

Sofia Vavrin

Maria Curie-Sklodowska University, Poland

ORCID: 0009-0001-1753-4047

Building a Brand: Trump's PR Strategy

Abstract

This article examines the key role of public relations (PR) in Donald Trump's election campaigns, focusing on the strategies employed in 2016 and 2024. His rise to power, despite his lack of traditional political experience, marked a new stage in political communication, where image and narratives play a crucial role. The study analyses how his election campaigns used messaging, crisis management, and digital tools to mobilise supporters and counter opponents, adapting to a dynamic media environment.

The 2016 campaign was marked by an innovative approach to social media, especially Twitter, which allowed Trump to bypass traditional media and establish direct contact with voters. He made extensive use of emotionally charged rhetoric, including the slogan "Make America Great Again". The analysis shows that these strategies, despite being unconventional, proved effective in attracting a disillusioned electorate. The study also examines Trump's 2024 election campaign, which took place in a climate of heightened polarisation, digital transformation, and increased media scrutiny. The PR strategy focused on creating the image of a "comeback president" by speculating on post-pandemic economic challenges. Through provocative statements, active use of the media space, and effective PR in resolving legal issues, the Trump campaign confirmed the power of strategic communications in shaping public opinion and influencing the electoral process. In conclusion, the article emphasises the growing role of PR in modern elections, where the ability to control the information agenda is a key success factor.

Keywords: Donald Trump, Public Relations (PR), Trump's Election Campaign, Social Media, Political Communication.

Streszczenie

W artykule poddano analizie kluczową rolę public relations (PR) w kampaniach wyborczych Donalda Trumpa, koncentrując się na strategiach zastosowanych w latach 2016 i 2024. Jego dojście do władzy, mimo braku tradycyjnego doświadczenia politycznego, oznaczało nowy etap w komunikacji politycznej, w którym wizerunek i narracje odgrywają decydującą rolę. Badanie analizuje, w jaki sposób jego kampanie wyborcze wykorzystywały przekaz, zarządzanie kryzysowe oraz narzędzia cyfrowe do mobilizacji zwolenników i przeciwdziałania oponentom, dostosowując się do dynamicznego środowiska medialnego.

Kampania z 2016 roku wyróżniała się innowacyjnym podejściem do mediów społecznościowych, zwłaszcza Twittera, co pozwoliło Trumpowi ominąć tradycyjne media i nawiązać bezpośredni

kontakt z wyborcami. Intensywnie korzystał z emocjonalnie nacechowanej retoryki, w tym ze sloganu „Make America Great Again”. Te niekonwencjonalne strategie okazały się skuteczne w przyciąganiu rozczarowanego elektoratu.

W artykule omówiono również kampanię wyborczą Trumpa w 2024 roku, która miała miejsce w warunkach pogłębiającej się polaryzacji, transformacji cyfrowej oraz wzmożonej kontroli medialnej. Strategia PR koncentrowała się na budowaniu wizerunku „prezydenta powracającego”, wykorzystując narracje dotyczące wyzwań gospodarczych po pandemii. Dzięki prowokacyjnym wypowiedziom, aktywnemu wykorzystaniu przestrzeni medialnej i skutecznemu PR w rozwiązywaniu problemów prawnych, kampania Trumpa potwierdziła siłę komunikacji strategicznej w kształtowaniu opinii publicznej i wpływaniu na proces wyborczy.

W konkluzji podkreślono rosnącą rolę PR we współczesnych wyborach, gdzie zdolność do kontrolowania agendy informacyjnej stanowi kluczowy czynnik sukcesu.

Słowa kluczowe: Donald Trump, Public Relations (PR), kampania wyborcza Trumpa, media społecznościowe, komunikacja polityczna.

Introduction

Donald Trump has become a symbol of a new stage of political communication, where image and narratives matter more than traditional political platforms. His previous election campaigns were classic examples of how a strategic approach to public relations can be a decisive factor in political success. In 2016, he used innovative methods to engage a mass audience, and in 2020, he continued to use these strategies to consolidate his political position despite the pandemic and social tensions.

However, the 2025 elections brought an even greater challenge as Trump dealt with new political realities – the globalisation of digital media, even greater polarisation in society, and new communication technologies that became an important part of his campaign. His brand strategy has shifted to an even more personalised, technologically advanced approach. As before, it is important not just to win the election, but to create an image of a leader who captures the imagination of voters and is able to respond to the needs and fears of the masses. In this context, building and managing his brand have become key elements of Trump's Public Relation¹ strategy in 2024.

This article proposes the thesis that PR strategy played one of the key roles in Donald Trump's election campaigns in 2016 and 2024 years.

The article employs a combination of several research methods and analytical techniques: a case study of Donald Trump's election campaigns (2016 and 2024), qualitative content analysis, and critical discourse analysis. The case study method allows for a comprehensive examination of the specific features of strategic communication in each campaign, taking into account the political context, media environment, and voter reactions. The qualitative content analysis included the examination of documents, media

¹ PR – information given to the public, persuasion directed at the public to modify attitudes and action, and efforts to integrate attitude and action of an institution with its publics and of publics with those of that institution [Bernays 1961], K. Wojcik, *Public relations. Wiarygodny dialog z otoczeniem*, Wydawnictwo Placet, Warszawa 2021, p. 22.

materials, speeches, social media content, and public communications from Trump's campaign team. Additionally, critical discourse analysis was applied to explore linguistic formulations, rhetorical devices, polarisation narratives, and strategies of constructing "in-group" and "out-group" identities. The empirical material consisted of selected speeches, Twitter, Facebook and TikTok posts, interviews, press releases, and reports from major American media outlets. The analytical categories were defined in accordance with the key components of Trump's PR strategy: messaging strategy, rhetorical techniques, crisis communication, and digital engagement. This methodological approach makes it possible to identify recurring patterns in the formation of Trump's political brand and to assess the role of strategic communication in shaping public opinion.

Trump: A way to the White House without political experience

Donald Trump is an exceptional figure in American politics. With no political or international experience, he has become the leader of one of the largest countries in the world. As the 47th president of the United States, Trump has been unprecedented in several ways. Before announcing his candidacy for the Republican Party, he had little connection to the party and received no support from its leadership during the primaries. His campaign was funded by his own money, as he had no political experience and had not held any elected office before. However, Trump had considerable financial strength and as of March 2016 was the richest president in US history, ranking 324th on the Forbes magazine list². Donald Trump's political ambitions were evident even before he officially entered politics, despite his success in business. During the 1990s and early 2000s, he repeatedly expressed his desire to run for office, but faced doubts from the media and political circles. However, Trump managed to attract a large following by capitalising on people's disillusionment with political correctness and traditional politicians. In June 2015, he announced his candidacy for the Republican presidential nomination. Trump's campaign was unusual and violated generally accepted political standards. He actively used social media to connect directly with voters and did not hesitate to use bold rhetoric that resonated with many disaffected citizens. His slogan "Make America Great Again" emphasised his desire to return the country to its former prosperity³.

² L. Pastusiak, *Donald Trump. Pierwszy taki prezydent Stanów Zjednoczonych*, Bellona, Warszawa 2019, p. 21.

³ *How Trump fused his business empire to the presidency*, Politico, <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/01/20/trump-businesses-empire-tied-presidency-100496> (accessed on: 24.01.2025).

The understanding of Trump's brand construction in this article follows the framework proposed by Bruce I. Newman⁴ and Jennifer Lees-Marshment⁵, who define political brands as symbolic constructions integrating emotional appeal, leadership identity, and strategic communication. These strategies clearly demonstrate how important PR is in modern election campaigns, where victory often depends not only on political programs or candidates' charisma, but also on the ability to control the narrative. Today's election campaigns are a struggle for the dominance of the narrative, which is formed through traditional media, social platforms, and networks of supporters. PR experts play an important role in creating these narratives, inventing stories that reflect the values, fears and aspirations of voters.

The main functions of PR in such campaigns include:

- Messaging: simplifying complex policies into memorable slogans (e.g., "Make America Great Again").
- Media relations: influencing coverage through press releases, interviews, and exclusives.
- Crisis management: managing scandals and mistakes on the fly.
- Digital engagement: mobilising voters through social media, influencers, and targeted advertising.
- Reputation management: creating or restoring a candidate's public image⁶.

Trump's 2024 campaign is a prime example of the application of these strategies, combining nostalgia for his first term with aggressive counter-narratives for his opponents.

PR-Strategy in 2016

Donald Trump did not grow up in the era of social media, but he intuitively understood the power of deintermediation, which allowed him to speak directly to a huge audience in 2016 that the media only amplified. He skilfully signals the darker extremes of society, while realising that most people live in information bubbles where everyone chooses their news and, dangerously, their own facts.

One of the parts of Donald Trump's political strategy in the 2016 presidential election was – gaslighting. Gaslighting is a form of psychological abuse or manipulation in which the abuser attempts to sow self-doubt and confusion in their victim's mind.

⁴ I.B. Newman, *The Mass Marketing of Politics: Democracy in an Age of Manufactured Images*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA 1994, p. 35–44.

⁵ J. Lees-Marshment, *Political Marketing and British Political Parties: The Party's Just Begun*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2001, p. 49–60.

⁶ R. Maćkowska, *Zasady tworzenia i cele komunikatów w kampanii politycznej*, Uniwersytet Ekonomiczny, Katowice, p. 247–253.

Typically, gaslighters are seeking to gain power and control over the other person, by distorting reality and forcing them to question their own judgment and intuition⁷.

Trump often denied facts that contradicted his narrative. For example, he dismissed accusations of Russian election meddling as “lies” despite numerous reports and investigations. This allowed him to shape the image of himself as a victim of political attacks.

On August 18, 2020, the United States Senate Intelligence Committee released the fifth and final version of its report on Russia’s attempts to influence the 2016 US presidential election. According to the committee’s general conclusion, the contacts between the campaign chairman of current President Donald Trump and individuals associated with the Russian Federation posed a “serious counterintelligence threat”⁸. The United States Intelligence Community has concluded that Russia interfered in the 2016 presidential election through social media campaigns and hacking of Democratic Party leaders’ email accounts to help elect Donald Trump. He won the election over his Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton. Trump himself called the allegations “lies”. He also categorically denies the suggestion that his team collaborated with Russian officials during the election. Russia also denies that it interfered in the 2016 election⁹.

Donald Trump also used the strategy of blaming various groups for the social and economic problems of the United States. Trump often targeted African Americans, Latinos, Muslims, and women, blaming them for various social problems. For example, he claimed that immigration from Latin America leads to crime in the United States, which provoked negative reactions from these communities. Trump’s campaign was marked by controversial remarks about Mexican immigrants, which many believe alienated Latino voters. His rhetoric included proposals for a strict immigration policy and a wall along the United States-Mexico border, leading to predictions that he would face strong opposition from this demographic. Contrary to expectations, Trump received a significant portion of the Latino vote. In the 2016 election, he received approximately 28% of the Latino vote, which was higher than expected given his highly charged comments. This support was particularly notable among certain groups, including Cuban Americans in Florida and some working-class Latino voters who resonated with his economic messages. The motivations of Latino voters who supported Trump were multifaceted. Some were driven by economic considerations, favouring his promises of job creation and economic growth. In addition, there was a perception among some

⁷ *Identifying Gaslighting: Signs, Examples, and Seeking Help*, Newport Institute 2024, https://www.newportinstitute.com/resources/mental-health/what_is_gaslighting_abuse/ (accessed on: 24.01.2025).

⁸ Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, (U) REPORT of the Select Committee on Intelligence United States Senate on Russian Active Measures Campaigns and Interference, The 2016 U.S. Election, Volume 5: Counterintelligence Threats and Vulnerabilities, https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/documents/report_volume5.pdf (accessed on: 24.01.2025).

⁹ Ryan Lucas, *Senate Release Final Report On Russia’s Interference In 2016 Election*, NPR 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/08/18/903616315/senate-releases-final-report-on-russias-interference-in-2016-election> (accessed on: 24.01.2025).

voters that Trump's tough stance on immigration could lead to better implementation of existing laws¹⁰.

Trump has repeatedly created an image of an “enemy” that threatens the American way of life. This included blaming Muslims for terrorism and African Americans for social problems, highlighting the need for a “strong leader” who can protect the country. Donald Trump has often expressed anti-Muslim views, painting Muslims as a threat to American society. His tweets often included claims that Muslims would be banned from entering the United States, which reinforced Islamophobic sentiments among his supporters. Donald Trump's language constructed a clear binary between “us” (Americans) and “them” (Muslims), promoting a narrative that positioned Muslims as outsiders and potential dangers. This demagogic approach was intended to mobilise his supporters by fostering fear and division. His tweets often relied on stereotypes to portray Islam and Muslims in a negative light. For example, he claimed that “Islam hates us”, reflecting a long-standing orientalist view that views Islam as inherently violent and incompatible with Western values¹¹.

Trump has rejected long-established standards of political communication, and people believe that this was one of the reasons for his victory in the US presidential election. Twitter is widely believed to have played a key role in the 2016 US presidential election and the UK Brexit referendum. Both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump pointed to the significant impact of social media on the election results, as did Barack Obama¹². Brad Parscale, Trump's digital campaign director, noted: “Facebook and Twitter made our victory possible. Twitter for Mr. Trump and Facebook for fundraising”¹³. In a recent interview with CBS News' 60 Minutes, Trump himself stated: “I don't think I would be here if it weren't for social media”.

Trump's approach to social media was unique in that he actively used his personal Twitter account, *@realdonaldtrump*, which was created seven years before he ran for president.

Since announcing his campaign in 2016, Trump has been posting dozens of tweets every day, sharing announcements, events, comments, and his own views. In that election, Trump retweeted ordinary citizens more often than any other candidate. Using the change in the traditional relationship between politicians and voters on social media, he reinforced his rhetoric about a corrupt government that ignores the interests of the people and manipulates the system¹⁴. Trump's aggressive campaigning style,

¹⁰ Donald Trump's remarks spur Latino 'naturalization blitz' before election, "The Guardians" 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/jan/26/donald-trump-latino-hispanic-immigrants-citizenship-voting> (accessed on: 24.01.2025).

¹¹ M. Hassan Khan, *Trump and Muslims: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Islamophobic Rhetoric in Donald Trump's Selected Tweets*, „SAGE Open Journal 2021”, Vol. 1–16, p. 4–6.

¹² Obama Reckons with Trump Presidency, "The New Yorker", 2016, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/11/28/obama-reckons-with-a-trump-presidency> (accessed on: 25.01.2025).

¹³ Here's How Facebook Actually Won Trump the Presidency, Wired, 2016, <https://www.wired.com/2016/11/facebook-won-trump-election-not-just-fake-news/> (accessed on: 25.01.2025).

¹⁴ H. Zhang, M. Afzaal, C. Liu, *American Populism in Digital Era: Strategies of Manipulation in Donald Trump's Election Tweets*, Revista Argentina, 2020, Vol. XXIX, No. 3, pp. 1273–1280,

which included the use of emotionally charged hashtags to attack Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton, proved extremely effective in 2016. On the eve of the election, he managed to attract a new audience – people who had previously been uninterested in politics. His hashtag *#CrookedHillaryClinton*, which has become a staple in the American information space, helped to sow doubts about Clinton's honesty, leadership skills and reliability. Twitter lends itself to harsh, emotional statements and fits President Trump's communication style. Previous research shows that the more negative his tweets were, the higher his ratings in polls were. It is also important to note that many Americans were attracted to the fact that their president communicated directly with them, bypassing traditional media. Thanks to Twitter, people could receive "news" directly from the head of state¹⁵. As intra-party discussions are increasingly moving online, the boundaries between politicians, activists, party members, and the public are gradually blurring.

The slogan "Make America Great Again" has been an integral part of US President Donald Trump's image since 2016 and remains popular to this day. Although the slogan "Make America Great Again" is most often associated with Donald Trump, who used it extensively during the 2016 presidential campaign (and continues to do so today), its origins go back much further¹⁶. The phrase first appeared in political discourse back in 1980, when Ronald Reagan made it part of his election campaign. At that time, his team emphasised the need to restore America's greatness, which became a relevant message after the economic difficulties of the 1970s. Trump, when running for president, not only brought this slogan back into the public space, but also officially registered it as a trademark. Thus, it was Reagan who pioneered the use of this phrase, but it was Trump who turned it into one of the most famous political slogans in the world¹⁷. For many Americans, the slogan "Make America Great Again" remains not just a political slogan, but a symbol of a broader social movement. One of the reasons for its popularity is the appeal to nostalgia for "better times", even if those times are more idealised than real. This slogan evokes a powerful emotional response among both supporters and opponents. For millions of Americans, the acronym MAGA embodies their core values: economic nationalism, patriotism, and the protection of traditions. In addition, due to its widespread use in culture, this slogan has become part of memes, music, movies and literature. It ceased to be merely political and turned into a recognisable brand. After 2016, the MAGA movement was often associated in the media with

<https://www.revistaclinicapsicologica.com/data-cms/articles/oldissue/20201214052152pm.pdf> (accessed on: 27.01.2025).

¹⁵ C. Gibson, *Trump's twisted tweets add to his popularity*, University of South Australia, <https://www.unisa.edu.au/unisanews/2019/december/story2/> (accessed on: 27.01.2025).

¹⁶ O. Zimko, *Make America Great Again – who actually created Trump's popular slogan*, RBC-Ukraine, 2025, <https://newsukraine.rbc.ua/news/make-america-great-again-who-actually-created-1737363209.html> (accessed on: 27.01.2025).

¹⁷ E. Margolin, *Make America Great Again – Who Said It First?*, NBC News, 2016, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2016-election/make-america-great-again-who-said-it-first-n645716> (accessed on: 27.01.2025).

populism. Critics believe that this slogan promotes and reinforces the split between liberal and conservative views, leading to the polarisation of society¹⁸. If communication is about getting messages across without the use of paid advertising, then Donald Trump is a true master in this area. According to the analytical company MediaQuant, he received almost \$5 billion in “free” media during the presidential campaign¹⁹.

Every time Donald Trump faces negative press, he uses it as a chance to portray himself as a victim. He claims that the media is against him, that they are petty and prevent him from implementing his policies, despite his election victory. Many of the fake news stories created during the election campaign portrayed Trump in a positive light (for example, a false story that a person was paid to attend an anti-platform rally), and the president further manipulated this situation. He often calls the media “fake” and “fraudulent” and even tried to trend *#FraudNewsCNN*. Donald Trump has managed to make many people doubt what they hear in the press about him – this is spin on a new level²⁰.

In summary, Donald Trump’s strategy during the 2016 presidential campaign demonstrated his ability to use modern communication technologies and manipulative practices to achieve political goals. His active use of social media, in particular Twitter, allowed him to interact directly with voters, forming a unique image and narrative that evoked strong emotions. Methods such as gaslighting and creating an image of the enemy helped Trump not only to divert attention from criticism, but also to strengthen his support base. Thus, his approach to politics and communication has become an important lesson for future political leaders about the power of media and emotional influence in the modern world.

PR-Strategy in 2024

The 2024 US presidential election, defined by polarisation, digital innovation and constant media attention, was a clear example of how PR can determine electoral success. Donald Trump’s campaign, in particular, showed the powerful impact of strategic communications, proving that in politics, perception becomes reality.

After his defeat in 2020, Trump’s team had to solve two important tasks: to restore the support of his base and at the same time attract swing voters who were disappointed by the economic problems after the pandemic. The PR strategy was aimed at creating an image of Trump as a “comeback president”²¹. Trump’s campaign successfully exploited the chaos, using PR tools to keep his opponents on the defensive. His team

¹⁸ O. Zimko, *Make America Great Again...*

¹⁹ Donald Trump: PR genius?, Salt&Shein, 2020, <https://www.saltshein.com.au/donald-trump-pr-genius/> (accessed on: 27.01.2025).

²⁰ Trump tweets fake video of him attacking CNN, Politico 2017, <https://www.politico.com/story/2017/07/02/trump-tweets-video-wrestling-cnn-240178> (accessed on: 27.01.2025).

²¹ S. Smith, *How Trump pulled off an incredible comeback*, BBC, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cly2818j7rko> (accessed on: 28.01.2025).

filled the media space with provocative statements, ensuring his constant presence in the news, even when the coverage was negative. For example: when legal issues threatened to derail the campaign, Trump's PR team announced a "historic tightening of immigration policy" shifting attention to an issue that was important to voters²².

Donald Trump's immigration policy in 2024 has significantly tightened compared to his previous campaign in 2016. The rhetoric remained similar, in part due to the emphasis on strict border security measures, but became more aggressive. Whereas in 2016 Trump promised to build a wall on the US-Mexico border to stop crime and strengthen national security²³. In 2024 he again emphasises the importance of protecting the border from "dangerous migrants", constantly associating illegal immigrants with crime. The differences between the two campaigns are reflected in a significant hardening of the approach to immigration. Trump proposes to use the military to control borders and deportations, a departure from his previous support for law enforcement. Also, in 2024, he is in favour of restricting the rights of immigrants, in particular, proposing to ban undocumented children from schools, which indicates a tougher policy towards this category of people²⁴.

The tone of the rhetoric has become more alarmist, reinforcing images of social collapse due to immigration and creating the impression that families are threatened by "illegal immigrants". This contrasts with the straightforwardness of previous promises and indicates a strategic shift toward increasing voter anxiety. A special promise was to strengthen the policy of mass deportations. In 2016, Trump talked about deporting millions of illegal immigrants, and in 2024 he promised to carry out the "largest deportation operation in American history", and after the inauguration he started realising this operation.

Donald Trump's 2024 election campaign contained a number of promises aimed at modernising the US economy. Among his proposals were tax cuts and new tariffs. He proposed to eliminate federal taxes on tips, social security payments, overtime wages, and car loan interest. This step was intended to support low- and middle-income workers. Trump also planned to reduce the corporate tax rate to 15%, down from the current 21%, while extending tax cuts introduced during his first term, which ends in 2025. These changes included preserving provisions that benefit high-income individuals, which has drawn criticism that these measures favour the wealthy. In the area of tariffs, Trump proposed to impose duties of 10% to 20% on most imported goods,

²² T. Hesson, *What immigration policies is Trump considering for his second term?*, Reuters, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/how-trump-would-crack-down-immigration-second-term-2023-11-14/> (accessed on: 28.01.2025).

²³ S. Pierce, J. Bolter, A. Selee, *Trump's First Year on Immigration Policy: Rhetoric vs. Reality*, Migration Policy Institute Washington, DC 2018, p. 6–18.

²⁴ T. Wats, J. Zars, *What to expect on immigration policy from a Trump White House*, Brookings 2024, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/what-to-expect-on-immigration-policy-from-a-trump-white-house/> (accessed on: 28.01.2025).

and up to 60% for Chinese products. He argued that these measures would help protect American manufacturing and create new jobs²⁵.

Trump's 2024 campaign faced unprecedented legal and ethical challenges, but his PR team quickly turned these crises into examples of a "witch hunt", which only strengthened support among his supporters. Within minutes of negative news on social media, his surrogates were flooding the internet with counter-messages. Trump decided to take his campaign to a new level by turning his speeches into media spectacles. These events were aimed not only at delivering messages, but also at creating shared emotional moments through viral videos of the crowd chanting or expressing their support. This strategy helped create a strong connection with voters²⁶. In addition, the Trump's team made extensive use of data-driven targeting, which allowed them to create micro-messages specifically targeting different demographics, such as veterans or entrepreneurs, through email campaigns and localised advertising.

To bypass traditional media barriers, Trump engaged influencers from the online space, such as conservative TikTok bloggers and podcasters. This allowed him to reach a new audience and further unite his supporters around his messages. Trump's tricks on TikTok were often shown on CNN and Fox News. The PR strategy was built in such a way that the content could move between different platforms easily²⁷.

Since a significant portion of people get their news through Facebook, it would be a mistake to underestimate the importance of winning the battle for this platform. It was in this area that Donald Trump's campaign clearly outperformed Hillary Clinton's. Trump had a much larger number of followers on Facebook, although this is not always a sign of appeal. Even more impressive, however, is the fact that at the height of his popularity, Trump received about 12 million weekly likes from users of the platform. Facebook users not only liked his posts, but also actively interacted with his videos and posts published by the campaign. Not only did Trump post more live videos than his rival Clinton, but he also did it in an unpredictable way. He posted videos not only at different times, but also with different frequencies per day. Unlike Clinton, who kept to a regular schedule, Trump kept his audience interested by going beyond the template approach. Sometimes he posted up to six videos a day: some of them were live from his tower, others featured people discussing the debates, and sometimes there were no videos at all. This approach required his supporters to be always on the lookout, which, in turn, appealed to them. This showed that Trump's team was able to react

²⁵ K. Lobosco, T. Luhby, *Here's what Trump is proposing for economy*, CNN, 2024, <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/11/06/politics/heres-what-trump-is-proposing-for-the-economy/index.html> (accessed on: 28.01.2025).

²⁶ A Master of the Media Envolved Yet Again in 2024, "The New York Times", 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/07/business/media/trump-media-strategy-podcasts.html> (accessed on: 28.01.2025).

²⁷ T. Lorenz, *How Trump Won the First "Influence election"*, "The Hollywood Reporter", 2024, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/politics-news/trump-wins-influencer-election-1236055439/> (accessed on: 28.01.2025).

quickly to the news, much faster than his opponents. In retrospect, this style of action did play an important role in the campaign²⁸.

On July 13, 2024, an event took place in Butler, Pennsylvania, that could have a significant impact not only on the course of the US presidential election campaign, but also on determining its winner. It's about an assassination attempt on Donald Trump. The main thing that became known is that Trump survived the assassination attempt, and this is a real miracle. If the bullet that hit his ear had passed a few centimetres to the right. It is worth recalling that for a casual witness sitting on the podium behind Trump, this bullet wound would have been fatal. It is also worth noting that during the assassination attempt, Trump demonstrated to voters his stress resistance and courage, and his photo surrounded by Secret Service agents, with a bleeding face and raised fist, became a real symbol for his supporters and beyond. It sent a message: "No matter what happens, keep fighting." As a result, the assassination attempt had a significant positive impact on his pre-election ratings. The main mystery of this story was the motive of the shooter. The man was not an "anti-Trumpist" and did not leave any written evidence or statements. Since he was neutralised by snipers after the first shots, one can only speculate as to what motivated him to do so. However, this uncertainty has also benefited Trump, who, both personally and through his supporters, immediately (and not always with good reason) began to accuse the Biden administration of taking society to extremes and actually inciting violence. The most striking evidence of how serious the situation was the reaction of the Biden campaign. The incumbent president and presumptive Democratic nominee was forced to virtually stop criticising Trump, as the growing sympathy for the former president had the opposite effect. In other words, the campaign had a perfect storm in Trump's favor²⁹.

The 2024 US presidential election was marked by political polarisation and the active use of PR, particularly by the campaign of Donald Trump, who, after his 2020 defeat, focused on rebuilding support for his base and attracting swing voters. His harsh immigration rhetoric and economic proposals, such as tax cuts and tariffs to protect manufacturing, played a key role in the campaign. Regardless of your political views, it is clear that Donald Trump has managed to stand out from the crowd and attract attention. He has become his own brand and is running his campaign in a way that no other candidate has done.

²⁸ *How Donald Trump used Facebook Live to help win the election*, Martintrippassociates Executive Search, 2020, <https://www.trippassociates.co.uk/how-donald-trump-used-facebook-live-to-help-win-the-election/> (accessed on: 28.01.2025).

²⁹ С. Сидоренко, *Ціна помилок Трампа. Як та чому колишній президент втрачає лідерство на виборах в США*, Європейська правда 2024, <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/articles/2024/08/13/7191991/> (accessed on: 30.01.2025).

Conclusion

Based on the results of this research article, we can confirm the thesis that PR strategy played one of the key roles in Donald Trump's election campaigns in 2016 and 2024 years.

Donald Trump's journey in politics demonstrates how public relations can be the foundation of electoral success. From his unexpected breakthrough in 2016 to his tactical moves in the 2024 elections, Trump's approach emphasises the importance of controlling the narrative, working with the media, and connecting emotionally with voters. He has consistently proved the effectiveness of his strategy of creating compelling stories, using the image of an outsider and victim of political manipulation, which has helped him mobilise support and avoid criticism. The slogan "Make America Great Again" became not only his main message, but also a cultural phenomenon that resonated with many Americans.

Thanks to the development of communication technologies, Trump was able to maximize the use of social networks, such as Twitter, Facebook or TikTok, to bypass traditional media and communicate directly with voters. This direct interaction has helped to strengthen his support and shape public opinion. His ability to turn negative news into an advantage and force critics to play on his field were important elements of his PR strategy.

The 2024 campaign continued the theme of polarisation in American society, with Trump using provocative statements to maintain his place on the political horizon and energise his supporters. His strategy is an example of how PR can change election campaigns and how important it is to be able to create emotional narratives that resonate with voters, as well as to manage crisis situations effectively. Trump's campaigns demonstrate that in modern politics, perception is more important than reality, and therefore strategic communication is becoming a key component of election success.

Thus, Donald Trump's PR strategies have not only changed the approach to political campaigns, but also set new standards for interaction between candidates and voters in the modern media space. Given the upcoming elections, these strategies are likely to have a lasting impact on the dynamics of politics in the United States.

The application of case study, qualitative content analysis, and critical discourse analysis enabled a systematic examination of Trump's messaging, rhetorical techniques, and digital engagement. These methods and analytical techniques allowed for the identification of recurring patterns in his PR strategy and assessment of their impact on voter behavior, highlighting the central role of strategic communication in modern political campaigns.

Bibliography

A Master of the Media Envolved Yet Again in 2024, „The New York Times” 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/07/business/media/trump-media-strategy-podcasts.html> (accessed on: 28.01.2025).

Donald Trump: PR genius?, Salt&Shein, 2020, <https://www.saltshein.com.au/donald-trump-pr-genius/> (accessed on: 27.01.2025).

Donald Trump's remarks spur Latino 'naturalization blitz' before election, „The Guardians” 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/jan/26/donald-trump-latino-hispanic-immigrants-citizenship-voting> (accessed on: 24.01.2025).

Election, Volume 5: Counterintelligence Threats and Vulnerabilities, https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/documents/report_volume5.pdf/ (accessed on: 24.01.2025).

Gibson C., *Trump's twisted tweets add to his popularity*, University of South Australia, <https://www.unisa.edu.au/unisanews/2019/december/story2/> (accessed on: 27.01.2025).

Hassan Khan M., *Trump and Muslims: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Islamophobic Rhetoric in Donald Trumps' Selected Tweets*, “SAGE Open Journal” 2021, Vol. 1–16, p. 4–6.

Here's How Facebook Actually Won Trump the Presidency, Wired, 2016, <https://www.wired.com/2016/11/facebook-won-trump-election-not-just-fake-news/> (accessed on: 25.01.2025).

Hesson T., *What immigration policies is Trump considering for his second term?*, Reuters 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/how-trump-would-crack-down-immigration-second-term-2023-11-14/> (accessed on: 28.01.2025).

How Donald Trump used Facebook Live to help win the election, Martintrippassociates Executive Search, <https://www.trippassociates.co.uk/how-donald-trump-used-facebook-live-to-help-win-the-election/> (accessed on: 28.01.2025).

How Trump fused his business empire to the presidency, Politico 2017, <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/01/20/trump-businesses-empire-tied-presidency-100496> (accessed on: 24.01.2025).

Identifying Gaslighting: Signs, Examples, and Seeking Help, Newport Institute 2024, https://www.newportinstitute.com/resources/mental-health/what_is_gaslighting_abuse/ (accessed on: 24.01.2025).

Lees-Marshment J., *Political Marketing and British Political Parties: The Party's Just Begun*, Manchester University Press, Manchester 2001.

Lobosco K., Luhby T., *Here's what Trump is proposing for economy*, CNN, 2024, <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/11/06/politics/heres-what-trump-is-proposing-for-the-economy/index.html> (accessed on: 28.01.2025).

Lorenz T., *How Trump Won the First “Influence election”*, “The Hollywood Reporter” 2024, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/politics-news/trump-wins-influencer-election-1236055439/> (accessed on: 28.01.2025).

Lucas R., *Senate Release Final Report On Russia's Interference In 2016 Election*, NPR 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/08/18/903616315/senate-releases-final-report-on-russias-interference-in-2016-election> (accessed on: 24.01.2025).

Margolin E., *Make America Great Again – Who Said It First?*, NBC News, 2016, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2016-election/make-america-great-again-who-said-it-first-n645716> (accessed on: 27.01.2025).

Maćkowska R., *Zasady tworzenia i cele komunikatów w kampanii politycznej*, Uniwersytet Ekonomiczny, Katowice 2014.

Newman B., *The Mass Marketing of Politics: Democracy in an Age of Manufactured Images*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA 1994.

Obama Reckons with Trump Presidency, „The New Yorker”, 2016, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/11/28/obama-reckons-with-a-trump-presidency> (accessed on: 25.01.2025).

Pastusiak L., *Donald Trump. Pierwszy taki prezydent Stanów Zjednoczonych*, Bellona, Warszawa 2019.

Pierce S., Bolter J., Selee A., *Trump's First Year on Immigration Policy: Rhetoric vs. Reality*, Migration Policy Institute, Washington, DC 2018.

Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, (U) REPORT of the Select Committee on Intelligence United States Senate on Russian Active Measures Campaigns and Interference, The 2016 U.S. Сидоренко С., *Ціна помилок Трампа. Як та чому колишній президент втрачає лідерство на виборах в США, Європейська правда* 2024, <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/articles/2024/08/13/7191991/> (accessed on: 30.01.2025).

Smith S., *How Trump pulled off an incredible comeback*, BBC, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cly2818j7rko> (accessed on: 28.01.2025).

Trump tweets fake video of him attacking CNN, Politico, <https://www.politico.com/story/2017/07/02/trump-tweets-video-wrestling-cnn-240178> (accessed on: 27.01.2025).

Wats T., Zars J., *What to expect on immigration policy from a Trump White House*, Brookings 2024, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/what-to-expect-on-immigration-policy-from-a-trump-white-house/> (accessed on: 28.01.2025).

Wojcik K., *Public relations. Wiarygodny dialog z otoczeniem*, Wydawnictwo Placet, Warszawa 2021.

Zhang H., Afzaal M., Liu C., *American Populism in Digital Era: Strategies of Manipulation in Donald Trump's Election Tweets*, “Revista Argentina” 2020, Vol. XXIX, No. 3, pp. 1273–1280, <https://www.revistaclinicapsicologica.com/data-cms/articles/oldiss-e/20201214052152pm.pdf> (accessed on: 27.01.2025).

Zimko O., *Make America Great Again – who actually created Trump's popular slogan*, RBC-Ukraine, 2025, <https://newsukraine.rbc.ua/news/make-america-great-again-who-actually-created-1737363209.html> (accessed on: 27.01.2025).