



# TECH TALK— EVERYONE’S A PUNDIT: HOW SOCIAL MEDIA IS CHANGING ELECTIONS

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1) On September 20, Fung Global Retail & Technology attended a charity panel discussion titled, “Everyone’s a Pundit: How Social Media Is Changing Elections” held at Facebook’s NYC headquarters.
- 2) The moderator, Larry Rosin of Edison Research, gave a brief presentation showing the dramatic increase in use of social media since the last US election, the most popular platforms and that some voters are getting political news from social media.
- 3) One of the key strengths of social media is its ability to reach specific constituencies of voters with targeted messages.
- 4) The technology landscape continues to change at a rapid rate, and politicians need to consider the use of smartphones, multiple screens and online video when crafting messages for voters.

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# EVENT

On September 20, Fung Global Retail & Technology attended a tech talk put on by charity UJA Federation and held at Facebook’s NYC headquarters. The event took place as a panel discussion, with representatives from Facebook, Google and Twitter. The four panelists work for their companies selling media to either Democratic or Republican political parties and/or PACs (political action committees.)

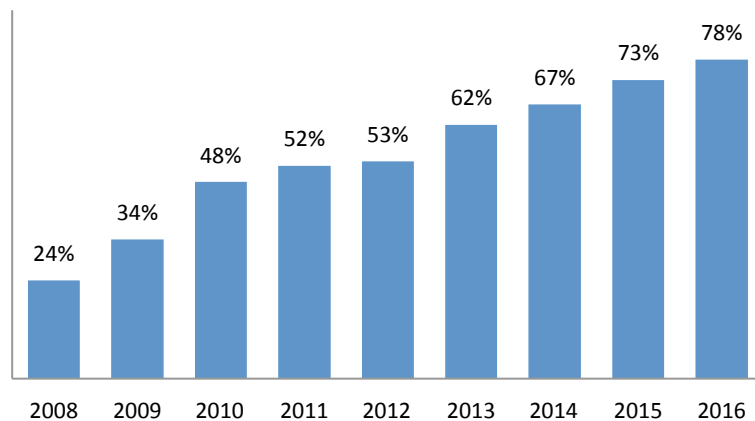
The panel was moderated by Larry Rosin of Edison Research, a consumer research, polling and survey company. In particular, Edison performs exit polling during US elections, and is said to know the winner long before he or she is announced (though they’re not telling.)

Rosin offered some brief insights from Edison’s research, under the category The Infinite Dial:

- Social media usage has increased dramatically Since the 2012 election (to an estimated 212 million people).
- Facebook Is the most-used social-media brand
- Many use social media to follow political news
- YouTube has changed the media landscape

**Social Media Usage has Increased Dramatically Since the 2012 Election (to an Estimated 212 Million People)**

**Figure 1. Social Media Usage (% Currently Using any Social Media)**

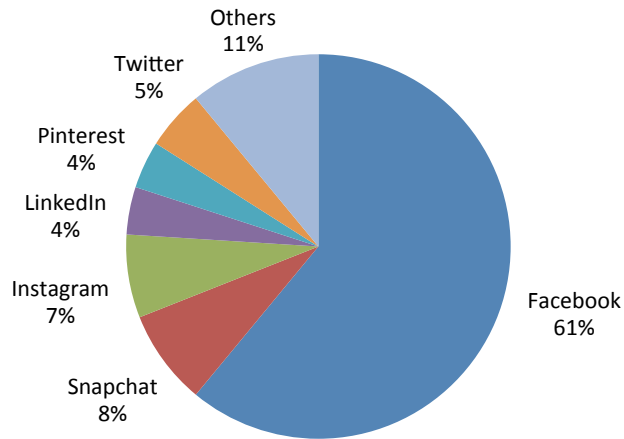


Source: Edison Research/Triton

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## Facebook is the Most-Used Social-Media Brand

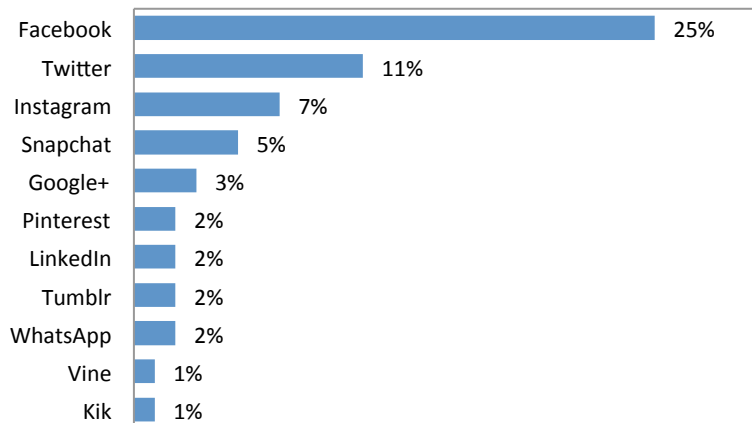
**Figure 2. Social Media Brand Used Most Often, 2016**



Source: Edison Research/Triton

## Many Use Social Media to Follow Political News

**Figure 3. Use Social Media Brand to Follow Political News or Candidates**



Source: Edison Research/Triton

## YouTube has Changed the Media Landscape

Finally, Rosin commented on how YouTube has changed the media landscape. Specifically:

- 61% of respondents use YouTube for videos or music
- 40% have used YouTube in the last week



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## PANEL DISCUSSION

The panel discussion was conducted as a Q&A session, and a summary follows.

### Q: Why do candidates need social media?

**A:** *We're swimming in information and need a filter. Candidates are able to go directly to voters without friction. Specifically, social media enable candidates to precisely target "the right voters at the right time with the right outcome." It has been publicized that Donald Trump used 107,000 targeted Facebook ads in one single day.*

### Q: What are your success stories?

**A:** *Social media companies are learning how to communicate with voters at key decision points, and the companies are developing new tools that are constantly evolving. For example, candidate Bernie Sanders successfully used social media to target millennial voters during the Iowa caucus. One key development has been the shift to mobile devices, and advertisers need to offer their message in this format.*

### Q: How do you address undecided voters?

**A:** *One social-media company is working with a super PAC using unspecified means to locate people planning to vote for third-party candidates. The social media companies can use the vast amount of data available to them to determine the likely party affiliation of a voter.*

### Q: What advice are you giving candidates this year?

**A:** *Social media was able to turn a situation of a bird landing on Bernie Sander's podium ("Birdie Sanders") into an ad within ten minutes, which the social media industry will be talking about for years to come, and this day turned into the #1 fundraising day for Sanders. Voters who are engaged in the moment are most likely to give money. The advent of Internet video has dramatically changed the landscape, and video is able to win the hearts and minds of voters in a powerful way.*

### Q: Can candidates suppress negative information from news feeds?

**A:** *The answer was a clear "no," however, users are able to click on ads and designate them as not relevant or objectionable, which is a valuable source of information for candidates and advertisers. Advertisers only pay when an ad is clicked on, prompting the comment "eyeballs are free." Voters who do not like a particular candidate's ad should click on it so that the candidate has to pay for the ad.*



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## **Q: Upcoming partnerships?**

**A:** *People are now watching multiple screens (i.e., TV and phone) at the same time, which creates opportunities for partnerships. For example, Thursday night football games are now being broadcast on Twitter, and the debates will also be broadcast using social media. Companies can combine tweets and video.*

## **Q: How to get people to vote?**

**A:** *Social media is providing information on how and when to vote. The most important point is for search engines to send people to mobile-optimized pages, as people may be seeking this information while on their way.*



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