he made use of his past successful business record as evidence to validate that he is indeed an effective job creator and has the ability to resolve various political problems or issues. As previously discussed in the theoretical framework chapter, expertise is an important trait that can help establish the credibility of the communicators and further improve the effectiveness of persuasion (Maddux & Rogers, 1980). Therefore, by transferring his expertise from the business world to the field of politics, Trump enhanced his perceived competence and credibility, which helped him convince voters to accept and even embrace his arguments. However, there were only a few tweets that focused on displaying his expertise and ability; hence, the evidence for corroborating his competence is still relatively weak. Aside from enhancing his personal traits, Trump also actively bolstered his proposed policies. Specifically, Trump repeatedly claimed that his policies are optimal and effective in returning prosperity to America. For instance, he said in a tweet “My childcare plan makes a difference for working families - more money, more freedom.” (Trump, 2016b). However, Trump did not offer any detailed evidence to substantiate the rightness or properness of his political strategies. Although he repetitively stressed that his policies would make a real difference, no relevant evidence was provided to prove how and why these would excel.

Moreover, Trump devoted special attention to showing off the considerable support he received. Cialdini (2001) proffered that individuals intend to rely on the people around them for cues on how to think and act. By presenting positive poll numbers and quoting or rehashing compliments from the audience, Trump could induce people to follow

these supporters' thoughts under the influence of peer power. Apart from making use of social proof from voters, Trump also actively employed endorsements from politicians and the media to project himself in a positive light and earn greater recognition. Political endorsements certainly play a significant role in affecting persuasion effects. When voters have limited information or lack the ability to make a determined decision regarding which of the candidates will assist them to be better off, they would be inclined to take advice from other credible sources (e.g., an endorser), which also represent how political endorsements prompt persuasion (Calvert, 1985). This is especially true when the endorser is perceived as knowledgeable or shares a common interest with the voters. At this point the individuals are more likely to base their choice on the endorser's signal and be persuaded. In Trump's case, he did not only involve endorsements from voters who shared a common interest with other voters, but also included endorsements from numerous politicians and media outlets that are usually perceived as knowledgeable and authoritative in the political field.

In addition to providing persuasive messages that can establish his advantages, Trump also placed great efforts on attempting to weaken the support for his opponents. Specifically, Trump provided a variety of evidence to justify his argument that Clinton was completely unfit to become the president. The evidence he offered primarily targeted some of Clinton's poor political records, such as her illegal email usage and unethical behavior, as revealed by the media and Wikileaks. Furthermore, Trump frequently quoted some voters' negative remarks regarding Clinton, which served as further evidence to convince the people not to support Clinton in the election. Technically, Trump's opponents do not merely refer to Hillary Clinton, but also included Clinton's running mate, Tim Kaine, and some media organizations. In order to support his argument that Mike Pence outperformed Tim Kaine in the vice presidential debate, Trump again massively selected voters' tweets that were in complete favor of his side, so as to confirm that Pence won the debate instead of Kaine. However, although Trump accused some of the media of being biased in their election coverage, there is no clear evidence provided in his tweets to support his assertion. To conclude, Trump mainly employed the form of past records, polls, endorsements and media coverage as evidence to substantiate his arguments. The evidence was merely presented or mentioned in his tweets, but there was no deep discussion or reasoning process involved in the tweets. Therefore, it can be concluded that the evidence can

facilitate his persuasive communication to some extent, but is not able to substantially improve the persuasiveness of his messages.

Apart from providing rational evidence, Trump also applied emotional appeals in continuing his level of persuasion. An emotional appeal is a form of persuasion that calls upon the audiences' emotions or feelings. Although emotions cannot serve as logical evidence, they are extremely powerful in affecting people's feelings regarding the relevant arguments and further influencing their attitudes and decisions on the issue (Brader, 2006). Table 9 presents the coding result regarding the emotions evoked in each tweet. The negative emotional appeals constitute half of the tweets, so it is not an exaggeration to state that negative emotions dominated Trump's tweets. Specifically, the negative emotions included anger, fear, sadness, etc. Furthermore, the majority of these negative emotional appeals were associated with his opponents; mainly targeting Hillary Clinton. The mixed emotions appear in 47 tweets (12%), and "other" mainly refers to the neutral emotion, such as tweets disseminating factual information.

Table 9. The emotions evoked in Donald Trump's tweets

Emotions	Details	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Positive	Joyful, grateful, hopeful, proud, excited, eager, inspired	123	31%
Negative	Angry, fearful, shocked, sad, worried, resentful	198	50%
Mixed	Proud and angry; hopeful and worried	47	12%
Other	Neutral	26	7%

Take the fear appeal as an example, Trump often aroused an emotion of fear by stressing the unacceptance or the assumed negative consequences of a Clinton presidency. As Trump reiterated in his tweets, "We cannot take four more years of Barack Obama and that's what you'll get if you vote for Hillary!" (Trump, 2016c), and "We can't afford more years of FAILURE!" (Trump, 2016d). Apart from evoking fear by himself, Trump also presented how voters should fear a Clinton administration. As Figure 8 graphically illustrates, Trump quoted from a user who even used phrases such as "gets Americans killed" to express her extreme concern and anxiety regarding a possible Clinton administration. Fear appeal exhibits a significant persuasive effect,

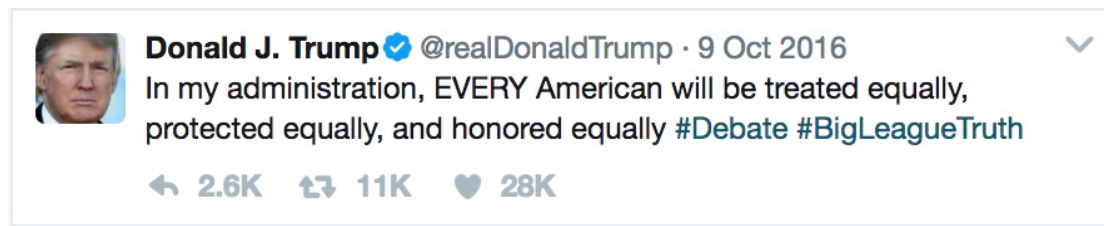
since it can push individuals to augment their attitudes or behavior through a threat of potential negative consequences (Perloff, 2003). Moreover, Trump also suggested a protective action to avoid risk, which is to vote for him instead of Hillary Clinton. While providing efficacy recommendations to the audience, it can be either gain-framed or loss-framed (Salovey & Wegener, 2002). Trump emphasized both benefits of voting for him, and the costs of not adopting his requested action. For instance, in one tweet Trump (2016e) stated, “Hillary Clinton’s tax hikes will CRUSH our economy, I will cut taxes”, in which he aroused fear by stressing the potential loss of the economy if Clinton were elected. Furthermore, he also mentioned the benefits of voting for him, constituting lower taxes and a stronger economy.

Figure 8. A tweet containing the fear appeal



In addition to negative emotional appeals, tweets related to Trump’s campaign always evoked positive emotions, including joy from received support, gratitude to voters, hope for a better and brighter future, etc. For instance, Trump frequently stirred up hopeful emotions by making various promises regarding what he aimed to achieve if elected. The most common one is “I will make America great again”, which is a relatively broad and somewhat ambiguous promise. Some other political promises focused on particular issues, such as “I will defeat ISIS” and “I will cut taxes”. These promises were short and decisive, but also vague, as Trump did not offer any detailed pledges or plans for fulfilling these promises. Actually, these rather ambiguous promises contributed to persuading voters, at least to some extent, as this ambiguity created an illusion, thereby allowing voters to read into it what they want to. As Figure 9 shows, Trump promised that a society with full equality will be established once he is elected. Thus, by making people imagine their best possible future in a Trump administration, it facilitated a desire for accepting his proposals. It is apparent that Trump designed a variety of emotional appeals in his tweets, which were intended to wield control on voters’ emotions towards different objects, and further enhanced the persuasive effect.

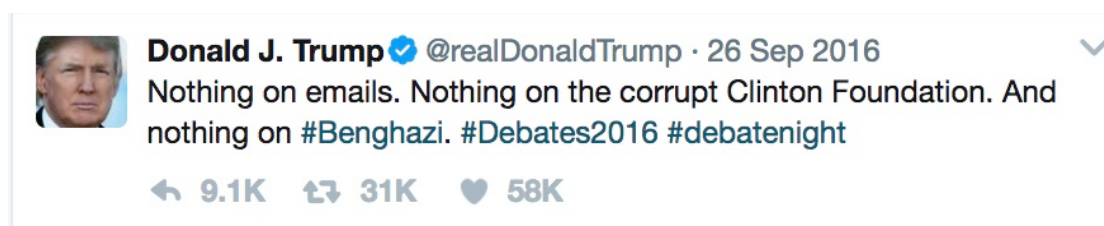
Figure 9. A tweet containing the positive emotional appeal



6.2.3 Message style

With respect to the influence of the message style on persuasion, the utilization of rhetoric and strong emotion-laden words were examined. Two common rhetorical devices were detected in Trump's tweets: irony and metaphor. The application of irony in rhetoric is to convey incongruity, so as to deprecate or ridicule an idea or actions. Trump employed irony as a trope in six of his tweets, and the majority were related to Hillary Clinton. As the example in Figure 10 reveals, although Trump said, "Nothing on emails. Nothing on the corrupt Clinton Foundation", he actually stressed the opposite of its literal meaning. Irony was not only effective in delivering his contempt of Clinton, but also evoked people's anger and mistrust toward Clinton for not being transparent concerning her email scandal, and issues pertaining to the Clinton Foundation.

Figure 10. A tweet using the irony trope



Moreover, three of Trump's tweets involved the use of metaphor, which is primarily utilized to convey an idea by linking it to an existing concept, or an ideology with which the audience is already familiar. Metaphor has a strong relevance with persuasive communication, and while delivering persuasive intent, messages containing metaphors produce a far greater attitude change than those without metaphors (Sopory & Dillard, 2002). In Figure 11, Trump compared "the truth" to "a beautiful weapon", describing it with the attributes of a "weapon". The background of this tweet relates to a person named Summer Zervos, who brought an accusation against Trump; however,

it was revealed that this woman praised Trump in an email on a previous occasion, inviting Trump to her restaurant. After he declined the invitation, the woman changed her attitude and began to accuse Trump. Therefore, Trump presented the letter in the tweet to clarify the true narrative and employed a metaphor to express how the truth works like a weapon to effectively dismiss false accusations and lies. Besides this, Trump also tactfully used a metaphor to express the promising future of America with his job creation strategies. As he reassured in one tweet, “Instead of driving jobs and wealth away, AMERICA will become the world’s great magnet for innovation and job creation”(Trump, 2016f). The word “magnet” vividly describes a thriving and prosperous society filled with jobs and career opportunities. On the whole, Trump did not heavily use rhetoric in his tweets, as only nine tweets detected this kind of use. However, the use of irony and metaphors still contribute to the intensity and liveliness related to language for persuasive intent.

Figure 11. A tweet using a metaphor



Language intensity is also closely related to word choice. The result of examining the strong emotion-laden words in Trump’s tweets is illustrated in Figure 12. The frequency of his words is in accordance with the size of the words. The most striking words include: great, crooked, bad, unbelievable, rigged, dishonest, lies, disaster, corrupt weak, failed, etc., and it appears from Figure 12 that Trump utilized negative emotion-laden words much more frequently than positive ones. These words do not only serve as important elements comprising emotional appeals, but also significantly shaped Trump’s personalized message style on Twitter, as he might make use of certain words that others do not usually employ. Based on this word cloud figure, negativity constitutes a distinct characteristic of Trump’s message style. Moreover, the strong negative emotion-laden words make Trump’s messages seem outrageous, but also clear

and forthright. The harsh words, divisive phrases, and emotive dramatic language characterize Trump's special message styles.

Figure 12. The strong emotion-laden words cloud detected in the tweets



6.3 Examining the emphasis of persuasive messages

6.3.1 Message quality

Message quality is a very decisive factor in affecting the probability of audiences accepting persuasion. In Section 6.2.2, the evidence provided for supporting Trump's main arguments has been fundamentally addressed. As addressed previously, the types of evidence Trump provided for his arguments were mainly regarding candidates' past records, poll results, endorsements, and media coverage (see section 6.2.2). As pertaining to past records, Trump oversimplified his claim that Clinton should be fully responsible for all the negative results of certain government policies, which present his arguments as chaotic, random, and subjective. As the example in Figure 13 clearly illustrates, although Trump attempted to utilize some of Clinton's stains left from her past records as proof of her incapability in dealing with political issues, he did not specify solid or factual evidence to validate that Clinton was really responsible for these negative consequences. Thus, it can be observed that Trump randomly presented a variety of accusations or statements without carefully verifying the authenticity and

objectiveness of this conjectured evidence. Concerning the latter three forms of evidence, Trump also discerningly presented others' evaluations that were favorable to his side. However, poll numbers and complimentary remarks from voters only reflect the support he received, and do not constitute powerful grounds on which to prove his ability for becoming a qualified or effective president. Hence, the types of evidence provided in Trump's tweets were not compelling enough to be reckoned as high quality or legitimate arguments.

Figure 13. A tweet providing relevant evidence for supporting arguments



With respect to the volume and source of evidence, Table 10 depicts 51 tweets offering evidence that facilitated the enhancement of Trump's campaign, yet these only account for 13 % of all the tweets. However, the relevant evidence for proving Clinton's unfitness was detected in 74 tweets, amounting to 19 %; thus, the volume of evidence cannot be viewed as substantial. Moreover, since the evidence Trump provided were mainly poll numbers from media agencies and endorsements from supporters, evidence from external sources makes up the majority. As to media coverage, Trump's shared press releases were not only from his official campaign website, but also from various third party media organizations. McCroskey (1969, p.170) argued that evidence from a

third party source rather than the speaker is usually seen as more credible. In Trump's tweets, a significant amount of evidence is from internal sources, Trump or his campaign team, which makes the evidence being perceived as less objective and persuasive. To sum up, the volume of evidence supplied in the attempt to substantiate Trump's arguments is quite limited, and many of them are not compelling enough, mostly due to the lack of factual statements or objective assessments.

Table 10. The volume and source of the evidence provided in Trump's tweets

Evidence categories	Volume	Source
Evidence building up Trump campaign	51 (13%)	Internal source (16)
		External source (35)
Evidence suppressing Clinton campaign	74 (19%)	Internal source (29)
		External source (45,)

Furthermore, the availability of key information in Trump's tweets was examined. In order to persuade voters, it is vital to provide answers to voters' most concerned questions. In other words, during the election campaign period, Trump should have explicitly conveyed to voters what problems he intended to solve and how he planned to solve these problems if he got elected. Moreover, it is necessary for Trump to explain what made him a better choice than his opponent in this election. After examining the information provided in Trump's tweets, it was discovered that Trump argued that America is presently in a bad situation, since the country has been troubled by countless problems. Trump expressed his aims in solving the following problems: the economy, public security, the healthcare system, terrorist organizations, illegal immigration, and corruption in the government. Therefore, it can be seen that Trump clearly highlighted the problems he planned to solve. His solutions as to how exactly he would deal with or effectively resolve these problems were quite vague. For example, Trump promised that he would revive the economy by bringing back jobs, renegotiating trade deals and cutting taxes as well as reforming Obamacare by repealing and replacing it with a more affordable system. However, Trump did not elaborate on any of the details pertaining to these proposed policies, nor the comprehensive plans concerning how to achieve it. When it comes to what makes him a better choice than his opponent, Trump labeled himself as a political outsider who represents the interest of ordinary, hard-working American people instead of the elite. Trump also projected himself as a brave and

determined “fighter”; one who is able to generate real changes and make America great again. Although Hillary Clinton has considerable political experience, Trump was determined to emphasize some of Clinton’s negative records and accused her of not performing adequately in her past career. In this way, Trump successfully distinguished himself from his opponent and clarified the advantages that make him a better choice than his opponent. Hence, Trump basically covered all the crucial information needed in persuading voters, with the exception of providing any detailed plans for solving these problems.

6.3.2 Peripheral cues

As mentioned previously, the peripheral cues can be categorized into three types: source cue, message cue, and additional cue. Concerning the source cue, since this study only focused on the message part of Trump’s persuasive communication, it will not specifically involve discussions relating to Trump’s expertise and characteristics as a persuader. Instead, the source cue refers to information contained in Trump’s tweets that tend to increase his social attractiveness. In Trump’s tweets, he referred to himself as a “blue-collar billionaire”, which stressed his similarity with ordinary blue-color workers. At the same time, “billionaire” reminds people of Trump’s remarkable business success, and attracts admiration and likeability among the more common working class people. According to Perloff (2003), if persuaders tend to share some similarities with the targeted recipients, audiences are more likely to exhibit a favorable cognitive response toward the message promoted by persuaders. By sharing his business savvy and experience for making a fortune, it helped him entice blue-collar workers or small business owners to believe that he better comprehends their innate concerns and can lead them toward having a more desirable and secure life. Aside from building up attractiveness through similarity and likeability, physical attractiveness is another crucial source cue. In all the promotional pictures or videos embedded in his tweets, Trump is portrayed as a positive, confident, capable and ready-to-lead politician. The example in Figure 14 clearly demonstrates this concept, since Trump is dressed in a formal suit with a tie or appears in more casual attire (e.g., with a baseball cap, without a tie). With the American flag and crowded audiences as the background, Trump appears as an authoritative figure who is qualified for the presidency, and one who triggers compliance among audiences. Moreover, these pictures featured Trump either holding up his thumbs or applauding with a confident and amiable smile on his face.

These gestures are not only in line with the leading poll numbers presented here, but have also highlighted his self-proclaimed physical attractiveness and assumed charisma. Thus, regardless of the content in the texts or pictures, Trump tried to establish his social attractiveness and project a positive and successful image as peripheral cues to influence individuals' attitudes. For an audience who exhibits low motivation or ability to process persuasive messages, these source cues could be the most telling factors that affect their impression of the persuaders as well as their messages.

Figure 14. A tweet showing Donald Trump's physical attractiveness



With respect to the message cue, the modality of the message and degree of repetition were examined. Among all 394 tweets, Trump embedded pictures in 106 tweets, and videos in 27 tweets, which collectively accounted for 34% of all the tweets. According to Messaris (1997), visual materials, such as pictures and videos, are more effective to capture audiences' attention and create a deep impression. Compared to texts, pictures and videos can promote a visual persuasion, which makes the persuasive messages not only more evident and direct, but also project a more powerful visual impact. It has even been scientifically established that 90% of the information that is transmitted to the brain is visual (ibid.) Trump also employed many striking pictures in his tweets,

which can easily attract the audiences' visual perception and serve as cues to influence receivers' decision-making process. To take one example (Figure 15), Trump compared Hillary Clinton with Abraham Lincoln, a famous and highly esteemed president in American history. So as to make it more convincing that Clinton is a liar, Trump placed Hillary Clinton's picture next to Lincoln's and labeled Clinton a "liar" and Lincoln "honest" (Honest Abe). Besides, these two pictures were presented in black and white for different reasons. Lincoln's photo was black and white originally, while Clinton's was converted into black and white deliberately, so as to project her image as dark, unfriendly, and negative. The visual persuasion technique such as using bold fonts also helps attract initial attention to the contrast between the two photos. In using this method, even without reading Trump's tweets, audiences can immediately form an understanding regarding the messages Trump tried to express. Therefore, pictures offer significant advantages in making messages direct, clear, and concise. Another persuasive tactic in this picture is the positive transfer; implying that Trump follows Lincoln's tradition of being honest. For audiences who do not bother to process information carefully, striking and provocative pictures can act as cues to influence their attitudes and a basis for making decisions.

Figure 15. A tweet contained a picture with strong visual impact



The other kind of message modality Trump utilized in his tweets is video. The distinct advantage of videos lies in its ability to transfer information more quickly and with significantly higher emotional appeal (Messaris, 1997). Figure 16 illustrates how Trump embedded an animation video in his tweet, in which Trump depicted Clinton as a puppet of Wall Street, who lined her pockets with money. The video did not only vividly portray Clinton's mixed relationship with Wall Street, but also increased the level of entertainment for audiences. To some extent, the highly selective use of visual elements in tweets helped make Trump's messages more convincing, bold and impressive, with an added twist of deviance.

Figure 16. A tweet embedded with an animation video



Another message cue is repetition. Although Trump posted tweets quite frequently, the content of his messages was highly repetitive. Specifically, Trump repeatedly made all kinds of positive remarks on his campaign, and criticized his opponents again and again. Numerous previous studies have ascertained that the repetition of arguments could increase audiences' belief in the statements, because it makes the arguments more familiar and salient in the receivers' memory (Gilbert, 1991). Thus, message repetition

can serve as a cue to influence the audiences' perceived message validity and familiarity. According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model, for audiences who lack motivation and the ability to evaluate complicated inference issues, they might choose to depend on familiarity and salience that have resulted from repetition, in order to come to a decision (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Hence, even though repetition does not make Trump's message, in and of itself, more convincing, yet it still exhibits an effect on facilitating his persuasion. Furthermore, Twitter, a key component of the persuasion process, plays a role in facilitating Trump's use of message repetition as a peripheral cue, because Twitter is broadcasting medium that encourages users to post frequently and constantly.

An additional cue detected in Trump's tweets is the bandwagon effect, which is characterized by "the probability of the increase of individual adoption with respect to the proportion of people who have already done so" (Colman, 2003, p.77). According to this concept, when a phenomenon, whereby more people believe in something, such as a philosophy or ideology, it encourages others to follow and adopt it, regardless of the underlying evidence. In the case of Trump's tweets, it was determined that Trump attempted to create this bandwagon effect, which is why a high proportion of people have chosen to support him. For instance, it is observed that Trump frequently showed off the leading approval rates he attained and quoted the complimentary remarks he received from his supporters in a series of his tweets. By implying that everyone else is supporting Trump, it enables the undecided voters to fall into the persuasive trap of the bandwagon appeal, which further encouraged them to follow the supporters' choice.

7. Concluding Remarks

7.1 Research questions revisited

Political campaign has its foundation in persuasion. As the crucial communicators of political campaigns, candidates have goals of motivating the public to believe in particular viewpoints or engage in certain behaviors for their interest, which is mainly accomplished through persuasive messages (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 2004). As of now, social media have become essential medium for distributing these messages with persuasion intent. Therefore, this study investigates Donald Trump's Twitter use in the political campaign from persuasive communication perspective. The entire study departs from the messages Trump posted on Twitter. The customized theoretical framework developed from Perloff's message characteristics approach and the ELM serves well in analyzing the characteristics and emphasis of his messages, it is believed that the research questions have been answered.

1. What are the characteristics of Trump's messages on Twitter during the 2016 U.S presidential campaign from the perspective of persuasive communication?

Based on Perloff's (2003) theories about the dynamics of actors that influence the persuasion process, the characteristics of Trump's tweets were examined from three aspects: message structure, message content, and message style. As to the message structure, Trump employed a mix of one-sided and two-sided messages in his tweets; however, the two-sided ones comprised the majority. In the one-sided messages, Trump only offered information related to promoting his advantages and qualifications in winning the presidency. These one-sided messages enabled Trump to clarify his point quickly and directly. With the limitation of 140 characters on Twitter, it is challenging to rationalize all his arguments comprehensively; thus, one-sided messages have the advantage of encouraging the audiences to particularly focus on the viewpoints that helped enhance Trump's campaign. However, Trump's two-sided messages contributed more to the effect of persuasion, as most of the two-sided messages were followed with refutations, which are perceived as more persuasive than one-sided messages. Although Trump involved the opposing side into his discussion, he specifically offered a comparison and contrast, so as to demonstrate his superiority, and went on to refute the opposing views with various statements. In addition, it was

determined that Trump's tweets always drew explicit conclusions, in the hopes of convincing voters to adopt the viewpoints and actions he promoted.

After examining the content of Trump's tweets, it was discovered that Trump's persuasive messages consisted of both cogent evidence and emotional appeals. Firstly, Trump provided evidence to establish his expertise, which forms a significant component of credibility. By demonstrating his successful business experience and expertise, the endorsements from other established authorities and carefully selected flattering press coverage, Trump argued that he was qualified and competent in becoming the U.S president. Furthermore, Trump also utilized facts and figures, such as poll numbers as logical appeals, so as to support his claims that he received more recognition and popularity than Clinton. For persuading people not to support Clinton, Trump not only criticized or made various accusations against Clinton, but also employed a variety of negative press releases in an attempt to discredit her. Moreover, Trump made use of various emotional appeals to sway audiences as well. Specifically, diverse kinds of negative emotional appeals were adopted to incite voter's anger toward Clinton's unethical behaviors, and to raise fear, and concern towards the potential consequences resulting from a Clinton presidency. In sharp contrast, all the positive emotional appeals were associated with the Trump campaign, which involved joy and excitement from a tremendous support base as well as being full of hope to live in a promising and bright American future under Trump's administration. Therefore, Trump utilized all three of Aristotle's modes of persuasion: logos (the appeal to logic), ethos (the appeal to credibility), and pathos (the appeal to emotion). It is believed that his messages clearly delivered his persuasive intent, and made adequate use of various persuasion tactics, such as scarcity, social proof, liking, etc.

As pertaining to the message style, Trump's tweets exhibit a unique and personalized style. Firstly, two rhetorical devices, namely, irony and metaphors, are detected in his tweets, which is supposed to contribute and enhance the intensity of his language, while increasing the effect of persuasion. However, the influence of rhetorical tropes on the persuasion effect was limited, since Trump only used them in a few tweets. What really distinguishes his unique message style is the significant number of dramatic emotive words he preferred to utilize in his tweets, which were quite different from the crafted speeches that individuals have been familiar with from candidates seeking the

presidency. Specifically, Trump's word choice was typically simple and conversational, which made it easier for all to understand, yet these words were also definitive and harsh enough to easily capture and retain people's attention and evoke emotions.

2. What is the emphasis of Trump's messages on Twitter during the 2016 U.S presidential campaign from the perspective of persuasive communication?

As to the emphasis of his messages, this study aims to ascertain whether Trump's tweets depended more on message quality to persuade the people or relied more on peripheral cues to facilitate persuasion. After examining the messages, the answer proffered by this study is that Trump's tweets were relatively weak in terms of message quality. Instead, the finding illustrates that more emphasis was placed on creating various peripheral cues for promoting persuasion, instead of developing high message quality to precede persuasions. The reasons for this conclusion are several. First, the quality of Trump's messages was evaluated based on the type, volume, and source of the evidence provided for supporting Trump's arguments. The results depict that the types of evidence, such as poll numbers, were not sufficiently convincing, due a lack of pragmatic reasoning processes and sound arguments. In addition, Trump selectively chose media coverage with a unidimensional opinion, so as to encourage a particular perception in favor of his side. He further employed judgmental language to produce emotional appeals, rather than rational responses, which made his messages appear biased and unconvincing. Furthermore, the volume of evidence is also limited, since only less than half of the tweets are available for relevant evidence. Last, but not least, a large amount of evidence originates from Trump or his campaign, which makes the messages less convincing, as compared with evidence derived from third parties. However, it needs to be admitted that Trump's messages basically offered pertinent information that voters' were most concerned with. On the whole, the quality of Trump's messages cannot be regarded as high in terms of the availability, amount, and persuasiveness of rational evidence.

With respect to peripheral cues, it was discovered that Trump's messages included a variety of different cues. Specifically, social attractiveness was enhanced by establishing likeability, similarity, and physical image, which served as source cues to positively affect Trump's perceived credibility. The message cues detected in Trump's tweets represent the excellent use of pictures and videos to catch people's attention and

deliver information directly and quickly. Moreover, a high degree of message repetition was applied to increase familiarity and salience, as a means of securing votes. The bandwagon effect was also applied by making use of received endorsements to encourage undecided voters to follow his supporters' lead under the influence of social proof. Hence, it is apparent that peripheral cues played a significant role in Trump's messages and had a significant impact on facilitating persuasive communication on Twitter.

However, it is not saying that persuasive messages focusing more on peripheral cues are definitely worse than those placing emphasis on enhancing message quality. It is people's individual choice regarding whether they take the central route or opt for the peripheral route to process persuasion information. Audiences selecting the central route to persuasion might find Trump's tweets were not persuasive enough due to the lack of solid, convincing, and reliable evidence. Nevertheless, receivers taking the peripheral route would be more subject to Trump's persuasive messages on Twitter owing to a variety of cues. In fact, it is necessary to take the channel Twitter, a key component of the persuasion process, into consideration for explaining the rationality of Trump emphasizing peripheral cues in facilitating persuasion on Twitter. As a microblogging platform, Twitter is famous for spreading short messages swiftly. On the one hand, such a platform makes detailed persuasion arguments and in-depth discussion more difficult to be employed, as compared with utilizing the traditional print media. On the other hand, with overwhelming information and continuous distractions on Twitter (e.g., promoted tweets, recommendations), all these factors prevent individuals' ability to scrutinize tweets carefully and, therefore, entice them to process information based on various peripheral cues, rather than the quality of the messages. Thus, the nature of Twitter also represents a crucial factor that determines the great impact of peripheral cues on affecting the persuasiveness of messages.

In conclusion, Trump's Twitter utilization reflects his efforts in establishing and facilitating persuasive communication on Twitter. As to the characteristics of Trump's messages, he employed two-sided messages, explicit conclusion drawing, relevant evidence, emotional appeals, rhetorical devices, and strong emotion-laden words, so as to effectively formulate his persuasive messages. A variety of persuasive techniques significantly enhanced the persuasiveness of his messages, including scarcity principle,

social proof, source credibility, fear appeal etc. Although the quality of his messages is reduced by the lack of compelling evidence, various peripheral cues are quite prominent in his tweets. Furthermore, the channel, Twitter, plays a significant role in facilitating certain aspects of persuasion techniques, such as enabling different formats of messages. This study achieved its aims of revealing how Donald Trump used Twitter to employ persuasion, and displaying the characteristics and emphasis of his messages. The result of this study shows that persuasive communication could be incorporated into candidates' Twitter use during election campaign. More precisely, it indicates that it is crucial and essential to formulate persuasive messages on Twitter with persuasion techniques, so as to successfully influencing voters' attitudes or even behaviors in political elections. Furthermore, it has shown that peripheral cues have unique advantages in employing persuasions on social media compared with in-depth rational discussions.

As to the contributions of this study, firstly, it adds an up-to-date empirical case to the academia field of candidates' social media use, shedding light on how Twitter has been used by Donald Trump to persuade voters in the election campaign. Besides, even though Trump's personalized style of Twitter use cannot be taken as a standard model, the outcomes of this study can still provide future candidates with experiences or inspirations in terms of applying a persuasive communication approach on Twitter use. Furthermore, it has shown that while developing messages on social media, making a good use of persuasion techniques and a combination of rational evidence and peripheral cues are supposed to contribute to candidates' pursuit of political goals in elections. In addition, the customized theoretical framework developed in this study can also be further applied to study persuasive communication in the future.

7.2 Limitations and future research

Persuasive communication serves well as a framework to examine candidates' social media use, especially on how they develop persuasive messages. This study makes contribution on offering insight into the characteristics and emphasis of Donald Trump's persuasive messages on Twitter, but it is unable to examine the persuasion effect of Trump's persuasive communication on Twitter because of the lack of resources. Furthermore, due to the short nature of the master's thesis, this study only

placed focus on messages part of the persuasion process, did not involve specific discussion concerning other actors' influence on the persuasion effect, such as communicators, channels and receivers. In addition, it is necessary to point out that candidates' social media in political campaigns is closely related to external factors, such as personal style, political system, and media environment, etc. In other words, the result of study can only reflect Donald Trump's case, but is not able to generalize to the situations of other candidates.

For further exploring candidates' social media use during political campaigns from the perspective of political persuasion, I suggest prospective studies to do an audience research by evaluating the effect of candidates' persuasion performance, as it can test the effectiveness of political persuasion and further guide future practices. Moreover, follow-up studies could continue the work by including other actors into discussion of persuasive communication, such as persuaders, channels, which helps gain a complete and comprehensive understanding of the persuasion process on social media. In addition, it would also be of great interest to do a comparative study concerning Donald Trump's and Hillary Clinton's social media use for persuasion in the 2016 U.S presidential campaign, which helps figure out the differences and similarities between different candidates' Twitter use for persuasive communication. Last but not least, it is also worth to examine more candidates' persuasion performance on Twitter in the context of different countries, so as to explore if there is some common pattern or rules behind the phenomenon.

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