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**A Functional Analysis of the
Persuasive Strategies Used by
Trump and Clinton in the
United States 2016 Presidential
Debates**

A B S T R A C T

This study presents a functional analysis of the persuasive strategies utilized by Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in the three U.S. 2016 presidential debates (henceforth PDs). These PDs, which take place every four years, are the furthestmost critical political rhetoric that gives rise to the voting of the following President. Such PDs cover an argument of various subjects between the candidates. Many scholars have studied the U.S. PDs, but there has not been a study that focuses primarily on the persuasive strategies (i.e. acclaim, attack, and defense) as a functional analysis in these debates. The persuasive strategies used by Trump and Clinton were excerpted from the U.S. 2016 PDs and analyzed using Benoit's (2007) functional theory. The findings of analyzing the two presidential candidates' speeches in the U.S. 2016 PDs state that 53.1% of the persuasive strategies were utilized by Trump in opposite to 46.9% were utilized by Clinton.

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تحليل وظيفي لاستراتيجيات الاقناع التي استخدمها ترامب وكلينتون في المناظرات الرئاسية الامريكية

لعام ٢٠١٦

أ.م.د. احمد حساني ياسين/ جامعة تكريت / كلية الآداب

الخلاصة:

تقدم هذه الدراسة تحليلاً وظيفياً لاستراتيجيات الاقناع التي قد تم استخدامها من قبل دونالد ترامب وهيلاري كلينتون في المناظرات الثلاث الرئاسية في الولايات المتحدة الامريكية للعام ٢٠١٦. هذه المناظرات، التي تحدث كل اربع سنوات، تعد الخطاب السياسي الاكثر اهمية الذي يؤدي الى التصويت

الرئيس التالي. تغطي المناظرات الرئاسية مناقشة مواضيع مختلفة بين المرشحين. وقد درس العديد من الباحثين المناظرات الرئاسية في الولايات المتحدة الامريكية، لكن لم تكن هناك دراسة تركز بشكل اساسي على استراتيجيات الاقناع (مثل الاشادة والهجوم والدفاع) كتحليل وظيفي في هذه المناظرات. وتم اقتباس استراتيجيات الاقناع، التي تم استخدامها من قبل ترامب وكلينتون، من المناظرات الرئاسية الامريكية لعام ٢٠١٦ ومن ثم تحليلها باستخدام نظرية (Benoit (2007 الوظيفية. وتشير نتائج تحليل خطابات المرشحين الرئاسيين في الولايات المتحدة الامريكية لعام ٢٠١٦ الى ان 53.1% من استراتيجيات الاقناع استخدمت من قبل ترامب مقابل ٤٦.٩% استخدمت من قبل كلينتون.

الكلمات المفتاحية: وظائف، مناظرات رئاسية، استراتيجيات الاقناع، اشادة، هجوم، دفاع

INTRODUCTION

This research addresses the functional assumptions as persuasive strategies employed by Trump and Clinton in the U.S. 2016 presidential debates (henceforth PDs). This research sheds light on the great role that American electorates play in the U.S. PDs in addition to the wide range around the world that covers these televised debates. The various issues that are allied to many countries have been dealt with by Trump and Clinton in these debates. Both candidates try to show their personal ideas and draw on the strategies that U.S. will apply. Thus, Trump and Clinton's speeches are of value to be studied. This study applies Benoit's (2007) functional theory as a theoretical framework to analyse the U.S. 2016 PDs, because of its suitability in fulfilling a qualitative research to the texts of the three PDs. This study is significant owing to producing knowledge that is presented to the society to recognize persuasion throughout the assumptions of Benoit's (2007) functional theory.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Due to the significant role of Trump and Clinton's speeches in the U.S. 2016 PDs, many studies have focused on this event. Clarke and Ricketts (2016) is a study that highlights the U.S. 2016 election and asserts that the American foreign policy is related to Jacksonian tradition. The issue of healthcare, which is an important issue tackled by Trump and Clinton in the U.S. 2016 presidential election campaign, has been discussed by Blendon, Benson, and Casey (2016). They explored this election's consequences to the future of this issue. In their study, fourteen polls from diverse sources were conducted by

Blendon, et al. (2016) to reveal the findings through electors' polarised observations. The multidimensional Asian American population helps Trump get the unanticipated triumph in the U.S. 2016 presidential election campaign (henceforth PEC). This was one of the considerably important supporting factors for Trump. Furthermore, Huang (2017) attempted to reveal the roots of Trump's overpowering his challenger, Clinton, between the population of Asian American.

By going over past studies which are exhibited in the literature review, realizing the assumptions (i.e. functions based on topics) of Benoit's (2007) functional theory is considered a gap in the previous studies, which are rarely addressed, on the U.S. 2016 PDs.

The current research tries to address the issue of persuasion in the two candidates' speeches in the U.S. 2016 PDs by using Benoit's functional theory to bridge the gap resulted from the earlier studies. This gap is going to come up to with germane objective and question which will be examined to find suitable answer during the research process in this study.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The goal of the present study is to identify the persuasive strategies (i.e., functions based on topics) utilized by Trump and Clinton in the U.S. 2016 PDs that influence the electorates.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Since this study aims at analysing how Trump and Clinton convince the electorates, this study investigates the research question to what extent the persuasive strategies (i.e., functions based on topics) are utilized by Trump and Clinton in the U.S. 2016 PDs to influence the electorates?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Various studies on the U.S. 2016 PDs have been tackled by a number of scholars and writers. Yaseen, Afida, and Zalina (2018) is an article that highlights the issue of immigration addressed by Trump and Clinton throughout the U.S. 2016 PDs. Yaseen, et al. (ibid.) used Benoit's (2007) functional theory to analyse the speeches of the two presidential candidates in these debates as much as concerns the issue of immigration. Those scholars had reached at a conclusion signified that the function of attack was carried out by the two candidates more than the functions of acclaim and defence respectively, and

these candidates emphasised the topic of character rather than policy. Moreover, they had concluded that Benoit's (2007) functional theory could not be absolutely applicable to all issues in the PDs due to different situations, contexts, and speakers. Another study tackles U.S. 2016 PDs is Benoit (2017) that focused on the analysis of 68 direct mail advertisements which were brochures, pamphlets, or fliers, spread by Trump and Clinton in Ohio in the 2016 presidential campaign. As regards the two candidates' use of direct mail advertising, Benoit (ibid.) assumed that attacks are used by the two candidates less than acclaims, and defences take place least occurrence; policy is argued by the two candidates more than character; the general goals are utilized to acclaims more than attacks; ideals are employed to acclaims more than attacks. Benoit (ibid.) concluded that these mails signified messages of acclaims rather than of attacks, and defences did not occur in those advertisements. The mainly discussed topics were policy and character. Acclaims were more often utilized than attacks.

Enli's (2017) main concern is the social media platform as shortest sources in avoiding the editorial news in the U.S. 2016 presidential election campaign. The aim of this article is to identify the newest developments in social media, in addition to investigating these developments in relation to the increasing of connection with the electorates and/or "professionalisation of the campaigns" (ibid., p. 51). In this article, the author has discussed Trump and Clinton's Twitter strategies during this election campaign. Clinton has followed the professionalisation strategy in political discourse in contrast to Trump who has followed the de-professionalisation strategy. Enli (ibid.) concluded that without social media, such as Twitter, a candidate may face unexpected obstacles and barriers inside his/her party as it happened to Trump with his Republican Party. On the same boat, Powers, Moeller, and Yuan (2016) had examined a comparison between political commitment and media consumption of the U.S. presidential election in 2016 and the survey assessing student political commitment and digital culture of the U.S. presidential election in 2012. The impact of the online platforms on the U.S. 2016 presidential election has been explored by Powers et al (ibid). These authors concluded that students revealed politics most attractive "when they felt a personal investment and when there was a social component to tracking election results" (Powers et al, 2016, p. 10).

As mentioned above, it seems that no study has tackled Benoit's (2007) functional theory in analysing the three U.S. 2016 PDs. This is considered a gap in past studies which is going to be bridged in the current study.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To examine the objective of the present study, the theoretical framework, i.e. Benoit's (2007) functional theory, that is utilized in this study is going to be described in detail. The functional theory, which mainly deals with political campaign discourse, is an inclusive theory more than other theories (Benoit, McHale, Hansen, Pier, and McGuire 2003b). This inclusiveness makes this theory applicable in investigating functions based on topics. This theory hypothesises that audience vote to the most preferable candidate who has favourable features rather than his/her opponent. According to Benoit's (2007) functional theory, preferability has three main functions: acclaim, attack, and defence based on two topics: policy, represented by issues, and character, represented by images. A candidate's speech that directed at the topic of policy tackles one or more of the issues of past deeds, general goals, or future plans. While a candidate's speech that deal with the topic of character addresses one or more of the images of leadership quality, personal quality, and ideals.

The three functions of acclaim, attack, and defence "may not be equally common in discourse, [but] they are three options that every candidate has available for use" (Benoit, 2007, p. 40). Moreover, the candidates' desirability can be demonstrated throughout these three functions (Glantz, Benoit, & Airne, 2013), where a candidate can express or declare the positive and good aspects that related to himself/herself or his/her party. This process is called acclaiming. Another function, which represents a candidate's attack to his/her opponent's negative or bad achievements, is called attacking which is unfavourable to voters. The third function is called defence which signifies a candidate's denial accusations and defence against the opponent's attack(s). the three functions work together "as an informal form of cost-benefit analysis: acclaims increase benefits, attacks increase an opponent's costs, and defences reduce a candidate's alleged costs" as it is stressed by Benoit and Airne (2005, p. 226). Benoit (2007) has identified six assumptions to the functional theory. These assumptions are:

- Voting is a comparative act.
- Candidates have to differentiate themselves from rivals.
- Political campaign messages permit candidates to differentiate themselves.
- Candidates create preferability throughout acclaim, attack, and defence.
- Based on two topics: policy and character, campaign discourse occurs.
- To win, a candidate must get a popularity of the votes cast in an election.

Zarefsky (2016) affirms that "campaign messages are 'functional' as they are designed to persuade voters that one candidate is more preferable than the opposition" (p. 6), that is, Benoit's functional assumptions in their nature are persuasive to the audience.

SKETCH OF ANALYSIS

In terms of Benoit's (2007) functional theory, the present study analysed the three U.S. 2016 PDs occurred between the Democrat nomination Hillary Clinton and the Republican nomination Donald Trump by using the software application ATLAS.ti 7 in order to answer the research question of the present study. These debates were transcribed by The New York Times (2016a, 2016b, and 2016c). The main ideas of each debate were identified, and each main idea included different utterances in various length (i.e., some utterances were full paragraphs, full sentences, incomplete sentences, clauses, and/or phrases) that are related to the two presidential candidates. These utterances were analysed and categorised according to Benoit' (2007) functional assumptions: acclaim, attack, and defence. These functions based on the topics of policy (issues) and character (images). The policy covered the two candidates' general goals, past deeds, and future plans, whereas the character comprised their leadership abilities, personal qualities, and ideals.

The sampling of the current study was purposive because the data that were collected and analysed involved all the utterances of the two candidates in the three U.S. 2016 PDs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The central purpose of this section is showing the findings of the analysis of the three U.S. 2016 PDs then discussing these findings. In these debates, the functional analysis of the selected excerpts that are related to the two candidates' utterances are going to be shown. The subsequent table (Table 1) illustrates the recurrence uses of the functional assumptions (acclaims, attacks, and defences). In the U.S. 2016 PDs, it is clear, as shown in Table 1, that different recurrences were operated by the two presidential candidates. These candidates used the

functional assumptions for 1653 recurrences where 875 based on the topic of policy and 778 based on the topic of character.

Table 1: The Functional Assumptions Used by Trump and Clinton in the U.S. 2016 PDs

Benoit's (2007) Functional Assumptions	Topics								
	Recurrences of policies			Total policy recurrences	Recurrences of characters			Total character recurrences	Total recurrences of
	General	Past	Future		Leaders	Ideals	Persona		
Acclaims	79	102	164	345	131	101	142	374	719
Attacks	58	256	101	415	104	48	141	293	708
Defences	15	73	27	115	32	10	69	111	226
Total recurrences of functions	152	431	292	875	267	159	352	778	1653

These differences of operating the functional assumptions between the two candidates are shown in Tables 2 and 3. Table 2 focuses on Trump's utilization of these functions, whilst Table 3 emphasizes Clinton's utilization. For Trump, 878 recurrences of functional assumptions were utilized to cover 468 recurrences for policy against 410 recurrences for character. The attack function got 457 recurrences where 283 recurrences related to the topic of policy against 174 recurrences for the topic of character. The function of acclaim is separated into 305 recurrences with 173 for the topic of character and 131 for the topic of policy. The function of defense, implies 117 recurrences that shared by the topics of policy with 54 recurrences and character with 63 recurrences.

Table 2: The Functional Assumptions Used by Trump in the U.S. 2016 PDs

Benoit's (2007) Functional Assumptions	Topics								
	Recurrences of policies			Total policy recurrences	Recurrences of characters			Total Character recurrences	Total
	General	Past	Future		Leaders	Ideals	Persona		

Acclaims	27	30	74	131	62	36	75	173	305
Attacks	40	183	60	283	82	26	66	174	457
Defences	8	37	9	54	14	2	47	63	117
Total recurrences of functions	75	250	143	468	158	64	188	410	878

On the same boat, Benoit's functional assumptions used by Clinton in the U.S. 2016 PDs include 775 recurrences divided into 407 recurrences based on the topic of policy, and 368 recurrences based on the topic of character as illustrated in Table 3. The function of attack signifies 251 recurrences whereby 132 recurrences were for policy, and 119 recurrences were for character. However, it is obvious that the precedence of using the functional assumptions is associated with the function of acclaim which is exploited by Clinton for 415 recurrences whereby 214 recurrences were for policy, and 201 recurrences were for character. Additionally, the function of defense utilized by Clinton indicates 109 recurrences which are used as the least function that is classified into 61 recurrences for policy, and 48 recurrences for character.

Table 3: The Functional Assumptions Used by Clinton in the U.S. 2016 PDs

Benoit's (2007) Functional Assumptions	Topics								
	Recurrences of policies			Total policy recurrences	Recurrences of characters			Total Character recurrences	Total recurrences of two topics
	General goal	Past deed	Future plan		Leadership ability	Ideals	Personal quality		
Acclaims	52	72	90	214	69	65	67	201	415
Attacks	18	73	41	132	22	22	75	119	251
Defences	7	36	18	61	18	8	22	48	109
Total recurrences of functions	77	181	149	407	109	95	164	368	775

Comparing the two presidential candidates' utilization of Benoit's functional assumptions can clarify that Trump generally used these assumptions further than Clinton (53.1% versus 46.9%). Trump practices mainly the attack (59.4%) and defense (56.8%) functions further than his opponent Clinton who used the acclaim (53.7%) function further than her opponent Trump. In the utilization of the functional assumptions, Trump sheds lights the attack, acclaim, and defense functions respectively. On the same vain, Clinton focuses correspondingly the acclaim, attack, and defense functions (for more details, see Tables 3 and 4).

However, the major concern of the objective of this study is to demonstrate the two presidential candidates' uses of the functional assumptions as persuasive strategies in the U.S. 2016 PDs. To elucidate the utilization of these functions, the beginning is to start with Trump then Clinton.

As regards Trump, one of the utilized functions is acclaim, which based on the topics of policy (i.e., the issues of general goals, past deeds, and future plans) and character (i.e., the images of leadership ability, personal quality, and ideals), that can be recognized in the following selected excerpts:

EXCERPT 1: Acclaim General Goals

TRUMP: "We're going to make America great again, but we're going to make America safe again" (The New York Times, 2016b).

A presidential candidate who uses acclaim function increases his/her benefit in general. In the first three excerpts, Trump operated this function for the topic of policy. In excerpt 1, Trump employed the slogan of his presidential election campaign in his speech. He attempted to portrait and give an idea about his general goals in remaking to the U.S. greatness and peaceful by emphasizing the protection of Americans from any internal or external violence. Another acclaim, which based on describing the issue of past deeds, was employed by Trump in excerpt 2. He described his full understanding for the importance of borders and its impact to economy, stability, safety, security, and immigration to the U.S. According to Trump, what approved his comprehensive understanding to the borders was the endorsement of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to be a presidential candidate.

EXCERPT 2: Acclaim Past Deeds

TRUMP: "ICE just endorsed me. They've never endorsed a presidential candidate. The Border Patrol agents, 16,500, just recently endorsed me, and

they endorsed me because I understand the border" (The New York Times, 2016b).

Because of his supposed future plan, as shown in excerpt 3, Trump labelled strongly his intention of making jobs available for Americans. He tried, as a businessman, to assure his talent in bringing back the factories and companies that left the U.S.

EXCERPT 3: Acclaim Future Plans

"**TRUMP:** I will bring — excuse me. I will bring back jobs" (The New York Times, 2016a).

In the excerpts 4,5, and 6, Trump used acclaim function that based on the topic of character. Trump highlighted his image of leadership ability in excerpt 4, where he announced bravely and clearly in front of media, his supporters, and opponents that Muslims have to report any tiny problematic issue that may create violence, terror, or instability in the American society. He stressed that the process of vetting Muslims must be achieved extremely.

Table 4: Comparing Trump and Clinton's Percentages of the Functional

Benoit's (2007) Functional Assumptions	Topics														
	Recurrences of policies						Recurrences of characters								
	T*	C*	T	C	T	C	T	C	T	C	T	C	T	C	
Acclaims	34.2	65.8	29.4	70.6	45.1	54.9	38	62	47.3	52.7	35.6	64.4	52.8	47.2	46.3
Attacks	69	31	71.5	28.5	59.4	40.6	68.2	31.8	78.8	21.2	54.2	45.8	46.8	53.2	59.4
Defences	53.3	46.7	50.7	49.3	33.3	66.7	47	53	43.8	56.2	20	80	68.1	31.9	56.8
Total recurrences of functions	49.3	51.7	58	42	49	51	53.9	46.1	59.2	40.8	40.3	59.7	53.4	46.6	52.7

Assumptions Utilized in the U.S. 2016 PDs

*T: Trump; C: Clinton

XCERPT 4: Acclaim Leadership Quality

"**TRUMP:** Well, you're right about Islamophobia, and that's a shame. But one thing we have to do is we have to make sure that — because there is a problem. I mean, whether we like it or not, and we could be very politically correct, but whether we like it or not, there is a problem. And we have to be sure that Muslims come in and report when they see something going on. When they see hatred going on, they have to report it" (The New York Times, 2016b).

As it is shown in excerpt 5, Trump's acclaiming of personal quality is obviously stated. He announced that he has been approved by a number of persons who received Congressional Medal of Honor. This means that Trump is the lonely presidential candidate who had been approved by this number of such persons, and no presidential candidate had such an endorsement in the present and past campaigns. For Trump, this personal quality is reckoned as a characteristic feature.

EXCERPT 5: Acclaim Personal Quality

TRUMP: "I have 21 Congressional Medal of Honor recipients who endorsed me" (The New York Times, 2016b).

Trump tried in the next excerpt to express his ideal image and reveal his sympathy with some people. He declared that among the audience of this debate,

i.e., the third PD, there were some persons whose children had been violently murdered by people who had entered illegally into the U.S.

EXCERPT 6: Acclaim Ideals

TRUMP: "In the audience tonight, we have four mothers of — I mean, these are unbelievable people that I've gotten to know over a period of years whose children have been killed, brutally killed by people that came into the country illegally" (The New York Times, 2016c).

The second function, which is attack, has been utilized by Trump in these PDs as well. Generally, the candidate who uses the attack function reduces his/her rival's benefit. The excerpts 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 are chosen to signify the application of this function.

On the one hand, Trump attacked his opponent's policies starting with the issues of general goals and past deeds as stated in excerpt 7. First, Trump attacked Obamacare which dealt with Americans' health insurance and health care. In addition to the opponent's general goals, past deeds had occupied a fair share of Trump's attacks, Second, he criticized the goal of the Iran deal and stated how a bad deal it was in reference to the benefits of U.S. He had provided the audience valuable and detailed information about this bad reputation deal made by his opponent's prominent figures.

EXCERPT 7: Attack General Goals and Past Deeds

TRUMP: "When I watch the deals being made, when I watch what's happening with some horrible things like Obamacare, where your health insurance and health care is going up by numbers that are astronomical, 68 percent, 59 percent, 71 percent, when I look at the Iran deal and how bad a deal it is for us, it's a one-sided transaction where we're giving back \$150 billion to a terrorist state, really, the number one terror state, we've made them a strong country from really a very weak country just three years ago" (The New York Times, 2016b).

As regards the issue of future plans, Trump had continued in attacking Clinton's future plans. He saw that her plans, especially those concern with the immigration issue as shown in excerpt 8, were useless, worthless, unsuccessful, and would lead the U.S. to more catastrophic crises. Trump used to attack this plan because he and Clinton were opposite each other as much as concern the immigration issue, where he tried to reduce the coming immigrants into the U.S. due to several reasons such as religious, ethnic, social, etc. In contrary, Clinton

tried to double the number of the coming immigrants (specifically those who were coming from Syria) more than five doubles.

EXCERPT 8: Attack Future Plans

"**TRUMP**: She wants open borders. People are going to pour into our country. People are going to come in from Syria. She wants 550 percent more people than Barack Obama, and he has thousands and thousands of people. They have no idea where they come from" (The New York Times, 2016c).

On the other hand, Trump employed the function of attack in attacking his rival's images of character. One of the most important images that were attacked by Trump, as illustrated in excerpt 9, was Clinton's leadership. He attacked Clinton's managing of foreign affairs, where supporters and colleagues were outplayed by the Russia, Syria, and Iran. He used tough and rough utterances towards the American leadership and he described them as an unwise leadership.

EXCERPT 9: Attack Leadership Quality

TRUMP: "We are so outplayed on missiles, on cease-fires. They are outplayed. Now, she wasn't there. I assume she had nothing to do with it. But our country is so outplayed by Putin and Assad, and by the way — and by Iran. Nobody can believe how stupid our leadership is" (The New York Times, 2016c).

The following excerpt indicates another attacked image, which is Clinton's personal quality, that was attacked by Trump. He disapproved Clinton's unaccepted way of presenting unrealistic issues or matters, where described her as a liar for many times during the PDs period.

EXCERPT 10: Attack Personal Image

"**TRUMP**: Look, she's been proven to be a liar on so many different ways. This is just another lie" (The New York Times, 2016c).

The last image of Clinton that was attacked by Trump is ideal image. In excerpt 11, Trump attacked Clinton's sympathy with the African-American community, where he claimed that the inner cities in this community had been deceived and abused by the Democrat politicians for about one century. He supposed that Clinton and her colleague had treated this community so badly during her service as a Democratic Senator or Secretary.

EXCERPT 11: Attack Ideals

TRUMP: "The African-American community — because — look, the community within the inner cities has been so badly treated. They've been abused and used in order to get votes by Democrat politicians, because that's what it is. They've controlled these communities for up to 100 years" (The New York Times, 2016a).

The other function that is utilized by Trump is fence, which lessens the presidential candidate's coast. Sometimes, he uses this function based on the topic of policy, as illustrated in the excerpts 12, 13, and 14, while other times he based on the topic of character as in the excerpts 15, 16, and 17. In excerpt 12, Trump defended his general goals when he stated that he is going to make the U.S. safe and have secure borders which America does not have. He called for building the wall between the U.S. and Mexico to prevent pouring of drugs in addition to pouring of illegal immigrants into the U.S. This goal can be supported by most Americans.

EXCERPT 12: Defense General Goals

TRUMP: "And I will tell you that I'm going to make our country safe. We're going to have borders in our country, which we don't have now. People are pouring into our country, and they're coming in from the Middle East and other places" (The New York Times, 2016b).

Excerpt 13 illustrates how Trump defended his past deeds when Clinton attacked them saying that Trump did not pay the preconcerted amount of money to an architect who worked in designing one of Trump's gulf courses. For Trump, he justified his deed and defended himself saying that the architect's work did not satisfy me and it was not good. In such a way, Trump used to defend his bad deeds and tried to persuade the audience with his reasonable justifications.

EXCERPT 13: Defense Past Deeds

CLINTON: "We have an architect in the audience who designed one of your clubhouses at one of your golf courses. It's a beautiful facility. It immediately was put to use. And you wouldn't pay what the man needed to be paid, what he was charging you to do..."

TRUMP: Maybe he didn't do a good job and I was unsatisfied with his work..."(The New York Times, 2016a).

Furthermore, Trump attempted to defend another issue which is his future plans as exposed in excerpt 14. Trump's plan, which concerns tax cut, had been attacked by Clinton who announced that Trump's plan would lose the U.S. millions of jobs. Trump defended his future plan saying that this plan is the biggest since Ronald Reagan and it would produce numbers of new and incredible jobs.

EXCERPT 14: Defense Future Plans

TRUMP: "And by the way, my tax cut is the biggest since Ronald Reagan. I'm very proud of it. It will create tremendous numbers of new jobs" (The New York Times, 2016a).

In reference to the image of leadership ability, Trump defended this image in excerpt 15, when Clinton claimed that he cannot be the U.S. president because he is unfit. Trump assured the opposite where he declared that he is able to lead the U.S. He announced that he was endorsed by more than two-hundred admirals and generals who confirmed his ability to be the president of the U.S.

EXCERPT 15: Defense Leadership Quality

"**CLINTON:** ... have said that Donald is unfit to be the commander- in-chief. It's comments like that that really worry people who understand the threats that we face.

HOLT: Mr. Trump, you have two minutes and the same question. Who's behind it? And how do we fight it?

TRUMP: I do want to say that I was just endorsed — and more are coming next week — it will be over 200 admirals, many of them here — admirals and generals endorsed me to lead this country. That just happened, and many more are coming. And I'm very proud of it" (The New York Times, 2016a).

Trump's personal image had been attacked by the rival Clinton, but he had defended this image as illustrated in excerpt 17. He mentioned that he did not abuse the money in Trump Foundation and he did not buy personal belongings, boats, or planes. The money was gone 100% to various charities that help people especially those who were in militarism

EXCERPT 16: Defense Personal Image

"TRUMP: I'd like to mention one thing. Trump Foundation, small foundation. People contribute, I contribute. The money goes 100 percent — 100 percent goes to different charities, including a lot of military. I don't get anything. I don't buy boats. I don't buy planes. What happens — the money goes to them" (The New York Times, 2016c).

The sympathy and kindness towards others are another image, which is called ideals, that Trump used to defend in the PDs as in excerpt 17. As soon as Clinton attacked Trump's attitude towards women, he reacted towards this attack defending his ideals. He claimed that the respect, regard, and deference for women that he has is more than anybody has, and he often appreciated the women's significance and value in the U.S. society

EXCERPT 17: Defense Ideals

TRUMP: "Nobody has more respect for women than I do. Nobody" (The New York Times, 2016c).

As regards Clinton, the function of acclaim is one of the utilized functions that can be characterized in Clinton's selected excerpts (18-23). The presidential candidates' use of this function in PDs may rise their benefits. Clinton operated this function for two topics: policy and character. From the one hand, in reference to the topic of policy, the issue of general goals had been acclaimed by Clinton as in excerpt 18. She talked the American people (Democrats, Republicans, and independents) saying that she wants to grow the economy for everybody, and she wants to invest the American's skills, talents, energies, commitments, and ambitions. Such a discourse represents a general goal that most of Americans support it.

EXCERPT 18: Acclaim General Goals

CLINTON: "Well, I would like to say to everyone watching tonight that I'm reaching out to all Americans — Democrats, Republicans, and independents — because we need everybody to help make our country what it should be, to grow the economy, to make it fairer, to make it work for everyone. We need your talents, your skills, your commitments, your energy, your ambition" (The New York Times, 2016c).

The issue of past deeds has been acclaimed by Clinton as in excerpt 19. She described one field of her past deeds when she was a Democrat senator for eight

years. She was proud of doing a lot of good deeds for the benefit of the U.S. Clinton declared that her name had been documented as a main or minor sponsor in relation to four hundred pieces of legislation.

EXCERPT 19: Acclaim Past Deeds

CLINTON: "Four hundred pieces of legislation have my name on it as a sponsor or cosponsor when I was a senator for eight years" (The New York Times, 2016b).

Moreover, in excerpt 20, Clinton had described her future plans that associated with supporting the U.S. She claimed that everybody, every company, and wealthy people must pay their fair shares to help and sponsor America in various aspects.

EXCERPT 20: Acclaim Future Plans

"CLINTON: And we're going to make sure that nobody, no corporation, and no individual can get away without paying his fair share to support our country" (The New York Times, 2016b).

On the other hand, Clinton acclaimed the images of character where she described her leadership ability in excerpt 21. She had the courage to determine where are the weak points that the Americans had. She announced that the middle class is the most important social rank that the U.S. government has to focus on. She emphasized on the people of this class and declared that she would invest and support them.

EXCERPT 21: Acclaim Leadership Ability

CLINTON: "And so what I believe is the more we can do for the middle class, the more we can invest in you, your education, your skills, your future, the better we will be off and the better we'll grow. That's the kind of economy I want us to see again" (The New York Times, 2016a).

Another image of character that Clinton acclaimed is personal quality. In excerpt 22, Clinton felt with proudness when she stated that the Clinton Foundation help people inside and outside the U.S. She proclaimed that most of the denoted money spent to the needy people in addition to those who were registered in health programs around the world.

EXCERPT 22: Acclaim Personal Quality

"**CLINTON:** Well, very quickly, we at the Clinton Foundation spend 90 percent — 90 percent of all the money that is donated on behalf of programs of people around the world and in our own country. I'm very proud of that" (The New York Times, 2016c).

In excerpt 23, Clinton acclaimed her sympathy and kindheartedness with people who live but they were not born in the U.S. She did not want to deport members of families from each other, or deport millions of parents from their American citizen children. She was against ripping families apart that Trump talked about and supported.

EXCERPT 23: Acclaim Ideals

CLINTON: "We have 11 million undocumented people. They have 4 million American citizen children, 15 million people" (The New York Times, 2016c).

Besides the acclaim function, Clinton has employed the attack function in the PDs as well. The use of the attack function by a presidential candidate in PDs may decrease the opponent's benefit. Clinton exploits this function in the excerpts (24-29).

Clinton attacked Trump's general goals in excerpt 24, where she criticized his ban people, who come into the U.S., according to their religion. She attacked Trump's logic and announced that the U.S. is a country of liberty, freedom, and diversity of religions. Her announcement can be reasonable and accepted by most American people.

EXCERPT 24: Attack General Goals

CLINTON: "But it is important for us as a policy, you know, not to say, as Donald has said, we're going to ban people based on a religion. How do you do that? We are a country founded on religious freedom and liberty" (The New York Times, 2016b).

Additionally, in excerpt 25, Clinton attacked Trump's past deeds which were represented as leaving different people without paying what they deserve. She expressed her resentment of his behaviors with others who were asked by Trump to do some work for his benefit. Furthermore, she revealed her ideality and sympathy with those people who were stiffed by Trump and did not receive their deserved money from him.

EXCERPT 25: Attack both of Past Deeds and Ideals

CLINTON: "And, indeed, I have met a lot of the people who were stiffed by you and your businesses, Donald. I've met dishwashers, painters, architects, glass installers, marble installers, drapery installers, like my dad was, who you refused to pay when they finished the work that you asked them to do" (The New York Times, 2016a).

Trump's future plans were also attacked by Clinton as in excerpt 26. She objected to his plan that would lose millions of jobs in comparison to her plan that could create millions of jobs. According to Clinton, the reasons that lie behind Clinton's attack to Trump's plans are his plans that would provide tax breaks to the corporations and to the wealthy people as well as adding \$20 trillion to the U.S. debt.

EXCERPT 26: Attack Future Plans

CLINTON: "That is a plan that has been analyzed by independent experts which said that it could produce 10 million new jobs. By contrast, Donald's plan has been analyzed to conclude it might lose 3.5 million jobs. Why? Because his whole plan is to cut taxes, to give the biggest tax breaks ever to the wealthy and to corporations, adding \$20 trillion to our debt, and causing the kind of dislocation that we have seen before, because it truly will be trickle-down economics on steroids" (The New York Times, 2016c).

Clinton also disapproved Trump's leadership quality. She claimed in excerpt 27 that although she did not agree with the preceding Republican nominees on politics, many policies, and different principles, she did not question their qualification to be the U.S. president, unlike Trump, in conformity with Clinton's comments, who is unfit to this sensitive job.

EXCERPT 27: Attack Leadership Ability

CLINTON: "You know, with prior Republican nominees for president, I disagreed with them on politics, policies, principles, but I never questioned their fitness to serve" (The New York Times, 2016b).

Trump's personal image had been criticized by Clinton as shown in excerpt 28. Based on Clinton, she attacked his personal image because: he was inappropriate to be president of the U.S., and so many prominent figures from the Democratic and Republican parties as well as independents questioned his personality; and he had unacceptable kinds of comments that are in association with women.

EXCERPT 28: Attack Personal Quality

CLINTON: "Donald Trump is different. I said starting back in June that he was not fit to be president and commander-in-chief. And many Republicans and independents have said the same thing. What we all saw and heard on Friday was Donald talking about women, what he thinks about women, what he does to women. And he has said that the video doesn't represent who he is" (The New York Times, 2016b).

The defense function is used by Clinton in PDs, as illustrated in excerpts 29-31 to lessen her coast. She utilized this function for the topic of policy as in excerpts 29 and 30, while for the topic of character as in the excerpts (29 and 31).

Clinton had defended the issues of policy beginning with general goals as in excerpt 29. Simultaneously, Clinton had defended her general goals and personal quality in one statement. She declared, according to her friend Michelle Obama's very wise statement, that when opponents go low, that means our logic is high. Her representation of such symbolism reflected the general goals that most American people follow. In addition, Clinton had defended her personal quality by using her friend's statement "When they go low, you go high". This statement had been exploited by Clinton to defend herself as a reaction to Trump's attack when he criticized her personal image and described her that "she should be ashamed of herself" (The New York Times, 2016b).

EXCERPT 29: Defense General Goals and Personal Quality

CLINTON: "When I hear something like that, I am reminded of what my friend, Michelle Obama, advised us all: When they go low, you go high" (The New York Times, 2016b).

What is more, Clinton had defended her past deeds and future plans in excerpt 30. She reacted to Trump's accusation that she had supported The Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement (TPP), but she affirmed her definite refusal of this agreement. According to Clinton, TPP did not match the test that she had made, which included creation of new jobs, national security, and increasing American people's incomes. Furthermore, she promised that would be against this agreement anytime that she has authority.

EXCERPT 30: Defense past Deeds and Future Plans

"**CLINTON:** Well, first, let me say, number one, when I saw the final agreement for TPP, I said I was against it. It didn't meet my test. I've had the same test. Does it create jobs, raise incomes, and further our national security? I'm against it now. I'll be against it after the election. I'll be against it when I'm president" (The New York Times, 2016c).

Leadership ability had been defended by Clinton as illustrated in excerpt 31. She had reacted to the FBI accusation of being 'extremely careless' as regards the deletion of the 33,000 e-mails. She showed her braveness when she confessed that this deletion was a mistake done by herself and she is accountable for this mistake.

EXCERPT 31: Defense Leadership Ability

"**CLINTON:** Well, Martha, first, let me say — and I've said before, but I'll repeat it, because I want everyone to hear it — that was a mistake, and I take responsibility for using a personal e-mail account" (The New York Times, 2016b).

CONCLUSION

The results of the present study represented in analyzing the three U.S. 2016 PDs revealed that Benoit's (2007) functional assumptions were employed by the two presidential candidates Trump and Clinton. These functional assumptions (i.e., attack, acclaim, and defense which based on the topics of policy and character) as persuasive strategies were practiced by Trump 53.1% whereas by Clinton 46.9%. This practice made Trump win this presidential election. In the three PDs, Trump adopted the function of attack more than the functions of acclaim and defense, where the latter function had the less concern in Trump's interest. Throughout these debates, Trump attacked the policies and images of his opponent character 64.5% versus 35.5% for Clinton and defended himself and reacted to her attacks as 51.8% versus 48.2% for her, but Clinton acclaimed her policies and images of her character 57.6% versus 42.2% for Trump. The statements contained within the three U.S. 2016 PDs refer to exploit policy (57.2%) and character (42.8%). As regards policy, past deeds were occupied more often using acclaim function rather than attack and defense. In relation to character, ideals were occupied less often using defense than to attack and acclaim.

This study supports Benoit's (2007) functional theory which indicates that a presidential candidate who uses the functional assumptions more that his/her

opponent will definitely win the election because these functions are used as persuasive strategies in convincing the audience.

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