The Overview of the Presidential Primary Campaign of Bernie Sanders: the Analysis of his Political Background and the Influence of Celebrity Endorsement and Social Media on Voters

Norbert Tomaszewski

University of Wrocław, Poland

Abstract:

Bernie Sanders became the phenomenon of this year's Presidential Primary campaign in the Democratic Party. In order to analyse his road to success, I have decided to focus on three main factors, that helped him conquer on an equal level with Hillary Clinton: his political background, the social media activity of his campaign staff and the celebrity endorsement. The aim of this article is to show, how in the 21st century, the role of the traditional media during the campaign is weakened by the influence of the Internet 2.0 tools. The work also focuses on the behaviour of the American voters and what impact does the regular internet use have on them.

Key words:

Introduction and the theoretical background

The last eight years have brought massive changes on the American political scene, considering the perception of its political marketing. The victory of Barack Obama during the presidential elections in 2008, was the first major political victory that based its success on the expanded use of social media. The equalization of the use of traditional sources and internet tools has allowed the candidates to reach more potential voters. This situation is related to the increasing strength of the Web 2.0. The initial function of the www (World Wide Web), was to gain the access to the information, that could be obtained with the help of the internet browsers

and websites – internet users were only the recipients of the content. The direction changed when internet portals began to emerge, which allowed the users to engage in the content – this is when the Internet 2.0 started. In addition to the previously mentioned functions of the internet, the user could interact with the uploaded content by commenting, sharing and moderating it (O'Reilly 2007). The role of the „creator of the content", which was previously unavailable for the end-user, granted them the power to evaluate the media subjects and influence their work. This has opened a room for maneuver for the canvassing staff to transform the way political campaigns work – while the role of the marketing staff has begun to decrease in this process, the role of potential voters, who could engage more in the campaign, started to grow. As a result, politicians were able to use less money to generate more content and to reach more citizens who could help them in canvassing in comparison with the traditional media (Raoof et al. 2013). The development of the internet has perfectly fitted the specifics of the American political scene and its campaigns. In 1944, in his essay, Leo Lowenthal has managed to analyze the difference in how the biographies were written before and after the First World War – while the idols of the masses before 1914 were mainly the so-called „idols of production", after 1919 most of the biographies started to focus on the „idols of consumption", such as actors or sportsmen (Lowenthal 1944). This determines the specificity of the American society, which has always been fascinated by the pop culture and the celebrities. This led to an on-going diffusion of the world of politics and mass culture through the engagement of the celebrities in the social postulates or their endorsement for the candidates. The theory formed by Erica Austin acknowledges that the external celebrities (which are not physically involved in the election process) can attract the attention of the media and by that influence their followers in thinking positively about the political process, therefore having the potential to reach out and mobilize the apathetic public (Austin et al. 2008). Celebrities have even been actively taking part in the elections in the United States with the example of an ex-actor Ronald Reagan who later became the President of the United States. In order to win the elections the US candidates need to infiltrate the mass culture and show their "celebrity" side, which may result in them becoming more popular amongst the voters and presenting their program to the wider audience. In addition to this, in the two-party system, the third-party candidates need to show their celebrity side to become popular in the media and gather the support of the undecided voters (Wheeler 2013). This theoretical approach confirms the results of the 2008 Presidential elections – Obama was

able to win them not only thanks to his experience as a U.S. Senator and his established position within the Democratic Party, but mainly because of his celebrity connections and the smart use of the social media marketing tools. With the charismatic and easy-going personality combined with the work of a PR specialist, Obama was able to let people believe that he is no different person from his voters. His mobilization of the undecided voters was influenced by the support of the celebrities, who were representing his ethnicity – that is why the hip-hop artists were able to let the black and Latino communities believe that their votes matter. What is more, Obama became attractive for the cultural elites – the endorsement of a candidate played not only the engaging role – it also became a part of a social fashion, which could allow the celebrities to appear in the political related media and re-establish their popularity.

Eight years later, this situation in the field of political marketing has only developed. Each of the most important candidates during the this year's primaries reflects the specificity of the campaign in the United States. On the Republican side, the primaries were won by Donald Trump, businessman and a political celebrity who played on the weakness of the other candidates and with his strong rhetoric was able to get to the conservative voters frustrated with their situation. He was able to access them not only with the use of the media, but also with his celebrity status. The Democratic Primaries were also based on the celebrity status of the candidates – Hillary Clinton became popular within the media as the First Wife and then established her position as a politician and a Secretary of State. That is why she was the most recognizable candidate within the party. On the other hand, Bernie Sanders, U.S. Senator from Vermont, who was until the start of the campaign rather unnoticed by the media, was able to engage young voters who use the internet on a daily basis, which led to him to gain a celebrity status among the Internet 2.0 society. In 2016 the Democratic Party is definitely facing a challenge – Obama is the most liked politician in the United States and a favorite of both traditional and internet media and such a strong persona will be hard to replace. At the very beginning of the Democratic Primary campaign, there were three candidates who mattered during the canvassing – Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders and Martin O'Malley who is the ex-governor of Maryland – but the eventual race went ahead between the ex-Secretary of State and the Senator from Vermont. With her party's support, Clinton was the favorite to become the Democratic candidate, but the growing popularity of Bernie Sanders was becoming a threat for her. From my scientific observation, Clinton could face the same problem as in 2008, when she

lost the primaries to Obama – her inability to reach out to the young voters combined with her approach based on the attacks on the opponent could determine her eventual failure. Although from the beginning she was winning in the opinion polls, she lost the Iowa caucus whose result usually determines who will eventually win the primaries – every candidate who won the first Democratic caucus since 1996 received later the nomination of the party.

Even though Hillary Clinton will be facing Trump in this year's elections, it can be easily established that the campaign of Sanders and his result will influence her political program and move it to more left-wing oriented issues. The aim of this research is to check how Sanders was able to compete with Clinton on an equal level and how he used the social media tools to achieve this result. Furthermore, this case can be used to determine how the modern marketing tools influence the decisions of the young voters – both from the perspective of the voter who can engage in the canvassing, and from the perspective of the campaigning staff which can use new applications to attract them. The main hypothesis that this research is supposed to follow is that new media are the most powerful ways of canvassing and reaching out to the youngest voters. At last, this article focuses on the celebrity aspect of the politics and how the mass culture icons can impact on the voting behavior of the social groups they come from, based on the Sanders case.

The political background of Bernie Sanders

Before analyzing Sanders' campaign his achievements as a politician need to be presented. Since his student years he engaged in the political activity. During studies he was active in the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and in January of 1962 he was one of the organizers of a strike which has been formed against the racial segregation at the University of Chicago. A year later, he attended Martin Luther King's speech in Washington, as a representative of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. These experiences and the influence of his socially-sensitive family have determined his political views.

His political career emerged in 1971, when he engaged in the activity of the Liberty Union Party, left-wing party that was formed in 1970 in Vermont. The party was formed by a group of political activists who met each other during the anti-war and anti-racist demonstrations during the 60's. Soon he was chosen to be a candidate to the Senate after a party meeting during which he presented his views regarding the Vietnam war and economic issues. As he mentioned in his autobiography „Outsider in the House", he wanted to gain the trust of the voters who

neither have endorsed the Republican, nor Democratic candidates (Sanders, Gutman 1997: 15). In 1972 he was both canvassing for the Senate seat and for the position of the Governor of Vermont. With his personal beliefs, which differed from the political program of other candidates, he was able to attract the voters – he decided to teach them economics and to show them how decisions of the government and the companies influence their standard of living. After he left the party in 1979, he could face new challenges. He admitted that the political campaigns had taught him two lessons: first one was that the views he represents are indeed mainstream, because they were met with the voters' acclaim; the second one was that people need to realize that instead of fitting into the two-party system voting, they can choose someone who is not supported by them and may be able to destroy this monopoly (Sanders, Gutman 1997: 18). With such an approach Sanders won the city major elections in Burlington, defeating the Democratic candidate Gordon Paquette who was also supported by the Republicans. The key to his success was being able to approach the voters on an equal level – referring to the distinctive theories of Bourdieu, he decided to show the anti-distinction – by minimalizing the distance between the candidate and the voter, he was able to show his more personal side, which was also possible thanks to using the nickname Bernie. His slogan „Burlington not for sale", which opposed the plans of the local politicians to build an exclusive subdivision with hotels, played an important part during these elections (Reynolds 1997: 152). Eventually he won by only 14 votes, which has disturbed the local political scene (Sanders, Gutman 1997: 44). Since the city council has been blocking all of his decisions, the citizens, who supported him, created a group called Citizens for Fair Play which has produced and handed out over 10 000 leaflets. This shows that from the very beginning he was able to engage his supporters when he needed them (Moberg 1983). Sanders, during his tenure not only focused on the local issues, he expressed his discontent on how American government interferes in the Nicaraguan conflict. The U.S. Administration was supporting the regime reign in Nicaragua in order to prevent the Sandinistas, the left-wing movement, to overtake the country. Sanders along with his supporters expressed his discontent and sent an official letter to Ronald Reagan reminding that instead of engaging in the conflict, the government should focus on the economic situation of U.S. citizens and the money that had been used for this cause should be rather spent on the housing market reform (Sanders, Gutman 1997: 67). Reagan's administration tried to form a counter-revolution in Nicaragua and in order to do so started to bombard this country with the economic sanctions – the strong

disapproval of such policies led Sanders to strengthen the ties with this country (Ipsen 2011: 4), which resulted in him visiting Nicaragua in 1985. He was invited by the Sandinistas for the commemoration of the 7th anniversary of the collapse of the regime. Since Sanders was the most engaged in this issue among the U.S. politicians, he gathered the attention of the media. Since this visit Sanders not only was seen as a local officeholder, but also a statesman who was representing his country abroad.

After successfully winning four consecutive elections in Burlington Sanders became the member of the U.S. House of Representatives in 1990. He has already taken part in two failed elections in 1986 and 1988 as an independent candidate, but the good results allowed him to think realistic about the win. The then-Representative, Republican Peter Plympton Smith has signed a legislative which included cuts in the medical care, which was met with the anger of his voters. Since Sanders was not serving anymore in the public office, he could fully focus on the campaign, while Smith had to attend the daily sessions in Washington, which did not allow him to canvas on a full-time basis. What is more, Smith was in conflict with the National Rifle Association, because he was planning to vote for the delegalization of the sport weapons. Because of these actions the Representative was facing a huge negative electorate among his voters – it is also worth mentioning, that he had not always followed the beliefs of the President Bush which led to the decrease of his position within the party. The Democrats, on the other hand, did not have a strong candidate – their candidate a professor at the University of Vermont, Dolores Sandoval, was rather unknown and did not have much support in the Democratic Party. In order to win, Sanders needed to secure over 50% of votes and he secured the seat by receiving over 56% of them, mainly because of the weaknesses of his rivals (Sanders, Gutman 1997: 86).

During his time in the House of Representatives one of the first moves of Sanders was the co-creation of the Congressional Progressive Caucus – the liberal left-wing organization within the Democratic Party. Starting with six founding members, the group has become the largest membership organization within the party with currently 76 members. The growing influence of this assembly has led them to prepare the project of a bill focusing on the equalization of the rights of Americans in the twenty-first century in 1997. The efforts of CPC were supported by the Democratic Socialists of America and the bill, which was called „Progressive Challenge", was prepared in cooperation with the Institute of Policy Studies and over forty other left-wing organizations. The main objectives of this project were: establishing the equal state budget,

ensuring equal and decent work conditions for every citizen, fighting with the inequality, supporting the demilitarization and the criticism of U.S. involvement in armed conflicts, social welfare and reducing the influence of private interest groups on the policies within the country (DSA 1997). In 2006 Sanders decided to take part in the Senate elections – he won by the 33% margin with the Republican candidate while canvassing as an independent candidate with the support of the Democratic Party. This election shows Sanders's natural talent to engage his voters in fundraising – he gathered almost 5.5 million dollars and, while his opponent had more funds (7.5 mln), he was able to easily secure the win (Vermont Senate Race 2006).

The beginning of the race

The official start of the Presidential Primary Campaign of Bernie Sanders took place on the 26th of May, 2015 in Burlington. About a month earlier in the interview Sanders announced his main postulate which was the fight for the social and economic equality amongst American citizens (Kane et al. 2015). At the very beginning, six politicians have reported their willingness to canvass – in addition to Clinton, Sanders and O'Malley, the ex-governor of Rhode Island, Lincoln Chaffee, ex-Senator from Virginia, Jim Webb and the Harvard professor Lawrence Lassig also expressed their interest in the 2016 Democratic Primary Campaign. His first meeting with the voters that has been noticed by the media, was in Kensett, Iowa. At that time he already gathered volunteers who helped him to organize a meeting, which was attended by 300 people (the population of Kensett is 240) (Gabriel, Healy 2015). The location of the event was not a coincidence, as it had been aforementioned, the first primary caucus was set to traditionally take place in Iowa. From this moment, the popularity of Sanders started growing not only in the traditional media, but also in the internet, which was quickly engaged by his campaign staff. On the 29th of July an online event was organized, in order to show his power within this medium. According to various data, the multiple hosting events organized by his support groups gathered around 100 000 attendees, mainly young people representing the so-called Generation Y, Americans born during the demographic peak at the turn of 80's and 90's who were highly disappointed with their economic status and work conditions. At that time Sanders had already gathered 15 million dollars of funds from the volunteers with the average contribution of 44$ - this had shown that Sanders represents the voters from all of the social backgrounds, in contrary to the average contributions for Hillary Clinton's campaign which were much higher (Davis

2015). This event, however, played another important role – until this day the campaign of the senator relied on 50 volunteers – ten times less than Clinton's. Local rallies were also focusing on the engagement of the potential voters into personal canvassing for the candidate. It is worth noting, that Hillary Clinton organized a similar event in June, which resulted in 650 hosting events, five times less than Sanders managed to set up. After this event, public polls gave the Vermont senator 22% of votes, 35% less than Clinton had (Frizell 2015). From the political marketing's point of research, the start of the campaign could not have been better – the position in the primary race of Sanders and his recognition among the voters had quickly transformed into becoming an internet sensation, while a few months earlier he was just one of the Democratic Party's Senators. His social postulates approached two important groups – old, socially sensitive voters and young people from bigger cities who were using social media on a daily basis and could find more information about the candidate in the internet. As the underdog without the visible support from his party, Sanders had to focus on the non-traditional ways of reaching out to the voters. His staff, however, was not able to win the voters from the ethnic minorities – the accident with the Black Lives Matter representatives during his campaign trail, which took place in Seattle, had only worsened his position. The activists who are fighting with the police brutality towards the ethnic groups and for the equalization of the chances among American citizens, have interrupted his speech – mainly because Sanders was an easier target in comparison to Clinton's rallies which were characterized by the higher level of security during her events (RT.com 2015). After this incident, the meeting with the candidate was cancelled, which was not seen well by the voters, because it exposed Sanders's weakness. When the candidate tried to interact with the group and got interrupted, his staff decided to close the meeting, which was a terrible decision and definitely did not help him win their support. According to the scientific research, this situation has exposed what is called a New White Narcissism, a situation in which the left-wing oriented candidates focus on the social and economic matters that are only important for the white middle-class (Bouie 2015). For many specialists this was the moment on the campaign timeline, when Sanders lost the votes of the ethnic minorities to Hillary Clinton. This was a devastating failure of his campaigning staff, which was not able to show the voters the long history of Sanders fighting with the racial oppression. Shortly after the event, a hashtag #BernieSoBlack started trending on Twitter which was aimed ironically at the candidate's ignorance towards the sensitive ethnic issues. The supporters of Sanders started to attack the

organization, which led to the creation of the nickname of this community – the „Standers” which is a wordplay related to the term „Stan” which means a fanatic.

Despite the incident in Seattle, with every next month the popularity of Sanders amongst the voters was increasing. The candidate appointed an Afro-American spokeswoman, Symone Sanders, who during his meeting with the voters in Portland, which gathered 28,000 people, has forewarned the attendees, if a similar situation happened (Wagner 2015). The summer period of the canvassing advantaged the candidate in social media: his website, growing number of followers on Facebook and the skillful use of hashtags on Instagram allowed him to expand his reach in Internet 2.0 and increase the funds along with the number of the volunteers. In August, Sanders announced his plans for the change in the Presidential Campaign legislations: current law allows the candidate to receive up to 2700$ funds from the supporter during the primaries and the same amount during the presidential elections. This legislative, however, is not applicable for the Super PAC's – the third-party organizations and interest groups who can fuel the campaign of the candidate and do not have to present where did the money comes from. This decision, made in 2010, disturbed the American political scene and created a situation in which not the voters, but the companies and the organizations could determine the amount of funds on the candidate's account. Sanders, who was not using the help of Super PAC's had been attacking Clinton for being dependent on her rich sponsors, while his funds were based on the voluntary payments (Murse 2016).

Before the first primary debates, which were supposed to take place in October, Sanders visited the conservative Lynchburg University, where he gave a highly acclaimed speech. Not only was he the only Democratic candidate to accept their invitation, but also he was able to engage in the discussion with the students, showing that he understands their values and is willing to find the issues on which they would mutually agree. During the meeting Sanders has been citing the Bible, which was a perfect marketing move and an act of respect (Zurcher 2015). The October debate has established the position of Sanders as the second favorite in the polls for the nomination of his party, while Lessig, Chafee and Webb had to drop off the race due to their low popularity among the voters. Since July the campaign of Sanders gained 26 million dollars and has changed the discourse within the primary campaign in his party, which now was focusing mainly on the economic and social issues. Even though the polls were still showing that Sanders would lose to Clinton by 20% of the votes, on the first of November his campaign staff

launched first of the video campaign spots, which were displayed in New Hampshire and Iowa. In the video, Sanders reinterprets the so-called „family values” – while his opponents understood them in a conservative way, he decided to present them as the social postulates, such as the freedom of choice for women or an increased family care for young parents. Autumn has also brought some pop cultural aspects to his campaign – Larry David was impersonating Sanders in Saturday Night Live, which quickly caught the attention of the candidate, who advised that the comedian should do it more often, because he does it better than Sanders himself. Furthermore, in the middle of November, Sanders was on the cover of the Rolling Stone magazine in which he presented his values and political program. He also started to receive the support from the world of hip-hop, which, what is worth mentioning, allowed Barack Obama in 2008 to connect to young voters and the minority groups. Killer Mike from Run the Jewels played the most important role in his campaign, which can be easily compared to the role Jay-Z played in Obama's canvassing process. In the times of the decreasing trust of the voters towards the politicians, the celebrities play the key role as the political actors who can influence the life decisions of their fans by presenting their personal beliefs and endorsing the candidates. The celebrities do not distance themselves that much from their fans like the politicians and are more likely to be seen as the representatives of the social groups. Killer Mike organized a popular among the media meeting with Sanders, during which he discussed the chances of Sanders becoming the next President of the United States and the policies he would like to follow. The end of the 2015 brought both a positive and negative attention to his campaign – on one hand, he held an acclaimed speech at the Georgetown University in which he re-defined the social democratic values, referring to Franklin Delano Roosevelt or Martin Luther King (Rolling Stone 2015), while on the other hand, his staff had been caught at obtaining the personal data of the potential voters of Hillary Clinton, which has been used by her surrounding as a proof of a foul play during the campaign.

The Primaries

The 2016 primary elections in the United States started on the 1st of February 2016 in Iowa and lasted until the 21st of July in the District of Columbia. In each of the states, a caucus is being held, during which the supporters of each party can vote for their candidates. The percentage of votes determines the amount of the delegates who are representing the candidate

during the congress of their party. The Democratic National Convention took place between the 25th and 28th of July in Philadelphia. The delegates were joined there by the superdelegates who are the members of the Democratic National Committee, distinguished party leaders, members of both the House of the Representatives and the Senate and the Democratic governors. This gives a total of 712 votes which are added to the result of the candidate during the primaries. The predicted number of the delegates oscillated around 4765 attendees, so in order to win the nomination of the party, the candidate needed to secure around 2383 votes. Hillary Clinton, who was one of the most important politicians within the party, had been the superdelegate favorite since the very beginning, which made the race for the nomination uneven – even though the superdelegates are undeclared and may change their mind, Sanders was not that influential in the party to secure the majority of their votes. Only a series of landslide victories during the caucuses could make them rethink their choice. In January, the reports showed that Sanders was able to collect another 20 million of funds. What is more, Sanders met with Barack Obama, who previously has been linked to the support for the ex-Secretary of State. This showed that the Senator from Vermont is seen as a serious candidate and that both of the candidates are treated equally by the President. The first primaries brought surprising results – Sanders almost tied with Clinton in Iowa and secured a 20% win over her in New Hampshire. This tactical and visual advantage led the supporters of Sanders to believe that the hype generated by them in the media can result in the positive outcome. It is also worth mentioning that at that time Martin O'Malley dropped of the race due to the unsatisfying results in the first caucus. In February, Sanders lost two of the primaries, but he accumulated 12 million more funds than Clinton with an impressing result of 42 million dollars. The most exciting moment of the primaries, Super Tuesday, which took place on the 1st of March and was followed by the primaries in eleven states and American Samoa, indicated the eventual win of Hillary Clinton, who had won in eight states, inter alia in Texas, which has a huge percentage of the voters representing the ethnic minorities which preferred Clinton. In his home state Sanders was able to collect over 86% of the votes, but from this moment the enthusiasm towards his campaign weakened. It became visible that with the additional support of the superdelegates, Clinton had nearly secured the win thanks to the political and party background. Even though he was losing, Sanders still was winning in the financial reports, mainly because his supporters were still able to engage in fundraising for him with the small amounts of money, while the supporters of Clinton reached the 2700$ limit. The

staff of Sanders predicted the Super Tuesday loss, mainly because of the lack of the support for him among the voters from the ethnic minorities. This theory was also confirmed during the primaries in the Southern states where the Democratic voters represent these groups, such as Ohio, North Carolina or California. In comparison, Sanders was winning in the states dominated by the liberal, white middle-class, where he noted seven consecutive wins, including an impressive 45% win in Washington. With Trump nearly securing his win, Sanders decided to focus on the polls which gave him more chances with winning with the businessman than Clinton. This situation was mainly caused by the fact that the voters of Clinton were more likely to support the Vermont Senator, if their candidate lost. If Clinton won on the other hand, she could not fully rely on her opponents voters, who would rather prefer voting for the third-party candidates such as libertarian Gary Johnson or a Green Party candidate Jill Stein. The campaign staff of Sanders was doing its best to show that their candidate has better chances of winning with Trump, but the results of May and June caucuses have secured Clinton's win, which was already quite certain knowing the fact that Clinton would receive at least 80% of the superdelegates votes.

The use of social media during the campaign

As it has been established at the beginning of this article, with every new elections, the influence of social media during the campaign is increasing rapidly. For ten years now, the role of the traditional media in the canvassing process has been decreasing – the midterm elections in 2006 were the first case when the candidates started to use Internet 2.0 tools on a huge scale to reach the voters. The campaign of Barack Obama in 2008 acknowledged that new technologies allow citizens to connect with their representatives and help them out either with financial or human resources. Eight years later the use of social media is reaching its momentum – with the applications such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Periscope, Vine and many others, the candidates are more likely to show the voters their more human face and interact with them on a more personal basis. This re-defines the way door-to-door campaigning works – if we have established that each of the internet users has their own IP address which can be defined as „home", then it can be seen clearly, that the candidate may access their „home" without spending money for the travel. The campaign of Bernie Sanders confirms this thesis.

Even though Sanders had around three times less followers on Twitter than Hillary

Clinton, his posts were more personalized. The main hashtag slogan of his campaign was #FeeltheBern, which in ideal way described the phenomenon of the candidate. The popularity of this hashtag, which has shortly became the part of everyday vernacular, shows how good decision it was. In comparison with Clinton, his hashtag was more attractive – her slogan #I'mwithher more likely focused on her having chances to become the first female candidate, was more sensitive and calm – what is more she had to put up with the negative electorate (mainly the supporters of Sanders), who posted negative content about her on this platform – at the beginning of her campaign she had to struggle with trending hashtags linked to her profile such as #dishonest and #liar, while the trending hashtags linked to Sanders were #liberal, #good, #trustworthy (Gass 2015). The turning point of his campaign on Twitter was the aforementioned Democratic debate in October. The role of the hashtag #debatewithbernie was both: to show the number of the candidate's followers on Twitter and to hijack other hashtags. Hashtag hijacking in this case means that the profile posting on this platform would use a #Demdebate or #GOPDebate hashtag, which was in regards to the debate, only to place a Sanders-related hashtag next to it, so it would start trending. Thanks to this move, Sanders was able to reach out to over 17 million users. This was the idea of Hector Sigala, 27-year old social media advisor of Sanders who was the head of his campaign on Twitter. What is more – the profile of Sanders has also been posting during the commercials – when the spot starring Tom Hanks was shown during the break, Bernie Sanders posted on Twitter ,,Tom Hanks. Finally. Somebody, who makes some sense", which was an ironic comment on the postulates of his opponents (Fares 2016). Although on Twitter he was losing when talking about the number of the followers, on other platforms Sanders was able to gain more internet users engaging with his content. This is mainly because his relationship with the potential voter is more personalized which is very important for the youngest voters. Nowadays each of the candidates must know his social media – in 2008 the use of the Internet 2.0 was still seen as a catchy way to get to the voters – during current elections the candidate relies on these platforms and must focus on them and the traditional ways of canvassing on an equal level.

Apart from Twitter, Sanders was also focusing on the social media applications that are most likely to be used by the teens. In March, Sanders's campaigning staff decided to organize a last-minute rally while using only the social media tools. This has not been the first time they used new media to organize events. The Iowa Caucus campaign was supported by a nine-day

campaign on Snapchat, which is the most popular application amongst youngsters (Shields 2016). Since young, left-wing oriented voters are more likely to use the internet on the daily basis to share their political values and use social media, this was a perfect idea. On Facebook Sanders was able to assemble almost 4.5 million likes, but the engagement of his young followers, not the personalized posts, was his greatest weapon. Since he became the phenomenon amongst internet users, they have started to handle his campaign – an ideal example of such behavior is a Facebook group called „Bernie Sanders Dank Meme Stash", where almost 500,000 users exchanged memes and virals linked to the candidate. The most popular one – Bernie or Hillary – became an internet hit that fueled the campaign amongst the Facebook users and had been a hot topic in traditional media. The meme displayed an infographic on which Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton shared their opinions on various matters (from political views to taste in music or memes), while obviously painting the ex-Secretary of State in the bad light. This was one of the topics of my analysis of the candidate engagement in social media during the Primary Elections of 2016. In order to attract the enthusiasts of new technologies, his staff also launched a chat on Slack platform where the specialists could advise about various technical matters of his campaign. These moves ease the campaign process for the candidate – since the good campaign relies on three variables: money, people and time, with the use of the internet the candidate is able to influence the decisions of the bigger amount of voters, in shorter time and with less money spent on this occasion (Grothaus 2016). In this context, when talking about the influence of the internet on the behavior of the voters, the information being posted on social media create the „filter bubble". Internet users tend to follow the social media news and people who represent their values and beliefs. This situation creates an information bubble in which they are isolated from other points of view, which do not interest them. As a result, they feel that they confirm their beliefs, they do not need information from other sources and are more self-confident in expressing their values, which leads to the polarization of the opinion in the internet (Auerbach 2016). Even though Facebook denies creating the algorithms which work this way, the users create them themselves. Furthermore, the traditional media, which post the news in the internet, tend to relocate the real life emotions to their news, which results in the radicalization of the content and the receivers of the information. Especially young people are influenced by this direction – they tend to rely less on their cultural background and the values they learned from their social groups. This is the perfect solution for the campaign staff who can control the content

they are posting and have bigger influence on the decisions of their voters.

The celebrity endorsement

Nowadays, political campaign have also pop cultural aspects which influence the way the politician reach out to the voters. The decrease of trust towards the politicians, allows the celebrities to fulfill their roles as the people who are representing their society and fight for its rights and values. The aforementioned case of Killer Mike is only one of the moments, during which the campaign of Sanders crossed paths with the world of celebrities. The endorsement for Sanders usually comes from the celebrity left-wing activists like Mark Ruffalo, Susan Sarandon or Tim Robbins, while the support from Clinton usually comes from the female mainstream celebrities such as Katy Perry, Kim Kardashian or Lena Dunham – when analyzing this situation a conclusion comes to mind that the endorsement for the Vermont Senator is more substantive and is based on the political activity of the celebrity, whereas Clinton's celebrity fanbase is created by the pop cultural aspects. This, however, displays the weakness of the candidates on this field with Barack Obama being able to gather the support both from the mainstream world and more issue-oriented figures. One must not forget that the main power of Obama that came with the celebrity endorsement was the ability to approach the undecided voters from the minorities – thanks to the world of hip-hop. While Killer Mike became the right hand of Sanders and opened it for him during his Atlanta speech, his activity was followed by other famous rappers such as Lil B, T.I., Big Boi or Nas. The relationship of Killer Mike with Bernie Sanders also shows an interesting casus – the artists, who are rather known for their independent status, are more likely to vote for him. This can be explained by the fact, that most of indie artists live normal lives and are facing the problems that every citizen is facing, such as for example weak medical care. It does not, however, prove that the mainstream artists in 100% turn to Clinton – Red Hot Chili Peppers bassist Flea gave a complex interview in Rolling Stone in which he explained why he supports the candidate with mainly focusing on how Sanders relied on the funds sent by average citizens and refused to use the help of Super PAC's (Flea 2016). At the end of the campaign, in order to get the votes of the minorities, Sanders released series of video spots on Facebook, first one addressed to the LGBTQIA+ community and second one which was made to reach out to the ethnic minorities, especially the black community, starring Danny Glover who expressed his support for him and compared their life paths, during which they were fighting for the equality. It also needs to be mentioned that the cult director Spike Lee, whose

films are very important in terms of black identity, engaged in canvassing for Sanders by directing ads for him and by encouraging to vote for him in a special spot called „Wake Up". During the GOP Convention it became, however, clear that there is one person who will become the celebrity symbol of his campaign – comedian Sarah Silverman was representing the certain group of Sanders fans who were disappointed with his loss, but understood that and decided to move their support to Clinton in order to stop Donald Trump. In the opposition there are celebrities who refused to vote for Clinton and were fighting outside of the convention for the nomination of Sanders – the most popular celebrities taking part in this protest were actresses Susan Sarandon and Rosario Dawson.

Conclusions

When analyzing the campaign of Bernie Sanders, the first issue that becomes interesting is how the main power of the 74-year-old can come from the young people and how he was able to attract them. Sanders appeared to them as an anti-establishment candidate, fighting with economic inequality which has become one of the top problems of the modern life in the United States. His biggest achievement was the ability to compete with Hillary Clinton on an equal level; when talking about the crowdfunding – small donations were the key to maintaining in the rivalry, and the refusal of using the help from the Super PAC's had proven that during his campaign he did not rely on the financial help from the organizations. Thanks to this move he established himself as a people person who redefines the term of democracy as the power given to the people.

His activity in the social media gave him the important recognition, which allowed him to become almost as popular as his main rival. Hillary Clinton had already established her status as an important figure of American pop culture and then transformed her popularity into the political career, while Sanders first became a politician in order to become a political celebrity. The way he interacted on social media was the key to his success – while Obama in 2008 highlighted his rather young age, which allowed him to reach out to the youngest voters, Sanders was simply natural and did not hide the fact, that he is in the rather advanced age and he is learning how to use new technologies. With the help of his campaign staff and his supporters engaged in the campaign, he became the social media favorite – his postulates and persona became one of the hottest topics in the media and his popularity amongst the internet users

ensured that he did not have to put up with the negative content. What is more, his fanbase was the one handling the negative campaign towards Clinton with the series of memes and virals, which shows how the internet can be a powerful weapon that can create a backlash when needed. The campaigns of Sanders and Clinton were focusing on different issues – while the postulates of the Vermont Senator were mostly economic issues aimed at the left-wing oriented youth and people disappointed with their current economic status, Clinton tried to reach out to everyone and her manifesto was rather mainstream and focused on the most popular topics. Sanders's voters were more politically oriented, but his proposals could not compete with the catch-all tactics of Clinton. This analysis can be confirmed by the celebrity endorsement of both of the candidates – while Sanders was publicly supported by the famous celebrity activists, Clinton focused on pop culture icons, especially the ones who were women – that is why her hashtag #I'mwithher was so powerful, because she appeared to the crowd as someone, who is changing the game by eventually becoming the first female candidate taking part in the presidential elections as a representative from one of the two most popular parties. In current situation, the campaign staff of Clinton is facing a huge challenge – it has already been established that the ex-Secretary of State is rather seen in a bad light by the supporters of Bernie Sanders and her rhetoric needs to turn to the left in order to win their votes. This will be a hard task – the campaign of Sanders and his persona is seen by the citizens as the revolutionary, while she is seen as the part of an establishment that had been ruling the Democratic Party for years. The support of Super PAC's and superdelegates was not helping to cover this bad impression – even when Sanders himself endorsed Clinton during the GOP Convention, many of his supporters were disappointed with such an outcome and attacked him suggesting that he simply sold himself out. Current opinion polls show that the only way Donald Trump could win the elections, would be when the supporters of Sanders declined voting for the „lesser evil" within their party and would turn to the third-party candidates, which are currently in the spotlight and with the negative electorate on the both sides of the fight, could reach their momentum that would be a fundament for the eventual destruction of the two-party system in the United States. What is interesting, this has caused the decrease of the amount of the undecided voters in the US. The campaign itself has once again proven that the role of the traditional ways of canvassing is decreasing and now the voters appear to play a new role in this process – instead of receiving the information regarding the candidate, by the means of the Internet 2.0 resources they can create

them and engage in canvassing on a new level, both by using their financial resources and by spreading the information about the campaigning events. Internet has an influence on every day activities of the citizens, so nowadays it is easier to reach out to them through this particular medium, than through more traditional ways. With the transfer of the content from the media to the internet, the polarization of the opinion appears which creates an opinion bubble, thanks to which the candidate can depend on his supporter, because he will be surrounded by the content that represents the values he follows. This situation is especially specific for the American political scene, which has always been a precursor of the transformation of how we see the political marketing and has always been connected to the pop culture. That is why in the USA the celebrities can become political actors between the voter and the candidate, by representing the characteristics of these two groups which makes it easier for them to connect with both. What could be the most visible outcome of the campaign of Bernie Sanders? Definitely the growing influence of the left-wing politics and issues within the Democratic Party which can be already seen by the postulates Clinton is currently forming, and which are inspired by his campaign. With the upcoming Congress elections which will probably be won by the Democrats, comes the chance, that the major candidates endorsed by Sanders can strengthen the position of the Progressives within their party and start the revolution Sanders had been dreaming of.

References:

Auerbach, D. (2016). *The Bernie Bubble*.
http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/future_tense/2016/02/the_bernie_sanders_campaign_owes_a_lot_to_social_media.html (19.05.2016).

Bernie Sanders draws record crowds, gets interrupted by Black Lives Matter.
https://www.rt.com/usa/312112-bernie-sanders-seattle-portland/ (13.05.2016).

Bouie J. (2015). *More Than a Food Fight*.
http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2015/07/netroots_nation_black_lives_matter_protest_hillary_clinton_needs_to_take.2.html (17.08.2016).

Davis, A.C. (2015). *Why July 29 is such an important date to Bernie Sanders campaign*.
https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/bernie-sanders-says-july-29-is-the-most-important-day-of-his-campaign/2015/07/17/b20680e6-2c9f-11e5-a5ea-cf74396e59ec_story.html (07.07.2016).

DSA (2007). *About DSA*. http://www.dsausa.org/about_dsa (23.05.2016).

Fares, M. (2016). *How a 27-year-old tweeter keeps Bernie Sanders' message resonating*.
http://www.businessinsider.com/bernie-sanders-twitter-strategy-2016-4 (14.05.2016).

Flea (2016). *Why I support Bernie Sanders*.
http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/flea-why-i-support-bernie-sanders-20160205 (20.07.2016).

Frizell, S. (2015). *Bernie Sanders Hosts Biggest Organizing Event Of 2016 So Far*. http://time.com/3976557/bernie-sanders-house-party/ (10.05.2016).

Ipsen, M. (2011). American Policy toward Nicaragua during Ronald Reagan's presidency. Frederiksberg: Copenhagen Business School.

Gabriel, T., & Healy, P. (2015). *Challenging Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders Gains Momentum in Iowa*. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/01/us/politics/challenging-hillary-clinton-bernie-sanders-gains-momentum-in-iowa.html (11.08.2016).

Gass, N. (2015). *Poll: While Clinton struggles with 'liar' tag, voters find Biden 'honest'*. http://www.politico.com/story/2015/10/poll-hillary-clinton-liar-joe-biden-trust-214322 (16.06.2016).

Grothaus, M. (2016). *Inside Bernie Sanders' Social Media Machine*. http://www.fastcompany.com/3058681/inside-bernie-sanders-social-media-machine (19.07.2016).

Jaffe, H. (2015). *Why Bernie Sanders Matters*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Kane P., & Rucker P., An unlikely contender, Sanders takes on 'billionaire class' in 2016 bid . https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/sanders-takes-on-billionaire-class-in-launching-2016-bid-against-clinton/2015/04/30/4849fe32-ef3a-11e4-a55f-38924fca94f9_story.html (07.08.2016).

Kelley, K. J. (2015). *Color Blind: Outside Vermont, Can Sanders Talk Race, Immigration?* https://www.sevendaysvt.com/vermont/color-blind-outside-vermont-can-sanders-talk-race-immigration/Content?oid=2699814 (17.05.2016).

Lowenthal, L. (1944). *The Triumph of Mass Idols*. Essay.

Moberg, D. (1983). *How Bernie Sanders Put Socialism to Work in Burlington: A Profile from 1983*. http://inthesetimes.com/article/18806/this-1983-profile-of-bernie-sanders-shows-how-his-success-in-burlington-mir (17.05.2016).

Murse, T. (2016). *What is a Super PAC?* http://uspolitics.about.com/od/firstamendment/a/What-Is-A-Super-Pac.htm (17.05.2016).

Raoof, J.K., Zaman, B.H., Ahmad, A. & Al-Qaraghuli, A.A. (2013). Using social network systems as a tool for political change. *International Journal of Physical Sciences*, 8(21): 1143–148.

Reynolds, D. (1997). *Democracy Unbound: Progressive Challenges to the Two Party System*. Boston, MA: South End Press.

Sanders, B., & Gutman, H. (1997). *Outsider in the House*. New York, NY: Verso.

Shaw, R. (1999). *Reclaiming America: Nike, Clean Air, and the New National Activism*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Shields, M. (2016). *Bernie Sanders Is Running a 9-day Snapchat Ad Campaign in Iowa*. http://www.wsj.com/articles/bernie-sanders-is-running-a-9-day-snapchat-ad-campaign-in-iowa-1453806001 (18.05.2016).

2015: The Year Bernie Sanders Became a Political Phenomenon. http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/lists/2015-the-year-in-bernie-sanders-20151211 (14.05.2016).

Vermont State Race. http://www.opensecrets.org/races/summary.php?cycle=2006&id=VTS1 (08.08.2016).

Wagner, J. (2015). *Bernie Sanders draws 28,000 people in Portland*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/08/10/bernie-sanders-draws-28000-people-in-portland-his-campaign-says/ (16.05.2016).

Wheeler, M. (2013). *Celebrity Politics: Image and Identity in Contemporary Political Communications*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Zurcher, A. (2015). *Bernie Sanders steps out of his comfort zone*. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-34229555 (16.07.2016).