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Sympathy with Ukraine (or not much)! Using an emotion-based framework of solidarity to understand Mateusz Moraviecki's and Viktor Orbán's reactions to the war.

Authors

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Abstract

The paper compares and contrasts emotionally grounded solidarity claims in the communication of Prime Minister Mateusz Moraviecki (PL) and Viktor Orbán (HU) in relation to Russia's military invasion of Ukraine between February 24 and April 2, 2022. As the political leaders of Poland and Hungary express very divergent views on the European responses to the war, the country selection is driven by the logic of most different cases. We conduct a qualitative content analysis of Prime Ministers' Facebook posts to make the first step forward in investigating the discursive strategies for evoking the feeling of sympathy, the rhetorical tool of increasing solidarity, and how top-level politicians use moral language to mobilize support.

We conceptualize solidarity as the process when spectators recognize the bond, objectives, standards, and sympathies with those in need creating a psychological sense of unity in groups. In politics, it is also known as a communicative strategy to justify policies in conflicting times and crises. Inspired by Adam Smith's concept of Moral Sentiments, we argue that collective solidarity is the outcome of a series of publicly visible sympathetic interactions with verbal and gestural communicative acts. We identify and investigate three dimensions, unifying, supportive and agonistic ones, of emotionally loaded solidarity discourses. First, under the umbrella of the unifying dimension of sympathy-based solidarity we study if and how Prime Ministers create bonds between their countries and representatives of Ukraine, e.g. expressing the way they care about, feel bad/sorry about others' trouble, grief, or misfortune. Second, as a part of the supportive dimension, we collect data on the proposed acts which should be done on behalf of the persons in need. Third, to study the agonistic dimension special attention is paid to assess if and how Prime Ministers are distancing themselves from the agent who does the harm by condemning the behaviour or denouncing the identity of the villain.

Data suggest that there are significant differences between the rhetoric of the Prime Ministers: all dimensions are very strong in the case of Poland while the agonistic one is rather absent in the data on Hungary. When it comes to the unifying dimension PM Moraviecki declares a symmetric, tight-knit relationship and emotional bond between Poland and Ukraine which is not found in the posts of PM Orbán. The subjects of sympathy are narrowly limited to the ordinary people of Ukraine who are represented by mostly children and females through the social media communication of PM Orbán in which he expresses sorrow for their misfortunes. Lastly, the two countries differ from each other from the viewpoint of the given support to Ukraine: the Hungarian Prime Minister calls for humanitarian aid in the name of good-heartedness and commiseration

while the Polish leader passionately campaigns for a broad range of diplomatic, symbolic, and material, incl. weapons, helps. The results shed some light on the nuanced differences in affective claims of solidarity and contribute to academic knowledge of moral politics.

Key Words

Moral politics, war, emotional component of solidarity, sympathy appeals

The EU Response and Communication during COVID-19 Crisis: an unexpected positive effect on the EU support by the citizen

Authors

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Abstract

The paper focus on the assessment of EU response to the Covid-19 crisis, the effectiveness of communication, lessons learned and communication challenges during the Russian full-scale war in Ukraine. Communication is not a strongest EU quality, however an unprecedented 'infodemic' during the pandemic crisis followed by the Russian information war against the West created a new challenge for the EU communication and required a decisive and adequate response. The EU services are not sufficiently equipped against massive disinformation. However, the lessons learned during Covid-19 crisis helped the EU demonstrate a high degree of adaptability and impressive communication after February 24, 2022. The Covid-19 crisis and, in particular, the ongoing war in Ukraine has reinforced citizens' support for the EU.

Key Words

COVID 19, Government Communication, Political Communication, Crisis

Challenges for Government Communication: A Case of Communication Strategies during COVID-19 Pandemic in Poland

Authors

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Abstract

The paper presents preliminary results of qualitative research (Individual In-depth Interviews, IDI). The interviews were conducted with experts - specialist in the field of communication and/or health policy (officials, healthcare professionals, health and political sciences scholars, health policy journalists) who shared their opinions on Polish government's communication during COVID-19 pandemic. The communication was assessed against fundamental characteristics of effective governmental crisis communication (Hyland-Wood et al. 2021, Wodak 2021, Garland and Lilleker 2022). Previous research revealed that during the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic (March-October 2020), there were a number of communication shortcomings on the part of the government: lack of clarity and consistency in communication, conflicting information and unclear rules. These shortcomings translated into a low level of credibility which in turn affected the government's authority, and contributed to the relaxation of people's behavior in terms of safety. The government communication from the first phase of the pandemic was compared to the communication from the last months of 2022. The analysis was made in broader political context and is a continuation of the study presented within the volume entitled 'Manufacturing Government Communication on Covid-19: A Comparative Perspective' published by Springer (Maarek 2022).

Key Words

COVID 19, Government Communication, Political Communication, Crisis

Government communication policy for dealing with Covid-19, the case of Israel: how to explain to groups with unique communication characteristics a universal phenomenon

Authors

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Abstract

This paper presents the Israeli government's media policy and information campaigns dealing with the spread of Covid-19 (commonly named in Israel the Corona Virus) from its discovery through the closures, vaccinations, and exit from the latest closure. The policy analysis is based on the actual communication with the population in Israel as expressed in the media. The analysis is based on four theoretical frameworks in communication research: crisis communication, risk communication, and science communication, which are combined into a practical theory of health communication. The analysis also looks for prior research and practical experience of dealing with the Bug 2000 when the State of Israel faced potential damage in all areas of computer-intensive life at the time and especially fear of public panic due to the threat of technological failure in conditions of uncertainty and little knowledge (Nossek, 2006). The initial analysis based on the theoretical frameworks and practical experience shows that the initial stage of dealing with the epidemic was based on a message of fear and anxiety, assuming that they would cause the population to obey the government's behavioral guidelines. In the first stage, the messengers of the message were the Prime Minister and the Director-General of the Ministry of Health. It seems that the use of fear and anxiety conveyed by the official speakers, as mentioned above, managed to cause the desired behavior of some of the public but did not cause the behavior of the entire Israeli population and especially groups and sections of the population with unique and particular cultural and media characteristics such as ultraorthodox, migrants from the former Soviet Union and Israeli Arabs. The findings show that the communication actions of the government were adequate only for 60% of the population and that the message was not compelling for the other 40% of the population. Previous studies have shown significant differences in communication with the various cultural communities and that they do not accept messages from the government that comes directly from the official governmental channels. Only after creating particular messages and channels for the different cultural communities was the correct behavior achieved.

Key Words

COVID 19, Government Communication, Political Communication, Crisis

Combatting Covid-19 by Non-Decision Making: Examining Strategies of Government Communications in Sweden 2020–2022

Authors

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Abstract

This paper examines Swedish government communications during the Covid -19 pandemic. Theoretically, the study departs from the notion of crisis as both a threat and an opportunity. From this perspective, a political crisis can be understood as a calculated act in which successful actors manage to exploit the situation to their advantage by demonstrating action (or non-action). Accordingly, political actors always have a choice to associate or dissociate themselves from managing crisis responses for strategic reasons.

Sweden's response to the outbreak of Covid -19 in Spring 2020 surprised the rest of the world. In contrast to most other countries, no heavy restrictions and lockdowns were imposed and the strategy to deal with the pandemic was based on individual responsibility and voluntary recommendations. In communicating the crisis, public health authorities on national and regional levels played more prominent roles than the national government. Scientific evaluations of the situation were most of the time not contested by political parties in government and opposition. Two years after, it can be noted that overall excess mortality in Sweden is not very different from other countries in Europe that took another route in fighting the pandemic. In the recent general elections in September 2022 government management of the pandemic was a non-issue.

This study discusses possible explanations for the development of government crisis communication patterns in Sweden, addressing the relative importance of existing governmental organizational structures, previous experiences of government communication shortcomings during crisis, as well as political actors' strategies and rationales when dealing with the crisis.

Key Words

COVID 19, Government Communication, Political Communication, Crisis

We're [no longer] in it together: how politician's behavior impacted public trust during the UK's handling of the pandemic

Authors

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic involved most governments imposing strict rules restricting social interaction. Social psychology shows that to earn and maintain public trust, government communication must convey clarity while leading by example. Despite severe inconsistencies in communication during February and March 2020, UK citizens accepted lockdown rules and a community spirit emerged reflecting the notion of we are all in this together. Prime minister Boris Johnson's hospitalisation reinforced this perception. However, a combination of inconsistencies in the relaxation of rules for summer 2020, and revelations that Johnson's Chief Advisor Dominic Cummings broke the law when travelling 300 miles with his family despite testing positive for COVID-19 fractured the consensus. We argued this, as well as Health Secretary Matt Hancock's office affair and numerous parties held in government buildings caused restrictions to become contentious by 2021 to the point Hancock's replacement as Health Secretary, Sajid Javid, bullishly announcing the relaxing of all restrictions. Yet the UK has returned to normality far more quickly than many similar nations, largely due to a highly successful vaccination programme supported by public communication. Thus we argue, despite losing public support the failures in government to act as role models during the pandemic led to a protracted political crisis but not a health crisis.

Key Words

COVID 19, Government Communication, Political Communication, Crisis

Contesting government's Corona policies – an analysis of political and media frames

Authors

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Abstract

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic dominated the public debate in Germany. The government, in particular the then German Chancellor Angela Merkel, had set the tone with powerful frames and narratives (Raupp, 2022). In 2022, the issue of the pandemic was displaced by other crisis issues. It had turned into an object of typical political frame contestation (Entman, 2003). In addition, the so-called traffic light coalition that came into power end of 2021, unites three parties—Social Democrats (SPD), Green Party and Free Democrats (FDP)—pursuing different strategies in dealing with the pandemic.

Entman's cascade model (2003) and its further development (Entman & Usher, 2018) provides the starting point to study the frame contest around the now politicized issue of the COVID-19 policies. This study examines (1) the strategic frames of federal government actors in Germany and whether these are conflicting, and (2) news media frames of the government's corona policy. The research period is Jan. to Dec. 2022. Press releases, statements, and speeches by members of the federal government on the issue of the pandemic, and media commentaries on the government's corona policy are analyzed. Commentaries lend themselves well for identifying how the media assess government policies. To obtain a broad spectrum of media assessments, the three most widely circulated national newspapers in Germany (Süddeutsche Zeitung, FAZ and Bild) were selected that differ both in their editorial line and in the fact that one newspaper (Bild) is a tabloid. Even if legacy media no longer seem to set the agenda in a hybrid media world, they still play a crucial role as an arena for political actors (Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2016). Manual and automated coding with MAXQDA is applied to gain deep insights into the material and to identify patterns.

Initial results of the analysis, which is still ongoing, show that, health severity and economic consequences frames are dominant both in the government's communication and in the media. The media also set a counterframe, contesting the frames of the previous and acting government. The apologies of the acting Federal Minister of Health (SPD) illustrate the attempt to adjust the original frame. Overall, the study demonstrates how the government's crisis communication during the first phase of the pandemic changed into a highly conflictual communication in which not the pandemic but the government's policies on the pandemic took center stage.

Key Words

COVID 19, Government Communication, Political Communication, Crisis

Facebook Communication of Brazilian Federal and São Paulo State Governments in Brazil: Contradictory Messages and Realities

Authors

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Abstract

This paper explores themes that emerge from the Facebook pages of the former Federal Government of Brazil (Bolsonaro: 2018-2022) and the former State Government of São Paulo (Dória: 2018-2022) during the Covid-19 pandemic. The methodological approaches include netnographic observations and content analysis. The study analyses economic and health issues, related to the pandemic at these two government levels - Federal and State. It incorporates notions of "uncivil society" and "necropolitics", discussing how these manifest in a context of neoliberal reforms. The findings demonstrate that the Federal Government focused on economic measures while there was little coverage of health issues, such as prevention and vaccinations. In contrast, the State of São Paulo had a predominance of posts on vaccination. For both pages, these were perceived as permanent campaign strategies rather than addressing citizens' needs. Posts that contained explicit misinformation and disinformation did not have an overt presence in both pages. However, this might be explained by our methodological choice not to analyze Bolsonaro's live streamed Facebook videos as well as the fact that he was being investigated by a Parliamentary Inquiry at the time. Thus, future directions for research include an analysis of government communication in private messaging apps, such as Telegram and WhatsApp. This would enable us to investigate whose voices echo misinformation and disinformation messaging.

Key Words

COVID 19, Government Communication, Political Communication, Crisis

Japan's Digital Transformation (DX) and Trends in Public Policy Communication

Authors

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Abstract

As a country, Japan managed to successfully navigate the COVID-19 pandemic during the period 2020 to 2023, propelling the country to embark upon an era of “Digital Transformation” (DX) in industry and government relations. What is the nature of this “Digital Transformation” and how does it combine draw on and negotiate cultural and institutional elements? This paper explores public discourse involving “digital transformation” in Japan, highlighting such cultural and institutional challenges that emerged during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key Words

COVID 19, Government Communication, Political Communication, Crisis

Weathering the storm: French Governmental Communication on Covid-19 Vaccination via Twitter during the normalization phase

Authors

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Abstract

Revisiting the situation in France one year on from the initial study, this contribution is based on a new corpus of tweets, compared to the previous one. The authors show how Covid-19-related French government tweets evolved during later stages of the vaccination campaign, as vaccination became more widely-accepted and available to all. This period was characterized by a radicalization of resistance from the “anti-vax” movement, leading to strategies which combine stigmatization with calls to social responsibility. The postures adopted by the different “institutional”, “ministerial” and “political leaders” accounts, previously analyzed in the initial phases of the vaccination campaign, evolve in the new period, to focus on figures of common enemies from without but also from within.

Key Words

COVID 19, Government Communication, Political Communication, Crisis

Political spam - trash or a gold mine?

Authors

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Abstract

The fifth election in a period of 40 months has just ended in Israel. Throughout the last election campaigns, we examine the 'hidden' political messages transmitted to us through smartphones. Or in other words: The text messages that land, right in the spam folder on the phone. These text messages, which have since become a built-in part of election systems, have hardly received any research attention. This pioneering interdisciplinary study seeks to map, analyze and characterize these text messages in a variety of ways.

The Elections (Methods of Propaganda) Law, states that you must publish on every election advertisement the name of the person responsible for ordering it and the name of the person acting on his behalf. However, for many years the legislator avoided amending the law so that it would also apply to the online space and not without reason - this allowed politicians to do whatever they wanted in the Internet campaign. In the first round of elections, the chairman of the Central Knesset Election Committee at the time, Judge Hanan Meltzer, issued a precedential decision that applied the propaganda law explicitly and not implicitly to the Internet and prohibited the publication of anonymous content on behalf of online campaigns Social media, search engines, and text messages. But despite the decision, anonymous messages/tagged with false or fake names continued to be sent to voters' smartphones.

These messages played an important role in spreading disinformation, illegally distorting the political reality through fake polls and defaming candidates, and lowering the election chances of rival parties. This act indicated a growing reluctance of political parties to obey the law, as well as the practical inability of the Election Commission to control the electoral online world (Haleva-Amir, 2022). Before the last election, the directive became binding legislation.

As mentioned in this nascent research, we make use of textual and visual meta-data content analyses, in order to examine a variety of practices in the political spam messages: The content of the messages while dividing them into a variety of content types such as: Surveys, persuasive messages, defamation notices, recruitment and more; the addressee's name; The manner of targeting according to the recipient of the message; The differences between the various election systems according to what emerges from the visible or hidden content of the messages as well as the ways of characterizing and designing the message.

Key Words

Political spam, election, political disinformation, political campaigns

Political communication and Celebrity studies on Instagram: the case of the presidential campaign in Colombia 2022

Authors

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Abstract

Instagram in politics is still a recent phenomenon. Despite being one of the most popular social media today, political parties and politicians are just in the process of learning how to dominate their languages, especially in critical moments like a presidential campaign. In the Colombian case, the main antecedents of the use of social networks in electoral times are focused on Twitter and Facebook. However, the recent 2022 presidential campaign put on the table a scenario that required the search for alternatives to reach undecided voters and abstentionists. The protagonists were two candidates with different country visions, one represented at the head of Gustavo Petro (who eventually won), as the candidate of leftist ideology, with some support from center politicians. The other option was represented by Rodolfo Hernández, an "alternative" candidate who received support from various business sectors, and who once advanced to the second round received support from center and right-wing parties. Both candidates, in this battle against the clock to capitalize on new voters, explored digital languages to perhaps give more echo to their campaign and generate sympathy with audiences that through other media would have been much more complex to reach. It is in this context that this paper focuses its efforts on analyzing the campaign configuration of their Instagram profiles, to identify the topics they addressed, but also the symbolic roles and framings that predominated in the publications that generated the most engagement in His Followers. The methodology used was content analysis and it was framed in celebrity studies in politics, an increasingly consolidated emerging trend in political communication studies. This study implied the construction of a code book and a matrix to process the sample. It was made considering a weighting of the publications that generated the most likes and comments, understanding the comment as a higher level of interactivity and participation compared to a simple "I like reaction". As a result, 33% of the total Instagram posts made by the two candidates during the campaign which lasted for about 14 weeks were analyzed. The analysis of the 373 posts made it possible to identify the reel as the preponderant format. Also, the candidates used constant self-referencing in their publications where citizen spaces predominated, without forgetting the importance of showing oneself in media scenarios and the particular case of Rodolfo Hernández, the private scenario as a comfort zone. Although topics such as Economy and Corruption were very present, they suffered subordination due to the interest in promoting their image in the best style of a celebrity, where they showed symbolic roles of protectors and eloquent communicators. They also evidenced frames that advocated, in the case of Petro,

projecting an ordinary image capable of connecting and mobilizing crowds. On the other hand, Hernández showed himself as someone ordinary but with qualities of power and leadership.

Key Words

Celebrity studies; Instagram; Political communication; Content analysis

Campaign Frames of Frontline Presidential Candidates in the 2023 Election in Nigeria: Implications for Voter Choice

Authors

Dr. Victor Eze - University of Ibadan

Abstract

Introduction

Election campaign is a mechanism by which candidates showcase their ideas on issues to voters in the period before election day. They do this through various frames or narratives in their speeches. Candidates employ traditional/new media, public events, written materials, etc. to pass across their stance on policy issues affecting the populace and the nation at large. Election campaign is one of the factors among others that motivate voters to make their choice of a candidate during elections. Thus, this paper examines the campaign speeches of the frontline presidential candidates in the 2023 election.

Statement of the Problem

Scholars (Finkel & Schrott, 1995; Hillygus and Jackman 2003; Lau and Redlawsk 2001; Gerber and Green 2000; Achanso & Zuure, 2021) have examined how election campaigns influence voter choice (whom a voter votes for at the poll). In line with the foregoing, this paper identifies the frames in the campaign speeches of the frontline presidential candidates and also draws implications therefrom for voter choice in the 2023 election. It is adrem due to its currency and timing in relation to the upcoming election, a milestone in the political and democratic life of Nigeria as a nation.

Theoretical Framework

It taps from psychology, philosophy, phenomenology, hermeneutics, and communication. Snow and Benford (1992) defined a frame as an interpretive schema that simplifies and condenses the world out here by selectively punctuating, and encoding objects and situations. Entman (1993:52) defined framing as the selection of some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. Feste (2011) stated that a frame is a central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is the issue. The rhetorical power of a frame comes from its function to heighten the saliency of some aspects of reality over others.

Research Objectives

This study seeks:

To identify the frames adopted by the presidential candidates in their campaign speeches.

To deduce the implications of the frames adopted by the presidential candidates on voter choice during the election.

Methodology

Qualitative frame analysis was employed to identify the frames emanating from the campaign speeches of the candidates. Frame analysis was conducted on five (5) speeches of each of the

front-line candidates. Speeches were selected purposively. Snow and Benford's (2000) frame categorization was employed in the analysis of the frames with a further look at emanating frames from the speeches. Using the appropriate keywords, the speeches were found on YouTube and downloaded for the frame analysis.

Discussion of Findings

Frame Analysis reveals that the candidates employed the 3 core frames for political cum social mobilization as presented by Snow and Benford (2000): Diagnostic Frame, Prognostic Frame, and Motivational Frame. They also adopted Ethnicity Frame and It is the turn of Nigerians' Frame

The frames have these implications for voter choice:

- (a) The employment of ethnicity frame can sway the minds of voters, especially those from the same ethnic group as the candidate, towards voting along the ethnic line even if the candidate has a poor capacity for governance. The long-term effect is bad governance and the total collapse of the nation.
- (b) A mischievous employment of motivational and ethnicity frames can reinforce the decision of voters from the ethnic group of a candidate to evolve from staunch supporters to violent followers who can initiate political violence
- (c) Those who feel that it is their turn to produce the next president may be motivated to engage in voter suppression and vote buying for the candidate of choice. This can cause voter apathy.
- (d) Some of the frames can generate conspiracy theories that misrepresent facts and thus confuse voters during election.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Some of the identified campaign issues are economy, insecurity, education, infrastructure health care, agriculture, human capital development, corruption, ethnicity, it-is-the-turn of Nigerians, religion, etc. How the candidates portray these issues in their speeches shows how they frame their campaigns. The frames are capable of influencing voters to be violent or non-violent prior to voting, to vote peacefully, and to accept victory with magnanimity or accept election loss with dignity. The presidential candidates possess strong followership and credibility in the eyes of their followers. It should be noted that the frames they brandish can make or mar the electoral process, and by extension create peace or chaos in the country.

Key Words

Election, Voter Choice, Campaign Speech, Nigeria, Framing, Qualitative Method, Voting

Diasporic communities' framing of 'Australian values' around 'China' and the 'Chinese' issues in the Australian Senate public inquiry of 2020

Authors

Ms. Chenjun Wang - Macquarie University

Abstract

Public inquiry is an intrinsic part of ongoing people-to-government (P>G) direct engagement within Australian parliamentary oversight processes. On 14 May 2020, the Senate initiated a public inquiry on 'Issues facing diaspora communities in Australia'. Six public hearings were held up to late-2020. Allowing participatory opportunities for the public's political expression and representation, the inquiry gathered 90 community, government, media, and academic submissions on its website. 9 of 81 submissions (excluding 9 unidentifiable submissions) were from Chinese diaspora communities or representatives; 6 of 15 individual submissions and 29 of 66 organizational submissions mentioned 'Chinese' or 'China' related issues.

These e-submissions and public hearing transcripts, with contributions from individuals and organizations with Chinese and non-Chinese backgrounds, will be analyzed to answer the question ***What are the 'value' frames in diaspora community elites' discourses regarding perceived challenges and solutions to issues related to 'China' and/or 'Chinese' people?*** The analysis will uncover people's experiences and opinions during political crises or events involving radical change, and their evaluations of information in the light of their political values and other predispositions.

Framing reveals actors' strategic and deliberated selection, (re-)construction, and social interaction. Framing in political communication serves communicators' intentions to (1) (re-)direct attention on 'issues' and 'problems'; (2) construct social reality; (3) influence opinion and belief; and (4) offer assessments and recommendations. Values, being widely accepted and cherished by populace and government, invariably shape issue-framing. In political communication, values (1) serve as reference points for assessing issues and constructing new social 'reality'; (2) direct listeners toward specified modes of conduct; and (3) provide reliable and justifiable bases for actions in response to identified issues.

The study employs an inductive framing analysis approach drawing on Snow & Benford, Van Gorp, Pan & Kosicki, Sotirovic & McLeod and Obregón & Tufte. It will identify interpretative frame packages constituted by core frames, and framing and reasoning devices. Core individual political beliefs, not just opinions and beliefs, will be uncovered in value-framing. Defining frame packages, the *core frame* of shared 'Australian values' reflects understanding of diasporic community members' new social reality. Vocabulary, catchphrases, and depictions are *framing devices* that will be uncovered in delineating statements' rhetorical structures. *Reasoning devices*, form a route of definitions of problems/issues, causal reasoning, evaluation, and possible solutions/actions evoked when 'China' and/or 'Chinese' issues are associated with 'Australian value' embedded frames.

Migrant-magnet countries face unique challenges when bilateral relations, with culturally and linguistically associated societies or countries-of-origin, become complex and entangled. Reported effects of the international political climate on the lives of Chinese diaspora communities in Australia since 2016 present a worthy case study to fathom how domestic deliberative processes responding to threats/concerns/issues associated with a foreign state may precipitate conflictual relations among some domestic groups, as well as inter-group and intra-group cooperation. Diaspora representatives' value-framing will be assayed to understand inter-group and intra-group convergence and divergence regarding identified issues.

The paper will contribute to comparative social theoretic theory-building in political communication, diaspora studies, and framing, as well as be of value to the policy community.

Key Words

Australia-China tension, Chinese diaspora, community deliberation, framing identity, parliamentary hearings.

Study of political communication techniques of AKP and CHP during the local elections in Istanbul

Authors

Mrs. Mina Tever - City University of London

Abstract

This paper focuses on and questions if it is possible to carry out positive political communication despite the high level of populist communication worldwide. Despite the rise of studies concentrating on political campaigning and its techniques around European countries such as France, Sweden or Germany and in the United States of America, a few studies are addressing political communication strategies and approaches used in Turkey. Especially, few studies have analysed the Republican People's Party's (CHP) political communication techniques and little research that focuses on Justice and Development Party (AKP) and Republican People's Party's political communication features during the recent election periods in Turkey.

Considering this fact, the research aims to study the main features and differences between AKP and CHP's political communication strategies that had been used during the local elections in Istanbul on 31st March and 23rd June 2019 by focusing on the use of populist political communication by both parties. The reason for studying local elections and specifically the 2019 Istanbul election, is that it was a significant turning point in Turkish politics as the main opposition party CHP managed to win the majority of the votes in various parts of the country, including Istanbul, the country's largest city where AKP ruled for the last 25 years. CHP managed to win the election by carrying out a different communication strategy, inverted populism, which opposed populism in many ways. Drawing from the 2019 mayoral elections, this paper also aims to reveal the importance of inclusive campaigning against polarised identity campaigning driven by populist agenda and targets to show how electoral authoritarianism can come to an end with an effective, different and positive political communication strategy. It also asserts that an effective political communication strategy is fundamental to political success, and it can defeat electoral authoritarianism with the right political message and with the right candidate.

Key Words

populist political communication, inverted populism, election campaigns

Locked Down, Voice up ---Digital Media Repertoire and Everyday Resistance in 'Zero-Covid' China

Authors

Dr. yuan zeng - University of Leeds

Abstract

The role of social media in political communication has been explored in great details but the scholarship to date is overwhelmingly situated in democracies where media pluralism is the norm and the publics have relatively free access to both content and format of political information. The very few studies touching upon transitional democracies or authoritarian states tend to focus on the de-contextualised dichotomy of regime control versus overt political resistance. But when not engaging with overt collective resistance, how the publics in digitally resourceful yet highly authoritarian societies such as China make use of the digital affordances of social media (though highly censored) to curate their personalised media repertoires and negotiate with state narrative? This study addresses this under-researched topic of Chinese publics' everyday practice of digital media and meaning negotiation under state narrative control.

China's recent controversial 'zero-covid' policy has produced rich tensions between state and alternative narratives, thus presenting a rare opportunity as a case study to explore the nuanced digital media practice and meaning making practices in digital China. Drawing upon the 'networked publicness' approach which takes social media as space for multi-layered networked meaning-making in constant negotiation between users, state, and technology (Castells, 2009; Poell & van Dijk, 2016), I conceptualise Chinese publics' social media practices as tactical curation of media repertoires (Hasebrink & Popp, 2006). Taking the most contentious months-long lockdown in the biggest Chinese city Shanghai in 2022 as a case study, using mixed approach combining media diaries and interviews, this study examines the digital media repertoires of social media users in Shanghai during 'zero-covid' lockdown. It explores how digitally connected individuals in an authoritarian media environment form and rationalise their digital media repertoires to understand contentious issues during times of crisis, and how people's tactical use of social media for non-political purpose constitutes a digital, non-political form of everyday resistance which should not be overlooked.

Conceptually, this study proposes a 'multidimensional media repertoire' framework which constitutes content dimension, evaluative dimension, and tactical dimension (how people use each media resource in response to state narrative control) to better reflect the dynamics in the authoritarian social and political context where the publics have long developed a set of hidden tactics to negotiate with state narrative control (Lee, 2018; Yang, 2009). I argue that despite the omnipresent online censorship and surveillance, the digitally connected Chinese publics tactically curate their personalised media repertoires on social media to actively participate in a networked meaning construction on contentious public issues. The study makes an original contribution, both

theoretically and empirically, to the understudied area of digital politics and the role of social media in everyday (non-political) resistance in non-democratic context, and to the field of political communication in general.

Key Words

media repertoire, everyday resistance, social media, China, zero-covid

When polarization and disinformation go hand in hand: the discourse in the quality European press

Authors

Dr. Laura Teruel - University of Málaga

Dr. Livia García-Faroldi - University of Málaga

Abstract

Disinformation is one of the most urgent threats facing contemporary societies around the world (Tandoc, Wei Lim, & Ling, 2017). There are numerous academics from Communication Sciences that address the phenomenon that was triggered by the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States in 2016 and after that has been decisive in European events such as Brexit, the management of the COVID19 pandemic or the war in Ukraine.

The phenomenon of information disorders takes place in a highly polarized political scenario. The polarization among the social groups inside a country -as has been observed in movements such as the yellow vests in France (Souillard et al., 2020)- and both political and affective polarization (Gidron, Adams and Horne, 2020, Torcal and Comellas, 2022)- as is currently observed in Spain- are determining factors in public discourse.

This research addresses the presence of informative disorders in a context of polarization through the analysis of the quality press of three important countries in Europe: France, Spain and the United Kingdom. The objective is to study the relationship between the two concepts (polarization and disinformation) in important newspapers from three countries with different media systems (Hallin and Mancini, 2003) between 2017 and 2022.

This is an international diachronic study that makes it possible to compare more than three hundred articles from six newspapers representing different editorial lines. A quantitative discourse analysis has been carried out together with a qualitative frame study.

According to the conference subtheme Media, Information and Communication, this proposal seeks to determine solutions to disinformation and polarization posed by the European press. That is, which are the actors that must intervene to stop this problem and what are the urgent practices that could be implemented.

The main conclusions are, in first place, the concern of the European press about the disinformation that comes from countries like Russia and China to destabilize Western democracies and, in second place, the prominence of social networks as an actor that spreads false content. Lastly, the press highlights the importance of European regulation to fight disinformation, even if it is insufficient to stop the problem, and points to technology companies as responsible for disseminating this content that increases political polarization.

Key Words

disinformation, polarization, quality press, France, Spain, United Kingdom, frames,

"Ecological apocalypse": An elective affinity between political and religious discourses?

Authors

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Abstract

Les discours publics portant le devenir écologique et climatique du monde vivant puisent fréquemment dans l'univers apocalyptique – par des emprunts littéraires, symboliques et de ton – pour décrire le caractère inédit, imminent et systémique des risques courus (Dobson, 2007 ; Kowalewski, 2023). Si le rapprochement est parfois effectué dans le but de disqualifier un propos considéré comme irrationnel, catastrophiste, voire obscurantiste (Latour, 2017 ; Semal, 2019 ; Chamel, 2018), la littérature qui s'attache à prendre au sérieux ce parallèle relève un certain nombre de similitudes (Karakash, 2002), de « schèmes interprétatifs » communs (Afeissa, 2014), de « parentés formelles » (Léger, 1982). Pour la sociologue Danièle Hervieu-Léger qui s'intéresse à des groupes néoruraux dans les années 1970, nous serions en présence d'une « affinité élective » liant apocalyptique écologique et apocalyptique religieuse. Empruntant cette notion à Max Weber, et plus précisément à *L'Éthique protestante et l'Esprit du capitalisme* (1905), elle met en évidence « le processus par lequel deux formes culturelles – religieuses, intellectuelles, politiques ou économiques – entrent, à partir de certaines analogies significatives, parentés intimes ou affinités de sens, dans un rapport d'attraction et influence réciproques » (Löwy, 2004 : 100).

Il s'agira dans cette contribution d'interroger la pertinence de cette catégorie d'analyse – celle d'affinité élective –, pour décrire les dynamiques à l'œuvre dans la mise en discours des défis contemporains : changement climatique, érosion de la biodiversité, raréfaction des ressources, pollutions, etc. Comment ces thématiques – *a priori* politiques – réinvestissent-elles des formes religieuses ? Moyennant quelles circulations et transformations ? En quoi la construction d'une affinité de sens avec les apocalypses antiques participe-t-elle à conférer une dimension eschatologique – aussi séculière soit-elle – à la crise écologique ?

Nous proposerons des éléments de réponse, à partir d'une thèse en cours de préparation, à l'interface entre les études en communication politique et l'analyse du discours « à la française » (Maingueneau, 1991). Les discours étudiés sont ceux de personnalités publiques (essayistes, journalistes, universitaires) et politiques (élus, conseillers, militants) mobilisant le thème de l'effondrement écologique, de 2015 à 2021, en Europe francophone et au Québec. Ce travail repose sur l'étude qualitative d'un corpus hétérogène composé de près de 70 ouvrages de genres divers (pamphlets, livres collectifs, bandes dessinées), d'une vingtaine de vidéos mises en ligne sur YouTube (interviews, débats) et d'une dizaine de documentaires, films, séries télévisées. Il est complété par l'éclairage de dix entretiens (avec par exemple, la coprésidente du groupe n°1 du GIEC Valérie Masson-Delmotte, l'auteur Pablo Servigne, l'astrophysicien Aurélien Barrau) et une

quinzaine d'observations ponctuelles, réalisés lors de conférences, salons, festivals, expositions, ainsi que durant des manifestations politiques de natures diverses (actions de désobéissance civile, marches climat, meetings).

Après avoir mis en évidence l'intérêt et le sens d'un parallèle entre apocalyptique écologique et apocalyptique religieuse, la communication reviendra sur une brève présentation historique et conceptuelle de l'idée d'affinité élective, puis détaillera de premiers résultats : la valeur heuristique et pédagogique de ce discours qui a pour objet des enjeux d'apparence incommensurable, sa portée argumentative et rhétorique, mais aussi sa visée pragmatique mobilisatrice.

Key Words

Political discourse analysis; Climate doomism; Elective affinity; Apocalyptic literature; Secularism.

TikTok use and users in run-up to Zimbabwe's 2023 general elections

Authors

Dr. Oswelled Ureke - University of Johannesburg

Abstract

Between June and August 2023, Zimbabwe goes into a general election whose dates are yet to be pronounced at the time of writing. The outcomes of previous Zimbabwean elections have been contested with opposition political parties accusing the ruling ZANU PF party of rigging. Among other issues, media use has been topical, with opposition political parties not given equal access to public media for campaigning purposes. Social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook have recently provided spaces for political communication, with all parties having unfettered access to the platforms and audiences. Recently, TikTok has emerged as a popular social networking site, rivaling established applications in terms of its uptake, particularly among youths. Research on the social media application suggests that it is largely used for trivial purposes and does not contribute to critical dialogue. Common TikTok performances include dancing, mimicry, fashion curation and other fleeting moments. However, TikTok has been used in the US by politicians to convey campaign messages in the run-up to the 2020 elections after the realization that it could reach a younger demographic. There have also been concerns that the SNS can be used to spread hate speech and extremism, such that in the first three months of 2021 alone, TikTok pulled down 300 000 videos for encouraging violent extremism. There are equally concerns around the misinformation that the application might cause due to its popularity coupled with its demographics, which show that it is most popular with Generation Z users, who are likely to be first time prospective voters. In light of the above, the study seeks to find out how political actors in Zimbabwe use the TikTok platform for political communication in the run-up to the 2023 elections. The paper also examines the nature of discussions fostered by political communication messages on TikTok and how these enrich or trivialize political discourse. As TikTok is a new digital terrain, the paper will also explore the strategies of political communication used on the digital platform to generate attention for particular political causes and brands. Initial indications show that TikTok is already being used to urge Zimbabwean youths to register to vote as well as to provide visual evidence of the good and the bad associated with particular political parties. Zimbabwean protagonists that actively use TikTok for political communication include Cucs Man, Hopewell Chin'ono, Rutendo Matinyarare and Web3ra, among others although, curiously political parties do not yet run official accounts as they do on Twitter and Facebook.

Key Words

TikTok, Zimbabwe, ZimTikTok, political communication social networking sites

Data Collection on Instagram - Practical and Political Perspectives in Platform Studies

Authors

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Mr. Yannik Peters - University of Bonn

Prof. Caja Thimm - University of Bonn

Abstract

In recent years, the photo and video sharing platform Instagram has become one of the most used social media worldwide. Due to practical research barriers associated with the data collection, Instagram still seems to be underrepresented in (empirical) platform research. This is primarily due to practical research reasons and is certainly related to the hurdles associated with the collection of Instagram data. While the microblogging service Twitter continues to facilitate access to its data archives for researchers and the video portal TikTok recently announced API access for research purposes, Facebook severely restricted free access to its data via API in the wake of the scandal surrounding the Cambridge Analytica case (Freelon 2018). This development now applies to all social media of the meta-corporation and thus also to Instagram. This paper starts at this point and would like to give an overview of the possibilities for data collection that still exist for Instagram despite the advancing APIcalypse (Bruns 2019).

For this purpose, we will first introduce the media grammar (Thimm 2018) of Instagram in order to show the various functionalities of and analytical approaches to the platform. This approach helps to differentiate and theoretically frame the possibilities of collecting Instagram data presented below. In terms of data collection, a distinction is made between four different collection strategies: a) manual collection, b) free programming languages, c) tools of the Meta group and d) commercial tools. These are compared on the basis of relevant criteria (including media grammar, survey form, contribution levels, completeness, programming skills). It is shown that different data collection strategies may be appropriate depending on the research question and method. The aim of our presentation is to make a contribution to facilitating access to Instagram data and to support researchers in collecting Instagram data. Using our own data collection on the topic of Covid-19 on Instagram in Germany, we will also present an example of an approach that combines several of these tools. Furthermore, the paper also takes a closer look at the ethical and legal perspectives of research.

Key Words

Instagram - Digital Methods - Research Ethics - Data Collection

Curatorial News Use as a New Genre of Online Activism ——A Case Study of the Series of "Shanghai Staged Dramas"

Authors

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Abstract

1. Introduction

From March to June 2022, Shanghai was locked down for three months in response to another round of COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, this was the first time that Shanghai had imposed a city-wide quarantine (居家管理/静态管理) since the pandemic began in 2019, shutting down parts of the city for nearly 80 days.

Between April 16th and April 27th, there was an online activism that had a huge impact. "Qing Hui Sui Bi" (轻晖随笔), a personal Wechat account wrote articles in the form of curatorial news use, which were comprised of the local citizen journalism and witnessing journalism that took place within 24 hours of the day, for 10 consecutive times. As a consequence, he accomplished 10 complete texts, which he named them the series of "Shanghai is staging a grand drama in turn" (上海正在轮番上演大戏, Shanghai Staged Dramas for short), causing great repercussions in and out of Shanghai. The information used in each text came from a wide range of sources, including live eyewitness pictures, screenshots of all events from the society, related comments on social media such as Weibo and "Moments" of Wechat, chat screenshots from QQ Group Chats and Wechat Group Chats. At the same time, artistic works (calligraphy, painting, etc.) as well as various memes created by netizens gradually appeared. All these phenomenons made it a prime case of curatorial news use as a genre of online activism.

2. Research Questions

This study raised questions of the activism itself and what influences and changes this new genre had brought in terms of its issues/contents and styles (Yang,2009) and process in the specific context of China and the COVID-19 pandemic.

As for the issues and contents, what news were curated and what were their categories in general? As Tuchman (1978) pointed out, what were the norms and values of news selected in the curation? What was the purpose of curators and the objects of contention and how to express them in the form of curatorial news use?

Regarding the style of online activism, what characteristics and styles could be used to describe this case? How did these characteristics relate to China's/Shanghai's politics, culture and history? How did the case challenge the official state/government and mainstream media discourse on the COVID-19? How were they accomplished by utilizing curatorial news use?

During the course of the case, what dynamic process was presented? What were the interaction and the communication flow between the curator (network opinion leader), ordinary netizens and the community? In what ways did it counter Chinese censorship and controls during the pandemic? How did it take advantage of the characteristics and merits of curatorial news use?

3. Research Methods

The general method will be the Case Study.

The main part of the study will systematically analyze the ten texts of "Shanghai Drama" series with the method of content analysis, investigate the contents using quantitative indicators and codes and conclude the style of the online activism.

Meanwhile, in order to evaluate the process, online ethnography will be used in this study. According to Zhao Yuezhi, the best way to study communication cases of China was to tell a good story (Zhao, 2019). Therefore, it is of great significance to collect and present as much information as possible about the processes, interactions and effects of this case.

At last, the method of qualitative comparative analysis will be used to compare the characteristics and disparities of online activism and analyze their reasons combined with previous cases and the curatorial use of news in literatures and data.

4. Significance of Research Questions

Today, China is witnessing a growing number of similar cases of curatorial news use emerging, to protest the authorities' dynamic zero-COVID policy (动态清零政策) and to illustrate the poor conditions for them to get help or justice under the pandemic or related controls, especially in the southwest, northwest and northeast regions, where the majority of the population and mainstream media tend to ignore them. That might indicate curatorial use of news could become the dominant genre of online activism during the COVID-19 or even continue into China's future. It gains significance to study for it reveals the changes in the forms and styles of contention in China.

The study of this case can not only enrich our understanding of the integration of news production and online activism, but also serve as a window into Chinese modernity, for it takes the forms and dynamics of a wide range of technological, cultural, social, economic, and political converging and contending forces (Yang,2009).

Key Words

online activism; curatorial news use

Unacceptable comments and social condemnation: a dissent management approach to Xuxa's 2021 controversy about prisoners and vaccine tests

Authors

Prof. Juan Pablo Cannata - Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Abstract

Conversations about public issues and moral values are an increasingly important dimension of politics and public debate (Lakoff, 2004). Serious discursive transgressions of fundamental community values can trigger public outrage that threatens the social positioning and reputation of politicians and public figures through inflammatory accusations and the social diffusion of dissent.

Ekström and Johansson (2008) call this phenomenon "talk scandal". Fifteen years after the concept was developed, important theoretical and empirical challenges remain. On the one hand, in 2019, the authors expressed the need to rethink their analysis based on three important contextual changes: the transformation of the structure of visibility by a new hybrid media system (Chadwick, 2017), the proliferation of neo-populist governments that strategically use scandalous talk (Herkman, 2018), and the different role of journalism in the processes of scandal and controversy. On the other hand, Patrona (2019) points out that scandalous talk has been theorized but still has little empirical support.

This article presents a theory of dissent management as a new approach to unacceptable speech, assuming the public position of the accused of transgression and considering that in hybrid media systems, speech acts controversies emerge and develop on social media in a neopopulist political and cultural context.

Drawing on René Girard's cultural anthropology and Elizalde's dissent management theory, I proposed a scale of situations of dissent based on the risk to the accused, the object of discussion, and the nature of the relationship between social actors. A controversy is about ideas, there is no risk to the social position of the actor, and it is a relationship characterized by confusion. A polemic is about values, there is no risk to the social position of the actor, and it is a confrontational, often polarized relationship. Finally, a scandal is triggered by a moral transgression, there is a real risk for the social position of the actor, and it is a confrontational relationship characterized by indignation and anger.

This framework is applied to Xuxa's 2021 polemic about prison population and medical testing in a polarized Brazil, at the moment led by right-wing populist Jair Bolsonaro, dealing with the COVID pandemic. On March 27, Xuxa, one of Brazil's top celebrities, a billionaire businesswoman, animal rights activist, and opponent of President Bolsonaro, became controversial. In an Instagram Live conversation, she declared that it would be convenient to test vaccines and drugs on prisoners, so

that they "do something dignified before they die," instead of on animals. The dissent process was immediately activated, and Xuxa's response was a heartfelt apology at 2:30 a.m., which acted as a de-escalator and was accepted by the media system in the next day's headlines and in conversations on social networks, where it became a national trending topic. In this way, she maintained her position in the field and her legitimacy, even though the process affected her reputation among certain audiences.

Using a process tracing methodology, the analysis will identify a set of social mechanisms that trigger dissent and act as deactivators of dissent and channel it toward resolution. Looking at the process from the defendant's point of view will allow a dissent management approach to identify alternative strategic responses.

Key Words

dissent, polemic, talk scandal, public discourse, controversy, mechanisms, apology

Women in party politics in Mato Grosso and the culture of machismo

Authors

Mrs. Julia Munhoz - Federal University of Mato Grosso

Abstract

This paper is a multiple case study of women active in political parties in the state of Mato Grosso, in Brazil's Midwest. We start from the guiding question: how do they face the culture of machismo that still marks politics in parties of different ideological hues? In different degrees and ways of emergence, the prejudices against the condition of women are a challenge to women's participation in party politics, both externally, with the voters, and internally, within the political parties themselves. It is on this movement of double tension, external and internal, that we focus our study. We present and analyze the profile of 10 women active in politics in Mato Grosso, one of them a transsexual woman, and the respective statutes of their parties in which they deal with the feminine condition. Our goal is to evaluate the values that are placed in this process of interaction. The study is interdisciplinary, at the intersection of communication, politics, culture, and philosophy. Our grounding incorporates critical value theory with John Dewey (2009), from the idea that all conduct involves values. To situate the notion of feminism we use the concept of Maria João Silveirinha (2016) and transfeminism with Jaqueline Gomes de Jesus (2014). In complement, we work with the operator concept of framing with Anabela Gradim (2016). As an innovative methodological procedure, we use the scientific construction podcast for the records of the personal narratives of each woman with performance in party politics. The scientific construction podcast, idealized by Pedro Pinto de Oliveira and Luã Chagas (2021), is part of the research process, giving the scientific community and other audiences to see what and how the researcher is treating the theme in question, since each interview is broadcasted in the news media and audio platforms.

Key Words

Communication. Politics. Culture. Philosophy. Feminism

Resurrecting Aristotle's deliberative rhetoric for analysis of 'practical reasoning' and 'rhetorical (ir)responsibility' in Australia's parliamentary climate change debate

Authors

Mr. Simon McLaughlin - The University of Queensland

Abstract

Australian politicians are criticised for unethical and unconstructive parliamentary debate; the climate change debate has come under particular scrutiny. Could an ethical approach to political debate encourage more effective deliberation on climate change and other critical issues? Alisdair MacIntyre insists "No issue is more central to contemporary concerns than that of the relationship of ethics to rhetoric. No book has more to teach us than Aristotle's *Rhetoric*" (1994, n.p.). In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle offers an ethical model of political speech that seeks relevant argumentative premises and decision-making for the civic good. Here, the political speaker's goal is to demonstrate rational, practical, civic-minded argumentation to find rhetorical 'proof.' With this 'practical reasoning,' a political speaker integrates *logos* and *ethos*. As Garver puts it, "Good practical reasoning is the discursive embodiment of good character" (1994, p. 151). Where the focus of the rhetorician is so often the emotional appeal, Aristotle creates a craft of rhetoric – an art – and puts it on an ethical footing by aiming for audience conviction with argumentation as the primary persuasive device.

My paper explores the rhetorical approaches in Australian Parliamentary speech. Following a conceptual discussion, I apply Aristotelian principles to a case study. In my qualitative content analysis (of sorts), I analyse two speeches from the time of the UN's 2021 Glasgow Climate Change Conference. The speeches come from both Government and Opposition speakers who oppose and support (respectively) net zero emissions legislation. Translating Aristotle's methods for ethical political speech into analytical tools, I analyse the argumentation of the two speakers and deduce whether they employ practical reasoning as their primary persuasive means. Are the arguments grounded on relevant civic topics? Are the premises and conclusions in enthymemes (deductive arguments) linked to evidence? I also examine *pathos*, particularly where it is detached from a reasoned argument, which Aristotle considered emotional manipulation. The analysis notes whether an argument is fallacious, that is, whether it employs an 'apparent enthymeme'. Aristotle considered all apparent enthymemes essentially a variation of the *secundum quid* (Garver, 1994). The *secundum quid* uses selective or general evidence, without qualification, to make a categorical statement (Hansen, 2020). In the *secundum quid*, limitations to a proposition are omitted, and the speaker provides no logical reasoning on which the audience can deliberate; rather, the argument jumps to a conclusion. Observing the apparent enthymeme in my analysis of parliamentary speech will allow me to determine whether a speaker's rhetoric is what I call 'rhetorically responsible'; where reasoned argumentation is absent, the speaker's only persuasive device is the emotional

appeal. Early findings show a consistent disregard for rational, practical argumentation by both speakers and a heavy reliance on *pathos* appeals related to friendship, anger, and hatred.

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Key Words

Political speech, rhetoric, argumentation, persuasion, *pathos*, Aristotle, climate change

The Politics of Newsjunkies: Intrinsic Need For Orientation and Political Party Identification, Political Ideology, and Vote Choice in a U.S. Presidential election

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Abstract

Prior research has claimed that people who feel a coming election is relevant to them and who are uncertain about who to vote for have a strong need for orientation (McCombs & Weaver, 1973; Weaver, 1977), the combination of which indicates a broad motivation to keep up with news. None of the original need for orientation (NFO) questions, however, like political party affiliation, mentioned news, and neither do NFO questions in several, much more recent studies (Lee et al., 2022; Camaj, 2019; Camaj & Weaver, 2013; Weaver et al. 2010). Because of such measurement problems, Matthes (2006) developed a more flexible NFO scale assessing interest in getting news about one topic, which doesn't have to be an election, but interest in news about one thing also doesn't indicate a general desire to consume news.

Intrinsic Need For Orientation

More recent work has examined intrinsic need for orientation (INFO), or the newsjunkie characteristic: the sustained, psychological need to keep up with news (Authors 2023a; Authors, 2023b). Specifically, INFO measures the extent to which people: a) check news first thing each day; b) consume news in their downtime; c) are uncomfortable when they feel they don't know what is going on in the world; and d) feel that keeping up with news strengthens their connections to other people. Prior research claimed NFO measured general motivation to keep up with news; INFO actually measures it, and does so explicitly and by asking respondents about news broadly, rather than news about one issue. To date, published studies have fielded and validated INFO in at least four countries and in two languages, and several findings dispute original NFO assumptions. Authors 2023a, for example, found that consuming political news was positively correlated with intention to vote, which shouldn't happen according to prior research; news consumption and intention to vote should be negatively associated, as intention to vote supposedly represents low uncertainty, indicating people who don't need more news in order to vote (see Camaj, 2019). Also in Authors 2023a, INFO itself positively predicted intention to vote, which should also not occur because, again, intention to vote supposedly indicates low uncertainty, which, in part, was claimed to represent a weak need for orientation. The current study further scrutinizes several additional measures of uncertainty, which prior research claimed indicate a strong motivation to track news.

Method

The four-item INFO scale listed above was assessed as a predictor of several variables that prior research claimed represent a weak need for orientation, among N=2,059 U.S. respondents in Sep. 2020 (Cronbach's alpha=.83). The study tested several "uncertainty" arguments from prior research: 1) that a weak political party affiliation indicates a strong NFO, because, supposedly, people with weak or no partisan ties are uncertain about who vote for and thus desire more news (Camaj & Weaver, 2013); 2) that being an undecided voter indicates someone who desires more news, because they are undecided on who to vote for, and therefore also has a strong NFO; 3) that moderates have a stronger NFO than liberals or conservatives; and 4) whether decided voters intending to vote for Trump versus Biden differ in their NFO. Prior research said decided voters have a weaker NFO than undecideds do, because the former don't need more news to vote, but made no distinction between respondents' candidate choice; if that supposition holds, intrinsic need for orientation should not differ significantly among people intending to vote for Trump versus Biden.

Results

Findings counter decades of prior NFO studies claiming that people who possess low political certainty desire more news. Respondents who identified as Republican or Democrat reported a stronger intrinsic need to keep up with news than did unaffiliated voters. Decided voters had stronger INFO scores than undecideds. Self-identified liberals reported stronger INFO scores than both moderates and conservatives. INFO positively predicted intention to vote for a specific candidate (Biden). Mediation analyses found direct, positive effects of INFO on all dependent variables, after political news consumption—a proxy for interest in politics, which was part of Weaver's (1977) nine-item NFO measure—was added to models. Findings suggest INFO offers greater utility and, potentially, greater predictive validity than previous need for orientation measures.

Key Words

Newsjunkies, intrinsic need for orientation, political partisanship, uses and gratifications

Behind the right ideas: Comparing populist party views on public service media in Northern and Southern Europe

Authors

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Abstract

The growth of populist parties in Europe entails new challenges for public service media and has added new dimensions to media policy debates in many countries. Traditional left-right wing political conflicts about the mission and role of public service media, in particular in relation to commercial media competitors in the digital era, have now been supplemented by right wing populist attacks questioning public service media as such: their content, impartiality and links to the established political system and elite groups in society. Public service media has thus become somewhat of 'a special target' for populist parties in Europe (Holtz-Bacha, 2021).

While the more interest-oriented market liberal and private media opposition to public service media have been extensively covered and discussed in media and communication research for long time, the driving forces behind a more ideologically oriented criticism from the far right has been less investigated and remains somewhat unclear. On one hand, this criticism matches populism perfectly, as public service media is portrayed as the representatives of a political elite distanced from the perspectives of 'ordinary people'. On the other hand, public service media also brings the national culture, language, and values that populist parties repeatedly identify themselves with.

This paper aims to shed new light on populist party views on public service media by comparing the standpoints of the populist right wing parties in Northern Europe (Denmark, Norway, and Sweden) and Southern Europe (France., Italy, and Spain) during the period 2018-2022. Party communication on the topic is analyzed through qualitative text analyses using three basic sources in both regions: news media content, parliamentary debates and documents, and party congress material. The comparison between polarized pluralist and democratic corporatist countries also allows for the analysis of possible media system importance for understanding populism standpoints on public service media (Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

Theoretically, this paper adheres to previous research traditions to study the role of ideas in explaining media policy. In contrast to traditional interests and institutional approaches where regulations are perceived as results of group self-interests, structures and social processes, the force-of-idea perspective focuses on actors' normative beliefs and cognitive understandings of causal relationships. It has been argued that the roles of ideas should be more emphasized and integrated in interest and institutional approaches when explaining media policy positions (Künzler, 2012).

As populist parties have gained political importance and become more influential in many countries in Europe, policy implementation in distinctive areas is also highly relevant to analyze. Media policy is one such area and this comparative study intends to offer new insights about motives and driving forces behind the formulation of ideological populist right wing parties' positions in relation to public service media.

Key Words

right wing populism, media policy, public service media, Europe, ideology

Only a personal thing? The Role of Individual Factors and Media System Characteristics on Conspiracy Mentality

Authors

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Abstract

Theoretical background

Conspiracy theories can have severe societal consequences like the refusal of vaccinations (Ruiz & Bell, 2021), among others. Focusing on the individual, it is important to identify factors associated with conspiracy mentality – the general tendency to believe in conspiracy theories. Thus, research in this regard proliferated in recent years, putting factors associating conspiracy mentality with individual characteristics such as low institutional trust or political extremism into the center (Bruder & Kunert, 2021; Imhoff et al., 2022). However, societal boundary conditions are seldom considered, as research on correlates of conspiracy beliefs at the country level is scarce and has mostly considered economic factors such as GDP so far (see Hornsey et al., 2022).

We argue that factors related to the media system might play a crucial role in explaining conspiracy beliefs by influencing the type and quality of information offered in a country, thus shaping the (dis)informedness of its citizens. Humprecht et al. (2020) identified three factors related to the media environment that weaken resilience to disinformation: low trust in news, weak public service media, and fragmented audiences. On that basis, we seek to investigate the role of individual level correlates as well as media system level characteristics in shaping conspiracy mentality.

Method

To that end, we use data from 21 countries included in the 10th round of the European Social Survey (ESS). Firstly, we examine the relationship of individual factors on conspiracy mentality - namely institutional trust, political extremism, satisfaction with the economic and political situation, as well as socio-demographics - using multiple regression. Secondly, country level influences are accounted for using multilevel modeling. Finally, we introduce country level predictors related to the media systems to test their influence on conspiracy mentality. We also investigate country differences in more detail using descriptive statistics.

Results

First results are in line with previous research regarding trust and satisfaction as well as high education as protective individual factors against conspiracy mentality. Regarding country level differences, an intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) of .23 suggests added value when using a multilevel model. Preliminary analyses show that taking country level variation into account

changes the impact of some individual level predictors. Since the study is currently still at the analysis stage, further results regarding country level predictors cannot yet be reported, but will be included in the full paper.

Literature

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(see "References" for the remainder of the literature)

Key Words

Conspiracy Mentality, Media Systems, Multilevel Analysis, Institutional Trust, Political Extremism

Protesting Paradigm Geopolitically: A Comparative Study of News Coverage of UC Strike in US, 2022

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Abstract

After more than 50 unsuccessful negotiations with the university, a general strike involving more than 48,000 people broke out at several UC schools on November 14 in a bid to achieve higher wages in the face of inflation. The strike ended with a new labor agreement on significant wage increases, increased childcare and protections against bullying and harassment on campus. The study validates the scope and applicability of the protest paradigm in geopolitics. In this study, 10 California internal publications and 10 California external publications were selected as the research sample for content analysis. Comparative study analysis showed that the news outlets exhibited a strong geopolitical character of protest paradigm, with media sources outside of California coming primarily from official sources, while media sources inside California came primarily from the protesters themselves. At the same time, we found that the in-state media were more factual, spectacle-oriented and had a more negative bias, while the out-of-state media had a more marginal bias and a more neutral attitude. Interestingly, the media, both in and out of state, believe that the responsibility for the incident lies with the university and support government measures to change the situation, but the differences in the framing of the story are not significant. Although these findings further complicate the protest paradigm which are indicated in geopolitics, they also show a dominant pattern of “paradigm repair” at the level of both news outlets' ideology and protest coverage even if the patterns are vary from in-state media to out-state media.

Key Words

geopolitics; protest paradigm; comparative politics; local media; social movement

Online Propaganda in the Age of Platforms: Uncovering the Cooperation and Tension between State Media and Digital Platforms in China

Authors

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Abstract

In a digital age, China's party-state has endeavoured to transform offline propaganda to online and expand into popular social media platforms to reach more internet users. The Chinese Communist Youth League (CYL), the world's largest youth political organization, has opened accounts on Douyin and Bilibili, the two most popular video-sharing platforms in China. On these platforms, local and central CYL organizations act as content producers, creating and promoting content, and competing with other content producers for users' attention. On the one hand, platforms in China are governed by state laws and regulations. State media backed by the Party and government organizations have an advantage in cooperating with platforms and using platforms' resources. On the other hand, the platform society has changed the landscape of content production and dissemination. State media as content producers are also governed by platform rules and mechanisms. Previous studies have explored the trend of platformization, in which platforms have growing power over data infrastructure, content moderation, and cultural production. As a result, official media like the CYL accounts have to adapt to platform mechanisms to increase visibility. However, platforms and state media are not necessarily aligned. Tension exists between state media which aims to expand the influence of official content and online entertainment platforms which pursue business interests. Although extensive research has explored the role of platforms in influencing ordinary cultural producers and users in the Western context, little attention has been paid to the relationship between platforms and state media as content producers in the Chinese context. Focusing on the local and central CYL accounts on Douyin and Bilibili, this research examines the cooperation and tension between platforms and state media, and how platform mechanisms impact online propaganda strategies in China. In-depth interviews with CYL accounts' operators and platform staff will uncover the interactions between platforms and state media and the challenges faced by state media in a platform society. The study argues that, while platforms are governed by the party-state, official organizations online are also governed by platform logic and mechanisms. Although state media have advantages in collaborating with platforms, resource allocation is imbalanced as local organizations receive little support from platforms, and the ability of official media accounts to produce content and attract users' attention is limited by their political attributes. Overall, this research sheds light on the role of platforms in online propaganda, contributes to understanding the complex power dynamics between state media and commercial platforms in China, and provides insights into political communication in a platform society.

Key Words

Propaganda, CYL, platform governance, digital platforms, platform power, Douyin, Bilibili

Caring Central VS Chaotic Local: Political polarization in rural young Chinese

Authors

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Abstract

The relationship between social media use and political polarization has been widely documented by political scientists and communication scholars. However, as has observed by Iyengar and other researchers (2012), extant literature tends to focus on political polarization in liberal democratic contexts, particularly in the US. Among the few studies conducted in China, most, if not all, provided an urban-centric picture of polarized internet-based debate on nationalistic topics. Guo (2004) first introduced the concept of polarization into this field in China. He figured out that Internet helped to bring similar users together to form a certain online group. Le and Yang (2010) examined the content of four major Chinese forums, analysed the distributions of extreme attitudes, indicating that forums assembling more radicals were more likely to be polarized, and the ring-wing forum was more likely to be polarized. They also concluded that the more similarity of opinion, the higher degree of polarization existed. Others conducted experimental studies, suggesting that online friend groups and online bullying were most significant cases of group polarization in China (Sia, Tan & Wei, 2002). Little, if not no, attention is paid to the role social media use might play in political polarization in rural China.

However, just little attention from the academia does not necessarily mean the issue as unimportant. Since reform and opening up, rural China has undergone sea change that is at once political, economic and particularly relevant here but often neglected, technological.

Considering that the majority of China's rural young people are nowadays working in urban areas, these developments force us to reflect the following: despite the state emphasis on ICTs as facilitator of the development of agriculture and public service in the countryside (Yang, 2006; Qiang, L, 2009; Qiang. Et al., 2012), how as a matter of fact do rural young people use these technologies to participate the local political issues while working in remote urban areas? How is this related to the dynamics of rural politics, or more specifically, the observed political polarization, in rural China?

We employ a processual approach to rural politics where rural politics is viewed as the interaction between individual participants and the structural forces, cultural or political, that comprise the current cultural nexus of power within the enlarged social landscape of rural politics.

From last September on, we have spent time working with a couple of rural young people and following fellow workers back to their home during the Spring festival break. We will in this process examine the polarization of their perception of rural politics, expression as well as action. By interviews and participant observation in this village, we demonstrated that their perception of the urban workplace culture, the time limits imposed by the urban employers, and extant social

networks on social media and the renting and mianzi principles attached to it are three important cultural forces shaping both their political use of social media and the observed political polarization. The very affordance of friends and group chats offered by WeChat, when adopted by them, in our case, play a central role in this process.

Key Words

social media, political polarization, China

ARMY for Leni: The Filipino BTS Fandom's Fight Against Disinformation in the 2022 Philippine National Elections

Authors

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Abstract

Elections are an open invitation for misinformation and disinformation campaigns in the Philippines which often target high-profile women (Chua & Soriano, 2020; Grounds & Koff, 2022). Such was the case with former Vice-President Maria Leonor “Leni” Robredo, the sole female in the roster of presidential candidates for the extremely convoluted 2022 national election campaigns.

During this time, an unprecedented number of popular culture fandoms like the “ARMY for Leni” also strategized political mobilizations on different social media platforms to support Leni Robredo and to actively fight the propagation of falsehoods on social media.

We, therefore, asked: How did Filipino ARMYs supporting Leni Robredo’s presidential campaign enact political mobilization strategies to counter disinformation amid the 2022 national elections?

We used the Wenger-Trayners' (2015) “Community of Practice” as the primary framework, with core tenets of online fan activism and “actualizing citizenship” as lenses to contextualize purposes and positionalities.

Communities of practice, “are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015).

On the other hand, actualizing citizenship is defined as political engagement that prioritizes self-expression via social media and participation in loosely bounded activism networks (Penney, 2019).

Through intensity sampling, relevant social media posts were gathered from the ARMY for Leni Facebook Page. The captions, visuals, and in-art texts of the sampled posts were then further analyzed to uncover the strategies of the ARMY for Leni to “actualize” citizenship.

Five themes surfaced from a close reading of the posts namely, Communicating a Collective Consciousness, Advocating for the Underprivileged, Surfacing Truths through Fact-Checking, Expressing a Playful Political Identity, and Self-Organizing to Sustain the Community.

Our findings supported the tenets of the “Community of Practice” namely domain, community, and practice. Having an online domain like the ARMY for Leni where community members can

interact and engage with each other through coordinated online and offline activities build on the development of practices that sustain the existence and purpose of such a community of practice.

Moreover, through the use of memes, as well as K-pop culture and BTS references, community members “actualized” citizenship. This was seen through the social media content that was created and shared by ARMY for Leni with their community members.

Through exacting facets of an online community of practice, the coordinated strategies are made sense by the reification, mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire within the community. Actualizing citizenship and fan activism were reflected in these activities through the different levels and kinds of practices within this community of practice. What can be emphasized through these shared practices is that learning and knowledge both sustain and are sustained through the practices and are continuously reified in an online community where engagement is communicative and mediatized.

Key Words

ARMY for Leni, BTS fandom, actualizing citizenship, misinformation, Philippines, elections

What is journalism? Young adults' folk theories

Authors

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Abstract

Drawing from the concept of “folk theories”, this research explores how Italian young adults make sense of the information around them. In general, folk theories are a form of expectations, based in some experience not necessarily systematically checked, that constitutes cognitive frames through which the world is interpreted (Rip, 2006). Thus, folk theories of journalism can be described as “actually existing popular beliefs about what journalism is, what it does, and what it ought to do” (Nielsen, 2016, p. 840) that shape (dis)engagement with news media (Palmer, Toff & Nielsen, 2020).

The research consists of two steps. First, we interviewed a balanced sample of 40 Italian young adults (18-22 years old) to identify their folk theories. Then, we conducted a survey of a representative sample of the Italian population with an oversample of 800 young adults. In this study, we focus on this latter population to investigate the distribution of young adults' folk theories and their correlates.

Qualitative results highlight that young adults' folk theories are articulated on five layers: ontological (what journalism is), procedural (how journalism works), epistemological (what journalistic reality is), ethical (what good journalism is), and relational (how journalism should interact with the audience). The object of the folk theories varies: they have been found to be directed towards journalism as well as journalists and specific news outlets.

Quantitative analysis shows that young adults largely share two fundamental epistemological positions: objectivism and empiricism (see Hanitzsch 2007). These epistemological stances are related to a professional view of journalism, according to which only journalists can convey relevant information. This result can be read as a successful attempt by the Italian journalistic field – which increasingly relies on the rhetoric of objectivism and empiricism as an antidote to fake news (Author 2017; 2021) – to expand its doxa to its public.

However, quantitative analysis also shows that interviewees are widely skeptical about journalists being able to be objective; they also think that journalists are more interested in personal gain (fame, money, etc.) than anything else. Those folk theories are associated with a lack of perceived political efficacy as well as a lack of trust in journalists.

Grasping how journalism and journalists are considered by younger generations is a stepping stone to understanding (the future of) journalistic epistemic authority.

Key Words

Folk Theories, Survey, Interviews, Young adults, Epistemic authority

A can of worms or a gift that keeps on giving? The role of voting in youth political participation

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Abstract

Low voter turnout is an issue that affects many representative democracies and is especially problematic among younger people (Blais et al., 2004; Franklin, 2004; Holbein & Hillygus, 2020; Kitanova, 2019; Putnam, 2000; Schulmeister et al., 2019; Smets, 2015). Some authors relativize the consequences of electoral abstention, arguing that political participation is not in decline but in transformation, adapting to a changing world (Theocharis & van Deth, 2018). Young people are not, therefore, becoming politically passive but rather exploring new forms of participation (de Moor & Verhaegen, 2020), horizontal and non-hierarchical (Loader et al., 2014), with greater significance for their daily lives (Norris, 2004).

Although these types of participation are important, they do not replace the role of voting in democratic life (Siegel-Stechler, 2019) nor in the future of young people: low youth engagement in formal politics means that politicians do not prioritize this age group in their policies (Sloam, 2014). Thus, it is crucial to study the relationship between voting and other types of political participation, especially among young people. While some authors claim that new forms of participation – mainly digital – may impact more traditional political activities (Boulianne & Theocharis, 2020; Jenkins et al., 2016), others question why the low youth voter turnout shows no sign of increasing (Matthes, 2022).

This study explores the relationship between voter turnout and other types of political participation among young people. While it is suggested that there is a correlation between different types of political participation (Theocharis & van Deth, 2018), it is less clear whether the movement takes place from political participation more broadly to electoral participation or from voting to other types of participation.

Data was collected through a national survey applied to young Portuguese people between 18 and 29 years old, resulting in a geographically representative sample (n = 600). Portugal is an interesting case of study because it is one of the countries where the inequality of participation based on age is more pronounced (Holbein & Hillygus, 2020), and young Portuguese people vote and participate politically less than most young European people (Magalhães, 2022).

Through Partial Least Squares - Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), two models were tested: one in which different types of political participation lead to voting; and another in which electoral participation has positive effects to other types of political participation. The results indicate that

only volunteering positively and significantly affects youth voter turnout. On the other hand, voting has positive and significant effects on all the other types of political participation.

The results imply that voting is the cornerstone of youth political participation and can be either a can of worms or the gift that keeps on giving: not voting is likely the symptom of political apathy in general – as notoriously suggested by Putnam (2000) – while maintaining voting habits is associated with a political consciousness that fuels all kinds of political participation.

Key Words

voting; political participation; youth; structural equation modeling

When politicians do journalism: a genre perspective on pseudo-journalistic political communication

Authors

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Abstract

This paper presents the results of a scoping review (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Colquhoun et al., 2014) that aims at answering the following research question: How is the adoption of journalistic genre elements in the production of political communication by political parties conceptualized by scholars from the fields of journalism studies, political communication, and genre studies?

The contemporary nexus between media and politics is characterized by multidirectional interactions and interdependencies between different types of political actors and citizens, across what scholars describe as “emerging new complex media ecology” (Gurevitch et al., 2009, p. 176) or “hybrid media system” (Chadwick, 2013, p. 3). An intrinsic element of this hybrid space are the increasingly porous boundaries between the hitherto differentiated genres of political and journalistic discourses (Chadwick, 2013). The intersections of journalism and political communication have received substantial scholarly attention in the fields of journalism studies and political communication respectively, with a focus on for instance the political positioning of journalists or the performance of politicians in journalistic formats.

What has been missing, however, is interdisciplinary research that combines insights from political communication, journalism studies and genre studies to shed a holistic light on the specific phenomenon of how political parties use journalistic genre elements in their political communication. Noteworthy exceptions to this trend are for instance Hillje (2021)'s conceptualization of *Propaganda 4.0* as well as Ekman and Widholm (2022)'s proposition of the term *parasitic news*, meaning “a particular political communication style that relies on established journalistic formats and genres” (p. 3). Both terms, however, fail to capture the emerging of hybrid genres through the integration of journalistic genre resources into political communication. Bridging journalism studies and political communication, this paper proposes the term *pseudo-journalistic political communication* to describe this particular phenomenon.

With the goal of grasping the breadth of research in journalism studies, political communication and genre studies on this previously understudied form of political communication as well as of justifying the need for its own name, this paper conducts a *scoping review*, a form of knowledge synthesis that is “aimed at mapping key concepts, types of evidence and gaps in research related to a defined area or field by systematically searching, selecting, and synthesizing existing knowledge” (Colquhoun et al., 2014, p. 1294). Preliminary results of the review include a four-fold

definition of the term *genre*, which will serve as an indispensable ground layer for further establishing of the concept of *pseudo-journalistic political communication* as well as developing research strategies for studying it. According to a synthesis of various publications on *genres*, they can be defined as (1) purpose-oriented (Cap & Okulska, 2013); (2) communicative (Shaw, 2016); (3) discourse-related (Tardy & Swales, 2014) (4) actions (Bhatia, 2014). When it comes to the production of *pseudo-journalistic political communication*, it appears that the first dimension is the most relevant one. While political parties leave all three other dimensions mainly untouched, thus producing political communication that very much looks and feels like journalism, it is the purpose of the genre which fundamentally changes when moving into the political sphere.

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Key Words

Scoping review, political communication, journalism studies, genre studies, genre, hybridity

Information, Discussion, Activism or Participation? Political uses of the Mobile Instant Messaging Services by citizens in U.S., India, Brazil, and Spain

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Abstract

Digital environment has opened up new possibilities in the field of digital political communication. This has redefined the interaction way of the different actors that take part in this process. The role of citizens has been especially influenced by the digital environment, whose function has gone from being simply passive to one that is much more active, thus increasing their ability to act in political affairs. In this context, the private and controlled nature that characterizes mobile instant messaging services has promoted the fact that during the last decades they have become preferred platforms for political participation in all its forms, especially with the aim of influencing the actions taken by political actors. The main objective of this study is to know what the citizens use mobile instant messaging services (MIMS) for in political terms. To do this, a quantitative approach is used based on the online survey technique, which was launched through the Qualtrics platform in July 2021 and answered by 2,803 citizens living in Spain, the United States, Brazil, and India. The sample has been stratified by gender, age, level of education and ideology. The results show how the country of origin, the age, the level of education and the ideology were determining factors, while gender had no influence on the different forms of political participation indicated by the respondents. Overall, users acknowledge that they mostly use MIMS for informational purposes, to be informed of what is happening around them, as well as to discuss social and political issues and exchange opinions, especially in India and Brazil, which present high values in both cases. However, actions related to online activism or active participation, which require a greater effort on the part of citizens, present low values, especially with regard to young people (between 18 and 29 years old) and the oldest ones (over 50 years). In this sense, it is worth highlighting the fact that users between the ages of 30 and 49 with university studies and those on the far right are those more likely to use MIMS more often to boycott products or services for political reasons, as well as to create and sign online demands or to join political actions. These findings have allowed us to know the different dynamics of political participation through the MIMS in four countries, just like to observe common and dissenting patterns among them regarding this phenomenon.

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Key Words

Political Communication; Mobile Instant Messaging Services; political participation

News Repertoires and Political Engagement among Young People in South Korea

Authors

Ms. Zhieh Lor - Ewha Womans University

Prof. Jihyang Choi - Ewha Womans University

Abstract

Structural and fundamental changes in the technological, social, and political environment have shifted the citizens' news patterns and reshaped political participation. People increasingly rely on only a small set of different platforms and consume a subset of news topics from the many available options. Such preference-based news repertoires subsequently turn into a comprehensive news routine, which makes up people's news repertoire— preferences for specific news items over others (Hasebrink & Popp, 2006). Despite this, there is still limited research on young citizens' news repertoire and relationship with democracies. Thus, this study aims to understand how young South Korean citizens consume news and how it relates to democracy. The study consists of two related parts. The first part of the study aims to identify the sub-dimensions of news repertoires—news platforms and news topics—among young people. The second part of the study investigates the political consequences of these news platforms and topic repertoires.

This study analyzed a two-wave online survey data collected among young people in South Korea. By conducting Latent Class Analysis (LCA) via Mplus 8.3, we explored the entire news preferences an individual regularly uses. The study results suggest that people get news through a combination of different platforms and a combination of news topics to compose their news repertoires. The study further explores the democratic implications of news platform repertoires and news topic repertoires. By conducting a Latent Class Regression (LCR), the study demonstrates differences in political knowledge, political participation, and political information efficacy between different news repertoires. These findings indicate that how people compose their news diets can have a significant impact on democracy.

Understanding the news patterns of young people is fundamental for democracy. Young people, as members of the next generation, are projected to make up the largest proportion of the next eligible voters (Fry, 2016) and are crucial to long-term citizenship development. The results of the study provide valuable insights into the news consumption patterns of young people and democratic outcomes in South Korea.

Key Words

news repertoire, political participation, young people, media effects, latent analysis

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS IN PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: MULTIMODAL FRAMING OF UK IMAGE ON CHINESE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM

Authors

Ms. Yijiao Wang - University of Nottingham Ningbo China

Abstract

Social media influencers (SMIs) have been shown to be influential in areas such as marketing and social opinion, however, their efficacy and potential as individual non-state actors (NSAs) in public diplomacy (PD) has not yet been academically researched and explored. It is necessary to explore whether transnational SMIs also have a strong influence in PD and to value their role similar to that of other NSAs such as international corporations and NGOs. The purpose of this study is to explore the roles of SMIs in PD and their communication strategies through the lens of shaping the country image. A new theoretical framework which combines framing theory and the four dimensions model of the country image (4D model) (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2014) has been developed and applied in this study.

It is a case study of UK-related SMIs on bilibili.com (a very popular video social media platform in China), looking at the videos they produce and upload to the bilibili.com. This research used frame content analysis, combining manual coding and machine analysis to determine the thematic clustering and use of frames of videos created and produced by SMIs. 256 videos uploaded by 25 influencers between 1st January 2019 and 31st December 2022 were sampled and analyzed. The findings show that the videos produced by SMIs bring out the normative and aesthetic dimensions of the country image of UK while the functional dimension is less frequently mentioned. Their expression of the emotional dimension is ambiguous or difficult to detect directly. The result of frame analysis show how the country image of the UK is constructed through the textual content, visual displays, auditory indications as well as the relationship between these three in multimodal videos. The human interest and ethical frameworks of the general framework are commonly visible across in the videos. Meanwhile this study also identified five issue-specific frames through hierarchical clustering analysis: the globalization frame, the cultural clash frame, the social diversity frame, the food culture frame and the lifestyle frame. Finally, the valences of the individual frames in the video were also analyzed, showing a positive tone overall, but neutral and negative valences were also present. The distinctive frames constructed by social media influencers in shaping the image of foreign countries are explained by concepts and theories such as the domestication of foreign media content, culture peg and culture link.

This paper argues that social media influencers have played a unique and complementary role in public diplomacy by reshaping and communicating the image of the state, as proved by their focus on UK culture and society and the use of special country image frames. However, the paper also recognizes that, as individual NSAs, they currently function as unintentional bystanders, and that

video content centered on the expression of their selves can only serve to inform socially and culturally relevant messages.

This study contributes to reveal a more comprehensive transnational country image under emerging media content also known as content produced by transnational social media influencers, a bottom-up construction of country image that brings theoretical studies of country image closer to the current social media reality. In a theoretical sense, this study provides a new perspective for studying the role of individuals as non-state actors in the new public diplomacy. In a practical sense, it provides new approaches and evidence for public diplomacy policy formulation and practice in every country. Finally, the multimodal frame that incorporates audio as a framing device could break through the limitations of past studies that were unimodal (textual texts) and bimodal (visual and textual texts). This research build a theoretical bridge between themes, multimodal frames and framing valence, providing a comprehensive theoretical basis for framing studies of media content.

Key Words

Social media influencers; country image; public diplomacy; framing content analysis

Fear of missing out as a driver of online political engagement among the politically disengaged: Survey evidence from Singapore

Authors

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Dr. Saifuddin Ahmed - Nanyang Technological Univeristy

Abstract

The growth of social media platforms has facilitated political engagement for the citizenry and eased the cost of participation for millions (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012; 2014). However, many remain politically apathetic and disengage from active participation (Zheltnina, 2020). It is necessary to attempt to reverse or, at the very least, decelerate this trend; otherwise, biases in political engagement will produce a biased representation of the populace, creating partisan outcome preferences (Manning & Holmes, 2013).

Empirical evidence shows that males, those with higher political interests and news use, and greater political knowledge, are more participatory in online and offline politics. However, other groups including young citizens and females in some societies, remain politically disengaged (Abendschön & García-Albacete, 2021; Vochocová et al., 2015). Therefore, scholars have long argued about which factors can facilitate this disengaged citizenry into active politics.

This study examines this question and advances the current scholarship by testing the role of fear of missing out (FOMO), a critical psychological experience, as a catalyst of online political engagement. It stands to reason that people with high FOMO levels are more likely to participate in various political activities online, such as having political conversations with others, supporting political causes, and participating in political events. Therefore, we propose that FOMO will be positively associated with political discussion on social media (H1) and online political engagement (H2). Next, we suggest that the relationship between FOMO and online political engagement will be positively mediated by political discussion on social media (H3). Finally, we explore how does gender and age conditionally moderate this proposed mechanism (RQ1). The proposed mechanism can be explained by the natural tendency of people with high levels of FOMO to closely monitor (and engage in) political topics and events in their networks so they do not miss any possible social activities (Skoric et al., 2018).

We conducted an online survey in Singapore ($N = 1008$) using a survey panel agency (Qualtrics) to test our assumptions. The sample characteristics were matched to population parameters focusing on age and gender quotas. We ran OLS regression (H1 and H2) and used PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018) to conduct the mediation (H3) and moderated mediation analyses (RQ1).

Our analyses suggest that FOMO is positively associated with political discussion and online political participation. Furthermore, political discussions on social media also mediated the relationship between FOMO and online political participation. Overall, the results suggest that

people with higher FOMO levels frequently engage in political discussion and activities online in Singapore. Here, such political discussions also act as a catalyst for online political participation. Further, we also find that this mechanism is moderated by age and gender, suggesting that the relationship is stronger for younger citizens and female Singaporeans – with the most potent effects being observed for young females.

Overall, this contributes to the scholarship on political engagement by identifying how FOMO can act as a driver of political discussion and online political participation among disengaged groups- in this case, young females in Singapore.

Key Words

political participation

FOMO

political inequality

females

political apathy

Supervised Intertextual Insulation in Modern Political Communication

Authors

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Mr. Matthew Dorr - Bowling Green State University

Mr. Vamsi Pedasanaganti - Bowling Green State University

Mr. Shudipta Sharma - Bowling Green State University

Abstract

Past research has demonstrated the concept of diffused intertextual production (Atkinson & Rosati, 2020), which states that the simultaneous presence of intertextuality and interactivity allows for the construction of “alternative knowledge.” In their research, Atkinson and Rosati demonstrate how an interactive forum, anchored to an intertextual frame of the city of Detroit, allowed for users to build a new vision of that beleaguered city. In a pilot study, I used this framework in my first step to examine and understand the Qanon conspiracy theory that has become integrated in US politics. In that research, I engaged in a limited version of cyberarchaeology (see Zimbra, Chen & Abbasi, 2010) to examine and map the online presence of three key Qanon content creators: Charlie Ward, Mel K, and RedPill78. Through that study, I illustrated the flow of an intertext from those creators’ main sites to their social media and live streaming platforms. Essentially, the findings demonstrated a supervised intertextual flow, in which these key creators maintained strong control over the intertext.

I have followed up that research by collecting data with a research team, which expands the scope of the original cyberarchaeology. In the current research, we looked to content creators who have collaborated with the original three key individuals from the pilot study. We searched content created by the initial three on the BitChute streaming site to find individuals who made appearances on their respective programs between September 1 and October 1 of 2022. We then engaged in a cyberarchaeology examining and mapping the online and social media presence of those collaborators. In this way, then, we have been able to illustrate a web that consists of three different levels. The first level, primary intertextual creators, constitute the online sites and social media of key influencers like Charlie Ward and Mel K. These individuals make content that explicitly addresses Qanon conspiracy theories, and is primarily intertextual with little (if any) interactivity. Next, the secondary intertextual propagators are individuals who collaborate with the primary creators. Their content often implies Qanon ideas, but typically avoids explicit references to the conspiracy theories. Their content is a mix of intertextual material with user-to-user interactivity; the community often leaves comments for these creators, or about their content. Finally, there are the social media collaborators, who have very sporadic and disorganized social media presences. Like the propagators, their content is a mix of intertextual material with user-to-user interactivity. Their communities leave similar commentary for them as well.

Overall, the final paper will demonstrate the notion of a supervised intertextual web, in which primary creators circulate Qanon content with the help of secondary propagators and social media collaborators. The findings will help to illustrate the challenges that such online networks pose to contemporary political communication. The research is in the final stages as we engage in content analysis of commentary left for the different content creators, and explore more differences between propagators and collaborators.

Key Words

Qanon, social media, conspiracy theory, intertextuality, cyberarchaeology

The social construct of the people and the elites in populist far-right parties Chega and Vox

Authors

Mr. Tiago Lapa - Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Abstract

The following paper draws from Burr's (2015) social constructionist approach to identify and characterize the members of "the people" and "the elites" of populist far-right parties Chega (Portugal) and Vox (Spain), which, up until a few years ago were described as the "Iberian exception" in the European political landscape (Alonso and Kaltwasser, 2015), doing so by collecting and analyzing these parties' Facebook and Twitter posts.

Hence, the concepts of "the people" and "the elites", the societal split that constitutes the core of populism, are approached as a social construct that diverges from country to country due to historical, socioeconomic, and cultural factors, and are fueled by individual interests, which blend in with a biased perception of reality, truth, and knowledge. Therefore, the theoretical framework of this paper also draws from Henri Tajfel's Social Identity theory (1974), particularly to analyze the ingroup and outgroup dynamics of Chega and Vox's populist rhetoric.

Thus, the main research question is the following:

1 – Who are the members of "the people" and "the elites" according to Chega and Vox?

In this qualitative exploratory-comparative case study, I employ the method of Critical discourse analysis (CDA), a qualitative analytical method of interpreting, explaining, understanding, and describing the ways in which the discourses maintain, construct, underline, and ultimately legitimize social inequalities (Mullet, 2018). The author states that regardless of our discursive choices being unconscious or not, the language we use is meaningful and purposeful.

The approach taken is Ruth Wodak's discourse historical approach (2001), which focuses on context, historical background, ideology, and the underlying meanings of language, and has been used in research about racism, far-right populism, islamophobia and nationalism (Reisigl, 2017).

The data sample consists of Facebook and Twitter posts of Vox and Chega official accounts from the period of January-March 2023 (3 months), which was considered to be a suitable sample to answer the project's research question. According to Airoidi (2021), these platforms have become themselves producers and disseminators of social constructs, due to their built-in dynamics, with social media's algorithms turning a space that could be used for proper rational debates into a popularity contest, providing populism a place to flourish (Khosravinik, 2017).

Additionally, social media was chosen as the unit of analysis due to its affordances in what concerns direct communication between the party and its audience, contrary to most other forms

of communication, in which there is a process of moderation and content curation by the more traditional media sphere.

These social media posts will be collected and imported to the qualitative data analysis software NVivo and will then be coded using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six step thematic coding process.

There is an aim to deconstruct the concept of both the people and the elites and to display its arbitrary meanings depending on different contexts. Additionally, this work will also contribute to the develop of a better ideological understanding of the populist far-right parties in Spain and Portugal.

Key Words

Social Constructionism; Populism; Far-right; Chega; Vox.

Illiberal Media and the Diffusion of Authoritarianism

Authors

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Abstract

The increasing concern over the spread of authoritarianism, and the rise of authoritarian global powers such as China and Russia, led researchers to examine the diffusion of authoritarianism across borders. While previous studies have focused on the economic, social, and political links between authoritarian states, little research involved a focus on the international media of illiberal powers in the dynamics of regime support or change.

This research aimed to assess the extent to which Chinese state-funded international media outlets, particularly its Arabic language service which can reach 22 Arab-speaking countries with one content, are contributing to a diffusion of authoritarianism. The research framework and indicators were developed based on the theories of autocracy promotion, support, and diffusion, and the factors that have previously been found to support and strengthen authoritarian regimes and their survival, influence policies in an anti-democratic direction, and actively or passively contribute to diffusion of authoritarian values across borders.

89 sampled pieces of content analysed, taken from the Chinese state broadcaster's Arabic language platform during the first 15 days of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, showed strong indication of autocratic diffusion and support. Further analysis of 40 pieces is underway to assess the narrative on democracy.

Key findings

Autocracy diffusion and the binaries of international norms

The research explored how sovereignty, human rights, and democracy are framed by the broadcaster, the "reconceptualization" of these international norms, and the promotion of a Chinese understanding of international norms through the media. The research gives particular attention to the newly re-branded Chinese democracy which is constantly compared to the Western democracy - "the whole-process democracy".

Autocracy diffusion and the binaries of evaluation

The binaries in the evaluation were also key to assessing a potential diffusion of authoritarianism. The evaluation of the Chinese model abroad is reinforced by the opinions of Arab evaluating elites who speak highly of China's impact on their respective countries. This positive evaluation contrasted with the reporting on the threat of the US and their foreign policy and the use of hard power in the Middle East. Yet, no indication of an intention to vilify or counter the EU's foreign policy in the broadcaster's reporting were found.

Autocracy support and the binaries of legitimacy

The binaries of legitimation were a clear indication of a support and legitimation of authoritarian regimes in the global arena. The attribution of responsibility for the invasion fell on the US and NATO, while the more sensible stakeholder who were the leaders of authoritarian regimes were seen calling for peace and negotiation and compliance with the UN charter; these included China, Russia, Turkey, Qatar, Iran, Hungary, UAE and Egypt.

Binaries and populism

The research explored how these binaries link to populism. The US has been framed as the destructive type of global power that endangered people's lives, leaving mines and explosives in countries like Iraq, terrorist organisations in countries like Afghanistan, and built biological warfare laboratories across the world. While China has been framed as the constructive power that contributed with infrastructure projects and was a push factor for the development of these countries.

Autocracy support and the China-Syria relations

The research explored in-depth the evolving relationship between China and Syria, a sanctioned authoritarian regime with low leverage and low linkage with the West, discussing alternative trade routes and currency with China, the country which increased its development aid to the Syrian regime 100 fold in just a few years. The relationship shows features of autocracy support.

Using these findings and the analytical framework

Part of China's influence can be in bolstering authoritarianism through legitimation, linkages, and enhancing the performance of the target regime through development aid support, especially media support. These findings showed that diffusion through the media allows authoritarian regimes to influence political discourse in target countries. The findings are important to understand the process of diffusion in order to counter their negative effects and protect democracy and democratic norms.

But also, the tested framework and its indicators pertaining to authoritarian diffusion can be used to further analyse international media outlets of authoritarian regimes to enable a more comprehensive understanding of the extent to which authoritarian diffusion is taking place globally in the media.

Key Words

- China;
- Authoritarianism;
- diffusion;
- democracy;
- Media;
- Arabic;
- United States;
- International affairs

Exploring Differences in Expressions of the Three-Child Policy Between Chinese Mainstream Media and the Public —An Analysis Based on LDA Topic Model

Authors

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Dr. Qi Zhang - School of Media and Communication, Shanghai Jiao Tong University.

Abstract

In policy release and communication, there are some differences between mainstream media and the public on the same policy issue in terms of discourse expressions and topics of concern. In order to better explore the current status of the differences between media reports and public expressions and facilitate communication between them. This study gathers news reports and public comments from 200 mainstream media on Sina Weibo within one year of the release of China's three-child policy to summarize the differences in themes and attitudes between media reports and the public's tendency to pay attention to the policy. This study is dedicated to investigate the differences between mainstream media and public political expressions in the release of the three-child policy issue, this study poses two research questions as follows.

RQ1: What kind of issues do media reports present a focus on regarding the three-child policy? What kind of issues do public discourses present? Are there any differences between the two?

RQ2: Is there a difference between the emotional attitudes presented by media reports and the emotional attitudes expressed by the public about the three-child policy?

This study adopted Python data mining, text analysis and LDA modeling to construct different thematic clustering maps of mainstream media and the public under the three-child policy. The results show that the media and the public pay more attention to different topics of the three-child policy, and both pay more attention to the topic of women's work pressure and rights under the three-child policy. At the same time, the public showed negative sentiments under the issues related to the three-child policy on microblogs, etc. These findings are also helpful for the future Chinese government and media to actively improve the implementation of the three-child policy, respond to public demands, and promote the establishment of a good communication mechanism between them.

This has important practical implications for the future news media to report policies and guide public sentiment. The study found that, first, there is a wide variation in the way the media expresses and focuses on topics under the three-child policy. In other words, the media pay more attention to the issue of "women's work pressure and rights", but less attention to the issue of "supporting measures and protection rules". Second, the public currently expresses negative feelings under the topics related to the three-child policy. The public's concerns fall into three main areas. First, they are concerned about the failure to implement supporting measures; second, they

believe that there are problems with the current situation of raising children's education, such as a public comment that "the birth of three children, we do not even have a good elementary school and secondary school in the district, not to talk about the birth of a child, mainly because education can not keep up with ah." Finally, some of the attitudes expressed about the implementation of the policy, such as "Now it is important to let the birth of a child without the worries of medical education and support, but also to take measures to change some people's radical and narrow-minded concept of childbirth, re-establishing a new concept of kinship." This also reflects a lower willingness to do business.

From a practical perspective, the findings of this paper can provide theoretical guidance for the media when reporting on the policy. In the future, the media should actively focus on how to respond to and meet public demands when reporting on the three-child policy, especially on how to implement supporting measures and the balance between women's work and family, so as to create an inclusive childbearing and parenting environment and promote balanced population development. At the same time, when publishing, communicating and disseminating other policies in the future, they should focus on transforming the dichotomy between the official media and the public into a dialogue between expression and interaction, focusing on responding to the public and creating a discourse ecology of equal communication between mainstream media and the public, so as to achieve better communication effects and build a good network ecology.

Key Words

Three-child policy; LDA topic model; Text Mining; sentiment

Creating heuristics to identify echo chambers in political discussions on Twitter

Authors

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Abstract

Hopes that the Internet's global connectivity would promote deliberative democracy have been dashed by fears that social media fragment and polarise the public sphere. In particular, 'echo chambers' have been described in terms of the dislocation of online populations into narrowly-focused groups, which reject dissenting opinions. For example conspiracy theorists are said to isolate themselves into interpretive communities where counter-conspiratorial information is absent (Cinelli et al., 2022; Douglas et al., 2019; Dow et al., 2021; Lewandowsky et al., 2018; Sunstein & Vermeule, 2009). Yet the impact and indeed very existence of echo chambers is hotly contested. Network-theoretic analyses of digital trace data of social media tend to find evidence of fragmentation in the form of homophilic clusters with limited connections to others in the network, which is interpreted as polarisation (Brugnoli et al. 2019; Conover et al. 2011; Crupi et al. 2022; Gruzd and Roy 2014; Williams et al. 2015). In contrast studies based on surveys find average web users are exposed to cross-cutting information, appearing to undermine the notion of digital echo chambers (Bruns 2019; Dubois and Blank 2018; Flaxman et al. 2016; Fletcher and Nielsen 2018; Gentzkow and Shapiro 2011; Newman et al. 2016; Rau and Stier 2019). In light of these contradictory empirical results, some authors suggest that it is not sufficient to analyse echo chambers through the absence of opinion-challenging information alone: it is also necessary to consider how people react to opposing viewpoints, and interact with those that articulate them (Bright et al. 2021; Karlsen et al. 2017; Nguyen 2020; Oswald and Bright 2022; Törnberg and Törnberg 2022). Gumbert et al. (2022) thus empirically investigate whether patterns of mutual affirmation emerge and solidify, and whether dissenting positions are rejected and delegitimized. Building on this work, we seek to determine whether other unique socio-technical characteristics might characterise echo chambers. To this end, we use a large-scale collection of tweets [N:2.5M] authored during the first 2020 US presidential debate, which we represent as a discussion network where nodes are Twitter users and edges represent reply tweets. We then test heuristics for echo chamber identification. Modularity clustering first serves to identify subnetworks with relatively stable composition throughout the debate, and where the majority of Twitter users share a common political orientation (we regard the existence of a durable and partisan cluster as a necessary but not sufficient condition for the existence of an echo chamber). We test additional potential echo chamber indicators using computational and qualitative approaches: (1) presence of hate speech, othering, or mocking of alternative viewpoints; (2) lack of engagement with external or 'authoritative' sources of information, e.g. Wikipedia; (3) usage of conspiracy-related hashtags and keywords; (4) semantic network analysis to assess how debate themes affected the

dynamic 'issue space' associated with the partisan cluster (we expect that in echo chambers conflicting viewpoints find little purchase). Empirically demonstrating whether echo chambers exist can help to raise awareness about the openness of people's information environments.

Key Words

echo chambers, political discussion, Twitter, homophily, semantic network analysis

Is it for the public's health or the national image? The framing analysis of news coverage on 'COVID-19 Vaccines' from People's Daily and The Guardian

Authors

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Abstract

In order to prevent the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, an unprecedented amount of resources have been devoted to inventing and producing COVID-19 vaccines. However, health (mis)information obtained from the internet may contribute to vaccine hesitancy, which was identified as a significant threat to global health by WHO (Puri, Coomes, Haghbayan, & Gunaratne, 2020). Compared to this, mainstream media is still an essential tool for citizens to receive more reliable information. Accordingly, since vaccination is a controversial issue, how mainstream media reported the Covid-19 vaccines in different countries is worthy of being explored. This study focuses on news reports from reputable news organizations, i.e., *People's Daily (Renmin Ribao)* in China and *The Guardian* in the UK, themed on "COVID-19 Vaccines" during the period from 1st December 2020 to 15th September 2022. Drawing on the topic modeling method with LDA and framing analysis, this paper intends to explore the similarities and differences in frames on both media and the changes in the news frames in the past couple of years.

Firstly, 3,498 news reports from *People's Daily* and 4,897 from *The Guardian* were found by using python. Secondly, LDA was adopted to examine the most appropriate number of topics. Both media were shown to be capable of being separated into three phases but with different split nodes. Finally, a total number of 254 news reports from *People's Daily* and 268 from *The Guardian* were gained by using an every-other-day model to ensure the accuracy and consistency of data (Riffe, Aust & Lacy, 1993). The framework was obtained by combining the existing studies in the news frame (e.g., Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Luther & Zhou, 2005) with the topics and main keywords gained from LDA. Coding with the tool Nvivo, the data was distributed into three levels. The results demonstrated that both media, when using the public health framework, *People's Daily* focused more on reporting other countries that had received donated Chinese vaccines and praised their value. In contrast, *The Guardian* reported additional content themed on equality issues in vaccination and fake news. Besides, *The Guardian* used the individual interest framework significantly more than *People's Daily*, which focused more on national and governmental levels. It is also interesting to note that *People's Daily*, in the economic consequences frame, emphasized cooperation with other countries and the contribution of China's epidemic prevention policy, vaccine donation, etc., whereas *The Guardian* was solely concerned with the influence of the vaccine itself.

The news on the Covid-19 vaccines, in this case, obviously goes far beyond the public health issue itself, economic and political factors play essential roles in the news framing. *People's Daily*, as a "mouthpiece" of the CCP, is tending to be used as a "strategic political propaganda" tool in the international communication field. Hence, its content must be in line with national policy, assisting China in constructing a good "national image" in the world, acting as a "symbol" that signifies the state's presence. *The Guardian*, in contrast, is one of the most influential and popular news agencies in the UK, which belongs to the left-wing party (Vessey, 2005), standing for a liberal-democratic newspaper. Thus, the content tends to be more diverse and liberal and has more democratic rights than *People's Daily*.

Key Words

COVID-19 Vaccines, LDA, News Frame, People's Daily, The Guardian

Can incidental suffering exposure on social media promote manifest political participation of Chinese college students? The mediating role of security perception and the moderating role of discourse opportunity perception

Authors

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Abstract

Miserable suffering is often the trigger for political protest, and college students have always been an important subject of the political protest movement. Therefore, this study focuses on exploring whether incidental suffering exposure to social media can promote manifest political participation in Chinese college students.

Based on the protection motivation theory, the theory of discursive opportunity structures, and the analysis of the environment of democracy movement toward authoritarian China, we extract the perception of security and the perception of discourse opportunity, two key factors of manifest political participation in the Chinese context. And we propose the following hypothesis: (1) There is a positive relationship between incidental suffering exposure to social media and manifest political participation in Chinese college students. (2) Security perception plays a positive mediating effect. (3) Discourse opportunity perception plays a moderating role. Based on the hypothesis, we construct the manifest political participation model of incidental suffering exposure to social media.

To test the hypothesis, we conducted an online questionnaire survey (N=537) among students from top universities in China, mainly collecting data on five aspects including the above four concepts and basic population information. Incidental suffering exposure on social media refers to passive or "unintentional exposure to suffering events" on social media. Manifest political participation refers to the form of political participation aimed at influencing government decision-making (Ekman & Amna, 2012). The above two concepts mainly investigate frequency. In addition, the security perception of this study refers to the security judgment on manifest political participation after exposure to suffering, which mainly measures two dimensions of immediacy security and anticipatory security (Zheng, 2020). The perception of discourse opportunity refers to the judgment on discourse opportunity in the visibility, resonance, and legitimacy of the suffering events in China (Koopmans, 2004a).

Through empirical analysis of the data, it is found that: Firstly, the interviewed college students had high incidental suffering exposure (M=4.1), low manifest political participation (M=2.1), high immediacy security perception (M=3.86), low anticipatory security perception (M=2.24), middle visibility perception in discourse opportunity perception (M=3.05), and high legitimacy perception (M=3.79). Resonance perception was low (M=2.73). Secondly, incidental suffering exposure and manifest political participation in Chinese college students present an "inverted U shape". Too

much suffering exposure can easily lead to suffering exhaustion and self-efficacy doubt. Thirdly, immediacy security perception plays an insignificant role, while anticipatory security perception plays a dominant role in security perception, showing a positive mediating effect. Finally, the visibility and legitimacy of discourse opportunity structure in the Chinese context are not significant. In the social media encounter suffering contact, the influence of resonance perception and anticipatory security perception on manifest political participation is more significant.

The contribution to this study is mainly embodied in the construction of manifest the political participation model, and the provision of some theoretical guidance on how to promote the improvement of manifest political participation behavior aimed at solving human suffering.

Key Words

Incidental suffering exposure;Social media;Manifest political participation;Security perception;Discourse opportunity perception

The Effects of Partisan Media Use on Misperceptions of COVID-19: Examining the Communication Mediation Model in the United States

Authors

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Abstract

Introduction

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, mounting misinformation regarding the sources, harmfulness, and authenticity of the virus have jointly contributed to an “infodemic,” deepening the post-truth crisis (Zarocostas, 2020). In the U.S., partisan media are deemed responsible for enhancing people’s misperceptions. This study aims to explore the conditional indirect effects of partisan media use on COVID-19 misperceptions, with message derogation as the mediator and political ideology as the moderator.

The theoretical framework of this study is the communication mediation model (i.e., O-S-O-R model), which is a heuristic framework that explicates how media messages influence perceptions and behaviors. The stimuli (i.e., “S”) refer to the reception of the media messages per se; The “O¹” is a moderator denoting individuals’ cognitive and motivational characteristics; The “O²” is a mediator that appears between the reception of message and the responses; While the response variable pertains to people’s perceptions, knowledge, or behaviors (McLeod et al., 1994).

In the U.S., the Fox News is regarded the right-wing blogosphere while MSNBC conventionally the in-party source of the Democrats. These outlets are committed to disseminating framed and slanted stories to advance the political agendas and interests of their affiliated parties (Eveland, 2001; Weeks et al., 2021). Rich credence has been lent to bolster the negative effects of partisan media consumption on actual knowledge of public affairs, including the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, it is hypothesized that partisan media use has a positive effect on COVID-19 misperceptions (**H1**).

Furthermore, the mediating variable, message derogation, refers to the extent to which people see general information as distorted or overblown. Research showed that consuming slanted news contributed to a derogatory attitudes toward non-partisan sources (Roberto et al., 2021). Hence, it is hypothesized that partisan media use would first lead to strengthened people’s derogation toward COVID-related news in non-partisan media, which in turn facilitates misperceptions (**H2**). Additionally, this study explores whether the main and the indirect effects would vary across individuals of different political ideologies (**H3** and **H4**).

Methodology

This study utilizes the survey methodology. The online survey questionnaire was administered through Qualtrics between October 1st and 15th, 2021. Participants residing in the U.S. and aged 18 and above were recruited from MTurk, a crowdsourcing platform. A total of 1,004 respondents

participated. Upon removal of missing values and invalid samples, 908 final samples were returned for analysis.

Endogenous variables include Fox News use ($M = 3.57, SD = 1.22$), MSNBC news use ($M = 3.61, SD = 1.12$), COVID-19 misperceptions ($M = 3.47, SD = 1.09, \alpha = .95$), political ideology ($M = 2.54, SD = 1.38$), and message derogation ($M = 3.63, SD = 1.08, \alpha = .91$). Exogenous (control) variables are demographics, including age, gender, race, education, and income. Hayes' (2017) PROCESS macro models with 5,000 bias-corrected bootstrap resamples and 95% confidence intervals (CIs) were performed to examine the hypotheses.

Results

Findings suggested that Fox News use and MSNBC news use were both positively associated with misperceptions ($b_{Fox} = .52, p < .001$; $b_{MSNBC} = .36, p < .001$), H1 is supported. Moreover, message derogation was positive mediator for the main effects of partisan media use ($Effect_{Fox} = .29, 95\% CI = [.2504, .3404]$; $Effect_{MSNBC} = .17, 95\% CI = [0.1214, 0.2233]$) on COVID-19 misperceptions, lending full support to H2.

Furthermore, both the effects of Fox News ($b = .13, p < .001, 95\% CI = [.0986, .1540]$) and MSNBC news use ($b = .11, p < .001, 95\% CI = [.0778, .1417]$) on misperceptions were moderated by people's political ideology. The moderation also holds when it comes to the indirect effects on COVID-19 misperceptions ($Index_{Fox} = .07, 95\% CI = [.0423, .0908]$; $Index_{MSNBC} = .06, 95\% CI = [.0339, .0922]$), Namely, the effects of partisan media use on misperceptions were greater among those leaning liberal, which bolsters H3 and H4.

Conclusion

Grounded in the communication mediation model, this study found that in the U.S., frequently consuming Fox News and MSNBC news, two major partisan media, both intensified COVID-19 misperceptions, while the effects were stronger among liberals. Moreover, it is found that partisan media use first triggered people's derogatory attitudes toward COVID-related news in non-partisan media, which in turn deepened misperceptions.

Key Words

Partisan media, COVID-19, misperceptions, communication mediation model, ideology, message derogation

More Social Media Platforms Used, More Political Participation? The Roles of Discussion Heterogeneity Preference and Ideological Extremity

Authors

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Abstract

While using multiple social media platforms has become increasingly common, little scholarly attention has been paid to the political consequences of the use of multiple social media platforms. Motivated by the spiral of silence theory and cognitive dissonance theory, and inspired by prior research on political consequences of cross-cutting exposure and cross-cutting discussion, the present study sought to explore how using multiple social media platforms affects people's political participation and examine the mechanisms behind the effect. Analysis of 3,066 valid cases of the 2020 ANES Exploratory Testing Survey revealed a positive association between the number of social media platforms used and political participation, and the effect was partially mediated by discussion heterogeneity preference, which refers to the psychological predilection of discussing with people having different opinions. Moreover, the indirect effect of multiple social media platforms use on political participation via discussion heterogeneity preference was conditioned by ideological preference. For ideologically extreme people, using more social media platforms increased their discussion heterogeneity preference, which further facilitated political participation. On the contrary, for ideologically neutral individuals, the increase in the number of social media platforms used led to lower levels of discussion heterogeneity preference, which inhibited political participation.

Key Words

social media use; political participation; discussion heterogeneity preference; ideological extremity

Coming in from The Cold: Sweden Democrats' Campaign Communication Developments 2010-2022

Authors

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Abstract

The right-wing populist Sweden Democrats' campaign communications during the National Election campaigns 2010-2022 are to some extent characterized by the same distinctive features, such as heavy reliance on distinctive direct communication channels (political television ads, postal information to voters), less developed news media strategies and very high activity on diverse social media platforms. At the same time, the party campaign budget has increased significantly due to state budget party financing rules (based on parliament strength since previous elections). This has allowed the party to organize the campaign differently on multiple platforms and facilitated the use of a broader arsenal of campaign methods and strategic tools.

This study compares The Sweden Democrats' campaign structures and campaign strategies during the four latest national election campaigns in Sweden, both with regard to internal changes of priorities and campaign tools within the party and in comparison to the development of campaign communications within other political parties in the parliament during the same period.

Theoretically, the study relates to the concepts of campaign professionalization and populist political communication styles and asks whether The Sweden Democrats' campaign communication illustrates a possible transformation of true populist party campaign style of communications into a more professionalized way of campaigning alike most political competitors. Methodologically, the study is based on pre- and post-election party surveys as well as personal interviews with party secretaries and campaign managers in all political parties represented in the Swedish parliament 2010–2022.

The preliminary results indicate that Sweden Democrats' campaign communications are becoming more professionalized and streamlined as the party becomes more successful and need to target new segments of the electorate.

Key Words

campaign communication, professionalization, Sweden Democrats, populism

The visual and textual frames of German politicians' personalization on Instagram

Authors

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Abstract

Background: Politicians increasingly use social media to interact with the public by posting their daily activities and opinions (Meeks, 2016; McGregor et al., 2017; Metz et al., 2019). A growing number of researchers argue that in some mature democracies, electoral judgments are more and more based on personal non-policy factors rather than purely programmatic ones (Clarke et al., 2004; Hacker, 1995; Kendall & Paine, 1995). The narrow conception of personalization proposes individualization (focuses on specific candidates or politicians) and privatization (depicts politicians as private individuals) (Adam & Maier, 2010; Holtz-Bacha et al., 2014; Van Aelst et al., 2012). However, current researches analyze politicians' personalization based on either text or images posted on media, there's limited empirical evidence in the multi-modal context. Therefore, this study aims to investigate (RQ1) what visual topics and frames politicians use on Instagram? and (RQ2) how politicians embed visual frames and textual frames in multi-modal contexts. The findings will help develop the political personalization theory and provide strategies for politicians to show personal images on social media to achieve their career aims.

Methods: This study collected 2,576 Instagram posts with 5,606 images from 20 politicians' Instagram accounts from 26.09.2020 to 26.09.2021. Politicians were randomly selected from the German Bundestag. Regarding RQ1, object detection technology is adopted to identify objects in pictures first, followed by agglomeration subgroup analysis to cluster images into topics. Under the guidance of the political personalization theory, the author summarized visual frames from the distilled topics. Regarding RQ2, the 30 most frequently used hashtags for each image topic were selected to detect multi-modal frames.

Results: 12 image topics emerged in this research, including posters and selfies, text content, meetings and speech, natural scenery, campaign events, eating and drinking, visiting, interviews, music, military, animals, and sports. Four visual frames are further summarized, including affinity image frame, activity scene frame, information content frame, and professional image frame. Three multi-modal frameworks were summarized based on the consistencies between visual frames and textual frames, which are picture-text consistent frame (both focus on individual and professional images), picture-text balance frame (text describes deep meanings on images to show the professionalism of politicians), picture-text conflict frame (combine beautiful pictures with serious political slogans).

Conclusions: It can be said that politicians' strategy is to use picture symbols to highlight individuals and to use text symbols to highlight occupations, which is inseparable from the essential properties of picture information and text information. As for the multi-modal frames,

the picture-text balance framework is used the most, and it reflects a more objective, serious, and deeper information transferred from picture to text. It intimates that visual and linguistic information both hold mode-specific communicative potentials, their interaction shapes the frame meanings. Frameworks relying on only one information type can have more bias. This study dresses the importance of multimodal frameworks, integrates individualization and privatization into a measurement framework, and provides a method of the normative standard used for evaluating personalization in a multimodal context.

Key Words

Political personalization, multimodal frames, Instagram, picture analysis

Reshaping the Contours of Digital Political Discourse: The Consumption, Perception, and Potential Implication of Digital Political Satire among Youths of India

Authors

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Abstract

Post entering the digital landscape, the pervasiveness and appreciation of political satires seem to be thriving substantially, as apparent from the hike in the social media follower base of the associated satirists. The prior research and investigations preceded the perpetual anxieties and controversies among political communication scholars pertaining to the dichotomy between the consequences of the consumption of hard news and entertainment genres for political discourse (Holberts, 2005; Young, 2004, 2006; Baum & Jaamison, 2006). While some studies favor the supremacy of the conventional hard-news format (McLeod et al. 1996; Prior, 2003) a contradicting section of scholars advocate the competence and implicit quality of political humor formats (satires, parodies, comedy, etc.) to influence the overall political engagement and sophistication of the consumers (Baum, 2002, 2003; Xenos & Becker, 2009; Gregorowic, 2013). Amidst this general lack of consensus, the current study intends to estimate the predictive power of the exposure of the mediated political satire in the context of the distinct socio-political milieu of the world's largest democracy. Since digital political satire remains in the nascent phase in India, it becomes imperative to determine the consumption and acceptance of the online content of political humor. Hence, the study, while employing the descriptive research design, investigates the consumption habits and perception of the mediated political satire among its consumers in India. Since the available literature proposes the impact of the satirical items to be more profound on young adults than older people (Boukes et al., 2015), the survey has been conducted on young adults falling under the age group of 18-35 years. Besides, provided that digital political satire is predominantly perceived as an urban-centric phenomenon (due to higher internet penetration) a total of 400 responses have been collected from two first-tier metropolitan cities of India, i.e. Delhi and Bengaluru. The findings reveal that online contents of political satires are the third most preferred source of political information/opinion. Besides, it validates the political informational utility corroborated with the entertainment function of such content. However, the quality of consumption remains a cause of concern as more than 50% of the respondents agreed on watching less than half of each of the contents of political satires (in the case of videos and satirical articles) on social media platforms. The findings also conclude the positive perception of digital political satires (concerning the credibility, reliability, information, and entertainment quotient, etc.) among Indian youth. Hence, the study is indicative of the positive implication of the exposure of

digital political comedy, which substantially holds the potential to expand the horizon of as well as to reshape the contemporary digital space.

Key Words

Digital Political Satire, Digital Political Discourse, Consumption of Political Satire,

Why corruption emerges in China? The strategic framing of the Communist Party in propaganda documentaries

Authors

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Abstract

Numerous studies on why corruption emerges in China have examined factors on the individual, institutional and cultural levels. Adopting the political science perspectives, many of them gauge the scientific causes of corruption with the hope of generating solutions for the social problem. Few, however, have investigated the strategic framing of the Communist Party of China (CPC) on what causes corruption, which is fundamentally different from those looking for scientific causes of corruption but could benefit tremendously from their findings.

The scarcity of research on the framing of the CPC on the emergence of corruption was mainly a result of the researchers' difficulty in gaining access to the ethnographic data via the qualitative methods of observation and interviewing and to the official documents, most of which are non-open accessed.

The eight broadcasted propaganda documentaries on anti-corruption in China, which were jointly produced and released by the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection of the CPC and the China Central Television (CCTV) between 2014 and 2022, is a precious opportunity for us to look into the following underexplored question: how does the CPC strategically frame the emergence of corruption by government officials?

By conducting a critical discourse analysis on the eight TV documentaries, which altogether contain 38 episodes, as well as several existing official documents on anti-corruption including CPC leaders' open speeches, the study aims to understand further the motivations and logics of the CPC in framing the corruption issue, which is highly negative for the legitimate ruling of the party.

The analysis show that CPC has been emphasizing on the transformations and decays of the individual cadres for the emergence of corruption, i.e. the individual level factors. However, the documentaries touched nothing on the absence of the monitoring and supervision at different levels of government and the responsibilities of the party committees (i.e. the institutional level factors), which however could be found in the official documents released in or before 2014 but not after. This indicates that there was a shift of the CPC in the framing of the causes of corruption in around 2015, the third year after Xi Jinping became the general secretary of the CPC and the middle year of his first term of office as president of the People's Republic of China.

The shift of focus on the framing of corruption's causes from the institutional level to the individual level factors also indicates that the CPC was dedicated to construct a "savior" image of the CPC and the Central Government (CG) for the Chinese people. With this image, they sent the following messages that the CPC and the CG: 1) are always standing with the people and are against the evil

corrupt officials; 2) understand people's concern and is finding ways to solve it; 3) determine to fight against corruption and to reform and 4) emphasize the rule of law and the strict governance of the party. These findings provide insights for people to understand how the CPC regime could strategically frame crises to maintain its legitimacy.

Key Words

strategic framing, corruption, propaganda documentaries, Communist Party of China

Hate Speech, Citizenship and the Identity of Muslim Superstars in a Time of #BoycottBollywood: Narrative Framing Analysis

Authors

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Abstract

With the shift in the Indian media landscape in the last two decades, the Indian fandom culture is reconstructed. Due to the growing synergy between traditional and digital platforms, Bollywood stars have emerged as 'transmedia celebrities' (Mitra, 2020). The vulnerability of Bollywood stars and the Bollywood film industry has become evident in the last two decades due to the easy accessibility of the private, off-screen persona of Bollywood stars to the common mass through social media platforms. Most interestingly and significantly, the religious affiliation of Muslim stars makes them more susceptible to online trolling in the age of religious and cultural nationalism, which uses Islamophobia by appealing to the fictitious collective consciousness of the majoritarian community. It is argued by multiple scholars that media platforms like WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram are utilized to satisfy and align the psyche of the ordinary Indian citizen with common consciousness through disseminating anti-Muslim beliefs, tropes, narratives, and images (Neyazi 2020; Banaji and Bhat 2019; Mirchandani, 2018; Waikar 2018, Udupa 2018; Mohan, 2015). In this critical context, Muslim celebrities are no longer just entertainers without any religious baggage at this pivotal sociopolitical juncture. This study also discusses how contemporary Indian majoritarian nationalism interacts with discourses on Bollywood cinema and stardom by questioning the Muslim superstars' allegiance to the nation. Adopting Richard Dyer's notion of "structured polysemy", necessitating the need to examine the star image in terms of 'the multiplicity of its meanings' (1998, 63), this paper also examines the Bollywood stars, who happened to be also Muslims, as star text and the significance of religion in shaping questions of nationhood and minority citizenship in the contemporary Indian public sphere. Examining the minority status of Muslim stars' and the question of their citizenship in this critical time, the current research situates the ordinary Muslims' position and status in the larger socio-political discourse of the country.

The current study uses narrative framing analysis to examine the textual rhetoric of the identity politics of the Bollywood Muslim superstars. Integrating qualitative textual analysis with data text-mining approach, the paper deconstructs and explores the amount and diversity of hate speech in the area of religious hatred on Twitter. Therefore, researchers have collected 50,000 tweets linked to #BoycottBollywood by using netlytic. Following that, the text mining method is employed to examine the text data to get a meaningful picture of the audiences' insights and sentiments. Following that, a survey of 250 respondents has been done to acquire information about the audience's views, beliefs, and opinions on how #BoycottBollywood has an impact on them.

Moreover, researchers have conducted in-depth interviews with critics and scholars to have a more nuanced understanding of citizenship and its connection to star text. Drawing on an exploratory study, the study situates hate speech as a culture of production. It will allow us to delve further into the social conditions of Muslim superstars in particular and the question of minority citizenship in general.

Key Words

Keywords: Vigilante Politics, Cancel Culture, #BoycottBollywood, Muslim Superstars, Hate Speech

Experiencing Political Advertising through Social Media Logic. A Qualitative Exploration

Authors

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Abstract

Political advertising's (PA) allocation in social media is rising in Western campaigns (Fowler et. al., 2020). Yet social media put forward a different exposure environment. No longer are audiences isolated and passive consumers of linear discourses from politicians; users can now engage with PA as prosumers, interacting with, sharing, and merging it with other discourses (such as entertainment). Given the scarcity of research on such possibilities, this paper explores how users engage, interact, and signify PA in social media. Theoretically, the concept of social media logic (Klinger & Svensson, 2014; Van Dijck et. al., 2018) provides a solid point of departure since it signals the properties of social media—popularity, programmability, datafication, and connectivity— that structure users' experiences (Van Dijck, 2013). Empirically, we carry out an exploratory qualitative inquiry, conducting six focus group sessions with users (n=36) from three states in Mexico during the 2021 federal campaigns. Findings show the crucial role of situated connections for advertising attention and attitude formation, a mismatch between the platform's media logic display and citizens' information needs, and the agency users' feeling to tame political content, for better and for worse. Thus, social media logic brings about new forms of user activity and engagement with PA not previously considered in the television era and in need of further research.

Key Words

political advertising; digital advertising; reception studies; social media logic

Structural consequences of multiple modernities in Latin American media systems. A theoretical proposal

Authors

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Abstract

Applying Hallin and Mancini's media systems theory (2004) to non-Western regions has been a challenge for scholars, partly because the former has roots in the historical trajectory of the West and cannot be transplanted. Since the media-politics nexus is tied to the modernization process, we recognize a divergent process in non-Western regions that combines Western institutional characteristics with local ones, and gives way to multiple modernities.

In this presentation, we expound the assumptions of a theory of Latin American (LATAM) media systems based on its particular modernization trajectory and link these to the consequences it has on the four system components proposed by Hallin and Mancini: journalistic professionalization, media markets, state intervention, and political parallelism. Our core thesis is that the four media modernization traits we put forth (see below) give those components a particular characterization unlike Western systems, and that is observable throughout LATAM.

In brief, the divergent modernization process in LATAM has four consequences for the media:

1. Under a postcolonial understanding, elites struggle to impose the media policy and model that best resembles that of the West, understood as the paramount journalistic practice. Hence, changes in elites in power give way to changes in media policy and models.
2. Colonial heritage gave way to a patrimonial and particularistic structure of power that manifests itself through clientelistic and instrumentalization practices of the media that pervade the region. The weakness of legal-rational authority and rule of law make these practices resilient
3. Unlike the West, the general differentiation process was conducted in Latin America by the State. Hence, it constantly interferes with the media, and the differentiation processes between media and the State are common.
4. The late integration of LATAM into global capitalism meant that some regions were left behind in their modernization process. This gave way to underdeveloped subnational regions and hence, media subsystems characterized by illiberal practices impervious to national changes.

These factors would have the following consequences on the components of Latin American media systems:

In terms of media markets, the centralization of power resources (1) and the weak rule of law explain the pervasiveness of clientelism and how it hinders market development since the markets are not sustained by competitors' practices but by the under-the-table arrangements with their patrons. Those factors also explain the high media concentration in the region, led by cronies close to the government. Furthermore, the struggle between elites for the dominant journalism model (2) creates an extra layer of media fragmentation because the media market is structured not only over ideologies and editorial lines but also over models of journalism, e.g., opinionated and literary, objective and watchdog, militant, etc. Subnational media markets (4) also exhibit abundant differences, namely, a deep disparity between strong urban centers and smaller provincial centers in terms of market and democratic performance. Taking into account the aforementioned conditions, weak local markets allow heightened government dependence and instrumentalization vulnerability.

As for professionalization, centralization (1) hinders professional autonomy since clientelist arrangements subordinate editorial lines. Moreover, the struggle for the journalism models (2) means the coexistence of multiple, divergent, and sometimes conflicting role orientations and journalistic ethos in one scenario. This can be termed as "multiple journalisms", that is, a variegated combination of western and local traditions of journalism in a given market. Further, state-driven differentiation (3) would induce the state to promote certain models of journalism instead of others through formal training, awards, financial support, etc. Finally, steep divides in local subsystems (4) make big urban centers more integrated with international practices and liberal journalism, whereas small urban centers tend to polarized pluralism and instrumentalization.

As for state intervention, power centralization (1) is what makes the media more susceptible to instrumentalization and state capture than other regions of the world. On the other hand, the struggle between elites (2) polarizes the fierce opposition between parties or factions for media models, policy, and regulation in formal spaces, such as Congress or the public opinion. Additionally, state-led differentiation (3) makes government intervention in the market and state media easier and stronger. Lastly, underdeveloped media subsystems (4) make a difference in the capacity of states to intervene. The well-funded and internationally backed media from rich urban centers are less susceptible to state intervention, but the media in small and underdeveloped regions are prone to it.

These assumptions are presented as hypotheses to be tested empirically, though we provide some observations and literature support that make them plausible and worth of further research.

Key Words

Latin America; Media systems; path dependence; multiple modernities

Articulations of the institutional and the popular in the construction of Europe: A discourse-theoretical analysis of Czech social media content

Authors

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Abstract

This paper studies how Europe is discursively constructed in content published on the social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter, in the Czech Republic. For this purpose, 600 Facebook and Twitter posts related to European issues are analysed, published by professional news producers, institutional and non-institutional actors. The social media posts were tracked using CrowdTangle (for Facebook) and Brandwatch (for Twitter), ranked on the basis of overall interactions and reach, and cover a three-month period (September-November 2021).

The research combines methods of quantitative content analysis (analysing 600 posts) and the tools of critical discourse studies (analysing a subset of 100 posts), theoretically supported by Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) discourse theory, and its later extensions (Carpentier, 2017). The research is also informed by the scholarly work on institutional and popular approaches to politics, culture and social organisation (Berger and Luckmann, 1966/1991; Scott, 1995; Williams, 1983; Hall, 1981; Laclau, 2005).

The analysis shows the specificity of the construction of Europe (partially connected to the period of study, as this was a pre-and post-elections period) through two mechanisms. First, we can find a series of reductions in the richness of the possible constructions of Europe. (1) Europe is constructed through Europe's/EU's institutions, much more than through an articulation of European people's voices, positions and identities. In other words, Europe's material-structural dimensions become emphasized. (2) Moreover, Europe is to a large extent equated with, or reduced to, the European Union, which is represented through a largely institutionalised prism, whether the social media posts are published by professional media, political agents or citizens. This implies that also citizens do not articulate themselves using a popular ('of the people'), grassroots discourse about Europe, but tend to replicate the arguments and positions of

institutional actors. (3) This institutionalised discourse about Europe also reduces Europe's citizens to an aggregation of national subjects ('Czechs'). (4) In addition, when (European) people are addressed, also by these citizens themselves, they appear mainly as powerless, passive recipients of benefits or harm offered/caused by the EU, and not as active agents who contribute to the construction of Europe.

A second mechanism is contestation: Our analysis shows that populist voices are particularly vocal and viral in the period examined, in addressing Europe. These voices, being to a large extent part of the political elite themselves, attempt to align with 'the people' by artificially distancing themselves from Europe/EU through arguments that favour a populist national subject at the expense of a European subject.

In our paper, we show—even though Europe is still present in online debates—how these mechanisms of reduction and contestation discursively weaken the signifier Europe, as a potential identity marker for Czech citizens.

Key Words

Europe, social media, Czech Republic, discourse theory, institutions, people

Towards a New Empiricism: Polarisations across Four Dimensions

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Abstract

There is a perception in many countries that public debate is increasingly polarised and dysfunctional. If so, this presents a critical danger to the democratic processes (McCoy & Somer, 2019). Yet there is little agreement about the drivers and dynamics of such polarisation, nor are different countries and their media and political systems equally affected by these developments; further progress in developing a more comprehensive understanding of these divergences is also hindered by the considerable overrepresentation of the United States and its unique (and uniquely dysfunctional) political and communicative environments in extant research on polarisation.

In addition, the literature on polarisation has seen a proliferation of the number of proposed types of polarisation in recent years: from conventional forms of ideological and issue-based polarisation through affective and identity-based polarisation (e.g. Iyengar et al., 2012) to interpretive and interactional polarisation (e.g. Kligler-Vilenchik et al., 2020), and beyond. It remains unclear how these may be clearly and systematically identified and distinguished by comparative empirical work, especially if such work is also going to take into account national and regional specificities. Considerable further conceptual and methodological advancements and consolidation are required.

Part of a panel that brings together inputs from several major research projects on polarisation from around the world, this paper presents the conceptual framework of a large-scale research project funded by the Australian Research Council that explores the drivers and dynamics of partisanship and polarisation in online public debate. We approach this challenge by identifying four major dimensions where evidence of polarisation may be found: we study polarisation in news coverage by investigating how different outlets frame the same topics and issues; we examine polarisation amongst news audiences by tracking which subsets of online news audiences engage with and share what news sources; we identify polarisation in online public discourse by mapping the patterns of engagement and interaction between participants in key topical debates; and we explore polarisation in online networks by analysing the clusters and discontinuities in the longer-term connections between participants in public discourse. We further draw on computational and manual content and discourse analysis to examine the rational, affective, and other discursive markers used and thus distinguish between possible forms of polarisation.

The project examines these patterns against the backdrop of the media and political systems of the countries where such debates take place, producing internationally comparative evidence that explores whether their different national settings (two- or multi-party systems; concentrated or diverse media markets; weak or strong public service media) correlate with divergent polarising tendencies. In doing so, we seek to restore some much-needed diversity to the study of polarisation, as a field that has been overly dominated in recent times by the attention paid to the pernicious polarisation evident in the United States during and after the Trump presidency.

Key Words

polarisation, partisanship

Ecological Dynamics of Political Polarisation on Twitter: Evidence from the Spanish Case

Authors

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Abstract

Social media is said to have fuelled political polarisation, the increasing distance between ideological groups in a given society. At the same time, social media data has become one of the main sources for scholars to measure this distance. The present work shows the results of the analysis of polarisation and community structure of political debates on Twitter in Spain. By analysing the two general elections in a row in 2019 (28 April and 10 November), we show: (1) the change in the ideological distances between clusters in the retweet overlap network (RON) (Guerrero-Solé, 2017), and (2) the change in the community structure of the whole network due to the irruption of the far-right populist party Vox. The main conclusion of the work is that, in an ecological dynamic, the irruption of a new species in the political environment provokes a reconfiguration of the relationships between the rest of the species or political groups and, simultaneously, an alteration of the distances between clusters. The results evince that polarisation is a dynamic phenomenon, that varies in time and is dependent on the context and the changes in the political scenario. The work is of particular interest because it shows the ecological dynamics of polarisation when it is a far-right party that irrupts in the environment. Finally, results are compared to those obtained in the two previous elections in Spain (2015 and 2016), in which Vox had no role in Spanish politics.

Key Words

elections, polarisation

Affective polarisation in the communication of political leaders in Brazil and Denmark

Authors

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Abstract

In this paper, we examine and compare the social media communication strategies of two major contenders in the Brazilian and Danish elections in 2022; Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro and Ignazio Lula da Silva with Denmark's Jakob Ellemann-Jensen and Mette Frederiksen. Our analysis focuses on the role of affective polarisation in the two election campaigns and the relationships between polarisation and an effectively binary, presidential system vs. a multi-party system without an elected head of state. These politicians are chosen as the leaders of the largest parties in the two countries, though their relative size and discursive as well as political dominance constitute another key difference between the example systems.

Using comprehensive datasets of the leaders' social media posts collected immediately before, during and after the elections, up until a government has been settled, we analyse how these political leaders communicate, particularly focusing on if and how they use affective polarisation as a way to garner support and/or detract from opponents. The aforementioned differences between the two political systems means we may presume differences in communications styles, as well as cultural differences in how (political) communication is performed. This paper examines this operationalisation of affective polarisation and thereby contributes to new understanding of the functioning of political polarisation and its connection (or lack thereof) to political and electoral systems.

As part of a panel on current research into polarisation and partisanship, this panel contributes to the ongoing development of our understanding of the functioning of these two factors in democratic elections. In particular, it furthers our understanding of the use of affective communication and its polarising effects in disparate democratic systems.

Key Words

polarisation, elections, affect

Individuals' Political Characteristics and News Media Trust: Evidence from China's Mainstream Media

Authors

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Abstract

Trust in news is important for the media system and even for the political system. Nowadays, news media in many countries is facing a declining level of trust. Media criticism has been on the rise in many countries. Especially mainstream news organizations are experiencing losses of public confidence. Trust is essential for the whole society, and the trust emergency of news media will be a risk for social stabilization. When people don't believe news media, they will choose to gain information from nonmainstream sources, and these contents haven't been checked by professional norms, which may lead to the spread of disinformation. Thus, it's necessary to find out what factors influence news media trust.

Literature review

News media trust is a complex concept, which includes trust in diverse objects: the news media system as a whole; news media as a public institution; media corporations or organizations; media types (e.g., newspapers and televisions); specific media outlets, brands, programs, or newsrooms; media coverage directed towards specific subject areas or concrete topics; and journalists. In China, there are some major centralized mainstream media, which influence public opinion in this country. Therefore, this study will test the trust in specific news media.

Many scholars have established diverse models and frameworks to identify the causes and factors that influence media trust. Fawzi et al. assumed that causes of media trust can be tracked to two paradigms: cultural theories (trust stems from interpersonal trust as a result of early individual socialization), and institutional theories (trust arises from the performance of institutions). Fawzi et al. also developed a framework to identify the individual- and societal-level causes of trust in news media, and tested individuals' political characteristics' influences on media trust. Political characteristics are common factors that affect people's trust in diverse organizations, and even in the authorities. This study will focus on the predictions of individuals' political characteristics on their trust in specific news media.

According to previous studies, four political predictors will be tested in this research: political trust, political ideology, political interest and knowledge, and external political efficacy. Trust in the news media is strongly associated with the way people's trust in political institutions. Individuals are more likely to trust media institutions that represent their political ideology. In addition, people's knowledge and political ability also affect their attitudes toward different organizations. Besides, age, educational level and income will be evaluated as three potential moderators.

Research design

This study will test Chinese public's political characteristics' influences on their trust in Chinese news media, and will take China's largest newspaper, People's Daily as an example. This study will use Prochazka and Schweiger's scale to test the above predictors.

This study will: (1) conduct a systematic review, conceptualize the definition of media trust, and identify the related predictors of media trust; (2) organize previous media trust frameworks, models and scales, and establish a new scale to test the associations between political characteristics and news media trust; (3) through a national survey to find out what political factors and moderator influence Chinese public's trust in news media.

Through this study, we could identify the predictors on China's mainstream news media trust, which will contribute to the solving of media trust risks in China. More importantly, this study will also extend the theoretical framework for media trust research.

Key Words

media trust; China; news media; political communication

Has Political Polarization on Twitter Increased with Bolsonaro's Presidency?

Authors

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Abstract

The impact of social media on political polarization continues to be a topic of ongoing debate in academic literature. While it is widely accepted that people on social media are more exposed to content that is politically-aligned with their ideological preferences — due to the influence of algorithms and the homophily of their social networks — the extent to which this contributes to increased ideological and affective polarization remains unclear and highly controversial (Kubin and Sikorski, 2021; Zhuravskaya et al., 2020). In a sense, the segregation of communication networks into separate homogeneous ideological circuits (echo chambers) can itself be considered a form of political polarization. There is currently no standardized method to measure this segregation. In this study, we adopt a measure proposed by Newman and Girvan (2004) and used by Conover et al (2011) to examine the segregation of retweet clusters in Brazil from 2018 to 2022. To ensure a standardized universe of analysis, we collected a sample of highly-retweeted Twitter accounts during political trending topics over the whole time period. These accounts were used as nodes, and other accounts that retweeted them were represented as edges to produce social graphs. As expected, given the political nature of the accounts, the results showed two polarized clusters, one with right-leaning content and the other with left-leaning content. We measured the separation of these two clusters and compared their evolution during Jair Bolsonaro's presidency. This was achieved by calculating the modularity of the best bipartition of each graph after removing isolated nodes. Our analysis showed a continuous increase in the segregation of the clusters from 2018 to 2022, with the index rising from 0.36 in 2018 to 0.46 in the last two years of our analysis. This suggests that Bolsonaro's propaganda-based governing style (Cesarino, 2022) may have exacerbated political polarization on Twitter in Brazil. Our work here provides further insight into the scope of political polarization in Brazil and complements a previous study that reviewed various quantitative measures of political polarization using public opinion surveys (Ortellado, Moretto, and Zeine, 2022). By measuring and comparing the evolution of cluster segregation on social media, we hope to contribute to the ongoing debate about the impact of social media on political polarization.

Key Words

Political Polarization, Twitter, Echo Chambers

Who are Influencing Our Expression: the Effect of Perceived Opinion Congruity on Willingness to Online Cross-Cutting Discussion

Authors

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Abstract

Background: Online cross-cutting discussion (OCCD) is a key ingredient of the deliberative democracy, given that it provides the opportunity to listen to and engage with diverse political ideas. Although studies have concerned about the influence of this experience on political participation, less scholarly attention has been paid to examining precursors of cross-cutting discussion. Spiral of silence theory predicts the binding of perceived opinion climate on expression, but the influence of multiple climates across various scenarios has not been given enough consideration. This study, therefore, focuses on how perceived opinion climate affects willingness to online cross-cutting discussion in different scenarios, with whom to discuss (strong ties/ weak ties) and where to discuss (public sphere/ private space). Our research background is the widespread social debate over the Chinese policy of restricting the movement of COVID-19 positive cases in 2022, given that cross-cutting discussion has not been sufficiently examined in the China's political system and the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Objectives: Based on our case, we studied two OCCD-related variables, including (1) individuals' perceived opinion congruity with familiar friends or strange netizens, (2) individual attitude strength. Attitude strength is seen as stable in OCCD, equated with ideology, but the effect may not be significant in short-term discussion of political matters. We examined how both variables were related to the willingness to online cross-cutting discussion, and how the association between perceived opinion climate and OCCD was moderated by attitude strength. Four scenarios, friends/netizens × public/private, were presented.

Methods: A web-based, cross-sectional survey was conducted. A total of 366 people (mean age 22.30, SD 2.93years; 174/366, 47.54% female) who resided in the mainland China were included in the study. 3-step hierarchical regression analyses, and non-parametric tests, were performed to analyze the data.

Results: (1) The limitations of social scenarios need to be considered when examining the influence of perceived opinion climate on online cross-cutting discussion. The willingness to discuss, privately with netizens ($\beta = -.123$, $P = .015$) or publicly with friends ($\beta = -.158$, $P = .003$), is negatively associated with individuals' perceived opinion congruity with netizens. No significant effects were predicted in other groups. (2) Attitude Strength hardly influenced the willingness to OCCD. (3) Online cross-cutting discussion with strong ties may occur more when, however,

individuals were more concerned about the differences in their own attitudes and perceived opinion with weak ties.

Conclusions: The present study provided preliminary evidence that perceived different opinion climates was a predictor of online cross-cutting discussion in China's social system and the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, negatively correlated but with scenario restrictions. While more accustomed to discussing political issues with strong ties, the public would be more sensitive to the opinion climate with weak ties. Once a strong disagreement was perceived, it was likely to turn to private argument with netizens or to seek public discussion with friends. We call for more concern about the specific causal mechanisms between cross-cutting discussion and the multiple opinion climates, to examine the precursors of deliberative democracy.

Key Words

online cross-cutting discussion, opinion climate, deliberative democracy, attitude strength, COVID-19.

Incidental exposure on social media and political tolerance toward minorities

Authors

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Abstract

This study theorizes that incidental exposure to political information on social media is also likely to foster political tolerance by inadvertently and indirectly promoting an understanding of political diversity and counterstriking the adverse effects of selective exposure on social media (Lu & Lee, 2018; Nanz et al., 2020; Valeriani & Vaccari, 2016). More specifically, this study examined whether incidental exposure to political information on social media is associated with political tolerance toward religious minorities through exposure to pro-religious-minority content on social media. Following the intergroup threat theory, it also examined whether perceived threat of religious minorities conditions the mediating relationship. This study investigated these propositions in the context of a partly free country, Pakistan—where religious minorities have been confronting major severe social and political issues (Raina, 2014; Shah & Nawaz, 2021).

Drawing on a representative survey of social media users in Pakistan, this study shows that incidental exposure to political information on social media is associated with exposure to pro-minority content on social media ($B = .238$, $SE = .049$, $p < .001$), which is, in turn, associated with political tolerance toward religious minorities ($B = .190$, $SE = .049$, $p < .001$). It manifests the democratic role of incidental exposure on social media in fostering political tolerance via exposure to pro-minority content (mediation index; $B = .045$, $SE = .015$, $LLCI = .018$, $ULCI = .077$, $T = 3.030$, $p < .003$). Hayes (2017) argues that an indirect effect is significant when the bootstrapped CIs do not contain zero. However, further analysis shows that perceived threat of religious minorities moderates this mediation (moderated mediation index; $B = -.022$, $SE = .009$, $LLCI = -.042$, $ULCI = -.006$, $T = 3.276$, $p < .002$). More specifically, it suggests that the democratic effect of incidental exposure on political tolerance supplemented by exposure to pro-minority content is only significant for those who perceive low ($B = .082$, $SE = .042$, $LLCI = .042$, $ULCI = .131$) and medium ($B = .051$, $SE = .024$, $LLCI = .024$, $ULCI = .083$) levels of threat from religious minorities in the country—not for those who perceive a high threat from religious minorities ($B = .017$, $SE = .016$, $LLCI = -.014$, $ULCI = .051$).

The capacity to compromise and respect the civil liberties of other social and political groups despite existing differences is a critical element for the well-functioning of a democratic society (Hassan & Shalaby, 2019; Mutz, 2006). Conceivably, the tolerant attitude toward the political activities of marginalized groups in society is more critical partly because they lack electoral power. In particular, political tolerance of religious minorities is a prime issue in Pakistan as a partly free

country (e.g., Karamat et al., 2019; Khan, 2013; Yusuf, 2012). Therefore, genuine political tolerance is vital for the country's democratization. In short, this study found that more social media incidental exposure to political information leads to more social media positive and/or unprejudiced stories about minorities, eventually leading to greater political tolerance of minorities in the country, but the relationship is insignificant for those who perceive a greater threat from religious minorities.

Key Words

social media, incidental exposure, religious minorities, political tolerance, survey.

Natural language and vote prediction in Twitter: The Mexican Case

Authors

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Abstract

Recently, surveys predictive capacity has been questioned because their results manifest in an unexpected opposite way or beyond error ranges. Thus, many researchers have devoted to inquire if social media content analysis could be more accurate and reliable on electoral preference. After reviewing our subject's specialized studies, we have identified an unfinished discussion, urgent for more academic work considering other contextual and linguistic features (Bilal, Gani, Marjani y Malik, 2019; Khan, et al., 2021), better research and programming techniques (Bermingham y Smeaton, 2011) and more in-depth lexicon impact (Gayo-Avello, 2011). Two research purposes were extended. The first one consists in designing and implementing a codifying and labeling model which allow -from Twitter natural language's linguistic and syntactic patterns- to meet the explicit and implicit vote orientation in presidential elections. The second is to develop a supervised automatic-learning algorithm to volumetrically identify Mexican users vote orientation. Methodologically, for the linguistic analysis of the explicit vote tendency tweets we mainly considered expressions in favor of the candidates, their parties or pre-electoral coalitions and allusive hashtags. On the other hand, for the implicit vote tendency tweets we built words sets based upon several ways to indirectly refer to the candidates. After a systematic search for Argument Structure, we identified a group of verbal words from which a vote intention can be inferred with syntactic-semantic criteria. Next, the algorithm was designed in a two-sense strategy. The first one lied on transforming linguistical criteria into a programming language, allowing to: 1) classify and establish a vote orientation and 2) build its graphical representation. The second one consisted in performing the previous procedure with artificial intelligence and natural language techniques to assert the algorithm's validity. This was made with a set of Tweets that, so far, have served as the experimentation base and for the codifiers and algorithm's training. After programming the algorithm, the initial results regarding the training set of Tweets showed similarity with the final result of the election. First place, Andrés Manuel López Obrador of the pre-electoral coalition MORENA-PT-ENCUENTRO SOCIAL; Second place, Ricardo Anaya of the pre-electoral coalition PAN-PRD-MC; and Third place, José Antonio Meade of the pre-electoral coalition PRI-VERDE-NUEVA ALIANZA.

Key Words

Natural language, algorithm, vote prediction, Twitter, Mexican Case

Personification and emotionalization of political communication: Visual content analysis based on vlog news in Chinese mainstream media

Authors

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Abstract

The arrival of the post-truth era has highlighted the importance of emotions in the political sphere. Propaganda method of “fact + emotion” have become a trend of political communication. In China, the mainstream media is the main subject of domestic political communication. Scholars have noticed that many Chinese media use a variety of personification symbols to create an affable media image for emotional communication. In the digital transformation of Chinese media in recent years, forms and contents of pop culture have flowed into the news production process. A news product that reports political news in the form of vlog has been produced. Interestingly, the charisma of journalists in vlog news is amplified, making political news more personalized and stylized. However, some studies point out that excessive personification in news may make mainstream media lose its seriousness and authority. Previous studies on the personification of news products are mostly characteristic summaries, lacking empirical analysis of the communication effects of personification strategy. The empirical attention to vlog news, a news product in the context of social media, is even less. This study builds a visual analysis framework based on the characteristics of vlog news to enrich the research theory and framework.

The questions in this study are: 1) What special role do journalists in vlog news play in political communication? 2) Does personification in vlog news have an impact on enhancing communication effect? 3) How do different personification content affect the effect of political communication in mainstream media?

Based on the theoretical perspective of “personification communication”, this study analyzes the visual content of 80 vlog news released by China Central Television (CCTV) from September 2019 to December 2022. Based on the core concept of personification communication, this study analyzes the communication effect by conceptualizing it into two categories: verbal symbol personification and non-verbal symbol personification. The results of the study found that: 1) the use of personification symbols can enhance the communication effect of vlog news. 2) the role of linguistic symbol personification is significant. The use of corpora such as Internet buzzwords and narrative styles of story and dialogue positively influenced the communication effect. 3) For non-verbal symbols, the use of eye-level and close shots, and the presentation of backstage scenes of journalists significantly enhanced the personification effect. 4) An interesting finding was that the bullet-screen culture rooted in the characteristics of social media made audiences and journalists to form quasi-social interactions, effectively promoting political participation.

In conclusion, vlog news implicitly conveyed news by showing daily images of journalists or other people related to news events. The micro-perspective of lived, backstage political events. Reporting political events from a micro perspective reflects the turn of political communication towards emotionalization and scenization.

Key Words

vlog news, political communication, personification, visual content analysis

Grassroots Illiberal Movements in the Cross-Media Milieu: Paving the Rise of Far-Right Politics in Bulgaria

Authors

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Abstract

“Are we not facing complete conceptual chaos, as almost anything—left, right, democratic, antidemocratic, liberal, illiberal—can be called populist, and populism can be viewed as both friend and foe of democracy?” asks Mueller (2016) in a critical analysis of the prevailing scholarly and public discourses on populism. This paper adopts the view that the rise to influence and power of far-right political parties espousing populist rhetoric – a trend observable across Europe, but also the US, Canada, and other countries around the world - cannot be properly understood without examining the connection between populism and illiberalism (Mudde, 2021, Mueller, 2016) on the one hand, and on the other – the germination and spread of illiberalism in the civic grassroots. Grassroots illiberalism is not triggered or caused exclusively by top-down demagogic rhetoric employed by political parties or leaders. It emerges from people’s lived experience based on multiple sources such as mass media discourses, popular-culture tropes and educational stereotypes, directly suffered economic deprivation, political disenfranchisement and democratic backslide. Not least, social media have offered affordances for users to congregate around previously suppressed ideas and to form potent echo-chambers reinforcing antiliberal, antipluralist and nationalist feelings and beliefs.

This paper employs concepts borrowed from studies of the media and social movements such as political, discursive and mediation opportunity structure (Cammaerts, 2012, 2018) to examine closely (1) the political and cultural context; (2) the discourses and (3) the practical use of social media for internal organization and rallying public support by three populist grassroots organizations with openly illiberal orientation in Bulgaria. One of them evolved into a political party and currently holds seats in Parliament. Based on interviews with leaders and members of these organizations as well as frame analysis of their online publications, the paper identifies three forms of grassroots illiberalism: radical-militant; strategic-institutionalist and banal. It reflects on the possible convergence and mutual amplification of these forms and the consequences for Bulgarian democracy and the geopolitical orientation of the country’s culture and politics.

Key Words

illiberalism, populism, cross-media, grassroots, social movements, far-right politics, frame analysis

The “Media-state capacity” in Media Development and Modernization: The Case of China

Authors

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Abstract

Orthodox political communication has focused on issues of the political election, governance, and the public sphere in western developed countries. However, there are various political systems in the global context. This paper takes China and its modernization as an example and intends to examine the media and political communication from the joint perspective of media studies and political science.

The western communication theories, from the Chicago School, Columbia School, and development communication, provide a rich theoretical analysis of the relationship between media and society. Nevertheless, in the context of developing countries' modernization after WWII, western communication studies unilaterally pursued social change from the “modern man” to the “modern society,” but neglected state-building as a prerequisite for modernization in developing countries. The absence of the role of the “state” becomes a “blind spot” in communication studies. In the field of political science, Theda Skocpol, Joel Migdal and other scholars reexamined the “state” in the past decades and proposed theories such as state capacity and state autonomy. Inspired by “bring the state back in,” this paper reviews state capacity theory and its “traveling” in the Chinese context. We find that although the media is not the most critical variable in state-building and state capacity, it plays an indispensable role as a bridge in the process of information dissemination and ideological integration. Furthermore, the media is also an organic part of state capacity.

During the transition from traditional to modern society in the past seventy years, China has established an alternative state system different from that of the west. This system has managed to promote modernization in this developing country with the largest population in the world, which makes it a typical case to study the media-state relationship. Based on historical and theoretical analysis, this paper examines the role of the media in China’s modernization process and attempts to construct a middle-range and practical theoretical model of “media-state capacity.” We proposed the four elements of “media-state capacity” – the capacity to deploy resources, the capacity to civilize and mobilize, the capacity to communicate, and the capacity for social integration. We also suggest three sources of “media-state capacity” – the state-led infrastructure development, the institutional coupling between the state and media, and state empowerment in the process of modernization. In the Chinese context, the isomorphism of media and the state has contributed to the efficient development of Chinese modernization.

In today's world, there are still many developing countries that need to modernize, and many of them are facing difficulties in state capacity and social integration. This study may go beyond the dichotomy of the state and media in the western social context, and provide an alternative approach to media development for developing countries and their modernizations.

Key Words

Modernization, media and state, state capacity, and media-state capacity

Post electoral violence and peace frames in newspapers. A comparative study of Kenyan and Zambian newspapers.

Authors

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Abstract

Peace frames have been used consistently in newspaper coverage of Kenyan elections from the disputed and violence-laden elections of 2007/2008 elections to the most recent relatively peaceful but tense elections of 2022. Likewise, the concept of peace journalism has grown in popularity in Zambia ever since the violent post-electoral protests of 2016. The application of peace journalism is therefore a topical matter in both Kenya and Zambia where ethnic wedges and diverse political interests have resulted in intense conflicts and flare-ups of violence during presidential elections. It is essential to investigate how journalists at *The Daily Nation* and *The Standard* which are Kenya's largest newspapers; and journalists at *Times of Zambia* and *The Mast* which represent diverse ownership and wide circulation in Zambia, implemented and perceived the use of peace frames during the elections of 2021 in Zambia and 2022 in Kenya. The research questions are, which peace frames were used by the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers in coverage of the 2022 Kenyan elections? Two, which peace frames were used by the *Times and Zambia* and *The Mast* in coverage of the 2021 Zambian elections? Three, how do journalists perceive the effectiveness of peace frames used in the coverage of the 2022 Kenyan elections? Four, how do journalists perceive the effectiveness of peace frames used in the coverage of the 2021 Zambian elections? A framing analysis of a purposively selected sample of newspapers published three months before and after the 2022 elections will be carried out and the findings will be supplemented with semi-structured interviews conducted with 20 journalists from the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard*. This will be contradistinguished with a framing analysis of a purposively selected sample of newspapers published three months before and after the 2021 Zambian elections and the findings will be supplemented with semi-structured interviews conducted with 20 journalists from the *Times of Zambia* and *The Mast*. This project is invaluable in augmenting the gap in the literature that examines how journalists perceive the use of peace frames when covering elections in violent-prone regions of Africa. There is also the practical utility of contributing to the development of more effective editorial policies as the perceptions of journalists are pivotal in determining how stories are crafted and which narratives or phrases are privileged and preferred. Similarly, the findings will assist in informing policymakers and academics in gauging the effectiveness of peace frames from the viewpoint of journalists who are key in crafting texts that incorporate the concept of peace journalism. The project also seeks to draw a comparative analysis of an East African country and a Southern African country which will shed light on whether context plays a role in how peace frames are implemented and perceived by journalists.

Key Words

#Elections #Peaceframes #Violence #Peacejournalism #Kenyaelections #Zambia

The Daily Mail Effect and beyond: Understanding the influence of news coverage on Official Development Assistance

Authors

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Dr. Ludek Stavinoha - University of East Anglia

Abstract

The world is facing an increasingly complex set of development challenges, exacerbated by sharply rising food and commodity prices, and the climate emergency, that are pushing increasing numbers of people into poverty. Official Development Assistance (ODA) is one of the primary mechanisms through which rich countries seek to address these issues, with potentially life and death consequences for recipients. How this money is spent – approximately 179 billion USD in 2021 – has become increasingly politicised and subject to growing contestation in news media coverage of/the mediated public spheres of many ODA donor countries. Yet the factors influencing its allocation – and the role of the media in particular - are remarkably under-researched.

In recent years, there has been a growing concern within the aid sector that ODA spending may be, as Molly Anders (2018) has reported, ‘growing too malleable to media whims’. Specifically, the concern is that aid donors are avoiding supporting certain kinds of development interventions because they might draw negative media attention. In the United Kingdom, for example, the term “*Daily Mail effect*” has been used to describe the anticipatory pressure civil servants feel to cut back on development spending or re-think particular programmes, for fear of being criticised in the right leaning newspapers. This phenomenon, if substantiated, has profound implications for the recipients of development funding. But it has not yet been interrogated by scholarly research.

Research which has been carried out in this area shows that news coverage and levels of ODA are strongly correlated. In one study, van Belle, Rioux, and Potter (2004:7) showed that ‘every additional article in *Le Monde* correlates with an increase of an additional \$66,640 in aid’. However, van Belle, Rioux, and Potter (2004) do not fully isolate the effect of the media or uncover the exact mechanism through which media influence happens. Furthermore, there have been no comparative studies examining this issue from the perspective of the policymakers involved in such decision-making.

The aim of our research is to understand RQ1: How do senior policy makers perceive the role and influence of the media on ODA allocation? We use the theoretical frame provided by “bureaucratic mediatization” in this study. This means paying attention to the process by which non-media institutions internalise and adapt to the rules, norms, and values of the media (Hjarvard 2008). Following this, we also ask RQ2: How do aid bureaucracies anticipate and respond to critical media coverage, and how might that influence their ODA allocations?

In this paper, we present preliminary findings about the influence of news coverage, and its limits, drawing on a series of semi-structured interviews with senior policy makers who oversee development aid decision making in the six largest ODA donors: US, UK, Sweden, Germany, Canada and the EU.

Key Words

Overseas Development Assistance, the Daily Mail effect

Polarising parliamentary discourse in Spain between 2000 and 2020

Authors

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Abstract

Polarisation has become one of the leading political phenomena of our time. This proposal is based on the idea that political leaders occupy a privileged position in social power structures that can motivate polarising processes. In recent years, Western countries have experienced an increase in the ideological polarisation of their political systems, which has led to parties and their sympathisers becoming increasingly far apart in the positions they defend (Abramowitz, 2017; Albaek et al., 2014; Barrio & Rodríguez Teruel, 2017; Gidron et al., 2018; Gutmann & Thompson, 2014; Iyengar & Krupenkin, 2018). These differences are socially relevant because for humans, group membership is a fundamental part of who we are. Individuals tend to form groups for many different reasons - hobbies, cultural background, race, identity, etc. - because in a group they feel more protected and, above all, understood.

Ideology plays an important role in this grouping process. Just as homophily processes favour the grouping of people with similar cultural backgrounds or similar hobbies, ideology also contributes to the formation of social groups (Bessi et al., 2016; Boutyline and Willer, 2017). The motives that lead an individual to join an ideologically organised group with a political objective can be varied and have been extensively studied in political science (Manin, 1998; Sartori, 2003).

Interest in polarisation stems from the increasingly fratricidal image of politics. Spain is no exception. In our country, political polarisation has increased over the last twenty years, especially since 2014, with the changes experienced by the party system with the emergence of new formations (Rama Caamaño and Casal Bértola, 2020; Rodríguez Virgili et al., 2022; Simón, 2021). The messages generated by politics respond to a logic that increasingly affects the ideological division of citizens. The confrontational dynamics driven by politics contribute to fostering the feelings of rejection that some ideological communities feel towards others (Binder, 2000; Maihold, 2017).

Consequently, the main objective of this research is to understand the evolution of political polarisation in Spain between 2000 and 2020 through the study of the speeches of the parliamentary spokespersons of the main political parties represented in the Congress of Deputies.

The main objective of the discourse analysis developed is descriptive and seeks to determine the tone used by the speakers, as well as the use of expressions aimed at appealing to the in-group and the out-group; a division that fosters the polarisation of the electorate. In addition to the candidates' speeches, the answers and counter-answers given by the spokespersons of the main

political groups are also analysed. For this selection, an electoral criterion was used - more than 6% of the votes at national level - as well as a criterion of political relevance, which, according to Sartori (2003), leads to the inclusion of those formations that play a relevant role in elections and influence the balance of power in Parliament.

The discourse analysis of the 175 parliamentary speeches reveals an increase in ideological and affective polarisation in Spain. In addition, natural language processing techniques, text analysis and computational linguistics in Python enrich and reinforce these findings, while allowing us to study the sentiment and hostility of the selected speeches.

Key Words

Ideological polarisation, Discourse analysis, Parliamentary discourse, Political Communication, Spain

Digital activism in favour of minority languages: analysis of hashtivism in Korrika, the world's biggest language festival

Authors

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Abstract

Korrika is a popular protest march held in Euskal Herria (northern Spain), in support of a minority language such as Basque (*euskera*). It is considered the most popular, participatory and influential event in the Basque cultural ecosystem. Thousands of people walk uninterruptedly, in relays, more than 2,500 kilometres over eleven days.

In our digital society, this physical and in-person event has a notable reflection in the virtual world of social networks, where opinion leaders and viral content contribute to build collective identities. The aim of this research is to analyse the digital conversation in order to detect the main actors driving the conversation, the most shared content and the presence of possible hate speech according to the language used. To this end, a methodology designed ad hoc for social research is used, which combines computational methods such as Social Network Analysis applied to digital social networks, on the one hand; and on the other, Descriptive Content Analysis, which helps to put the signifiers and meanings obtained in their social and cultural context, from a more qualitative approach.

A sample of 52,210 tweets issued by 13,739 users during the 2023 edition (31 March to 10 April) with the hashtags #korrika, #korrika2022, #korrika22 and #hitzekin is used. The tweets are captured with Twitter API for Academic Research and Twarc, processed with OpenRefine and visualised with programmes such as Pajek, Gephi and Power Query (Excel).

The data show that the viral messages and images that are disseminated are reproduced in several languages and contribute to the construction of a collective identity such as the Basque identity, based on certain symbols and values. Furthermore, this study obtains information on the leaders of the conversation and the most successful contents, which vary according to the language used by Internet users. For example, hate speech or polemic focuses on one language, Spanish. It is thus corroborated that the use that cyberactivists make of different languages differs according to their objectives. English, for example, is used to give the event global significance, to spread the message to other global Internet communities and to foster ties of solidarity with Basque culture, especially with a minority language such as Basque (*euskera*).

This is a new way of doing social research with computational methods in the big data paradigm, which helps to understand the phenomenon of activism in the new media ecosystem. The methodology employed in this study has the potential to be replicated in other cultural, social and activist phenomena in the public space.

Key Words

Digital activism, Twitter, minority languages, computational social science, big data

Performing politics in TikTok - Comparative study of generation Z and Y politicians in Latin America and Europe

Authors

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Abstract

Visual social media platforms have gained popularity during the past decade, TikTok, a short-form-video-focused social media app, being one of the most novel and popular ones, especially among younger social media users and women (Carter 2023). In fact, 71 % of TikTok users are aged between 18-34 years (Statista 2023), making it an attractive platform for political parties and politicians to reach and connect with younger voters. Previous case studies on political parties' activity in TikTok have revealed that they mainly use it to showcase their political activity without focusing on nourishing their relationship with the users and suggest a future increase in a politainment style of content (Cervi et al. 2021).

In this paper, our aim is to study how young established, or promising politicians construct their TikTok performances. The focus is specifically on generation Z and Y politicians (18-41 years old) since they are the main users of the platform and also may be assumed to be more social media savvy than older generations.

Performance is a multidimensional mode of communication that articulates meanings to the audiences in many ways, e.g. through gestures, voice, props, and use of space. Politicians need to develop public performances to gain legitimacy in society (Alexander 2013) and turn that legitimacy into votes and power in an election setting. The aim of a performance is to create an emotional connection between the performer and audience and the performer and the performed text, and in this way to create cultural meanings through the performance for the audience.

In the study, we focus specifically on politicians in two geographical areas, Latin America and Europe, with the aim of comparing two regions with different political traditions and styles. The data includes 20 politicians who have established themselves in national politics and are also successful in TikTok in terms of a grand number of followers representing both genders and different political ideologies. The video data (n=600) was collected in 2022-2023 and is analyzed first with quantitative and qualitative content analysis in order to detect differences including visual, textual, and audio features, and platform-specific affordances. After this, the data is analyzed with performative analysis in order to include textual, visual, spatial, and vocal analysis.

Preliminary results show that the politicians analyzed use their TikTok accounts as a tool to reaffirm and bolster their personal profiles, by means of a direct and intimate approach to their followers. In terms of language and cultural differences, the speech rate is higher and body

language is more vivid in Latin American speakers compared to European speakers. Latin American speakers also tend to have more intimate TikTok videos than European speakers. Although there are not many differences in the patterns followed by generation Z and Y, some nuances can be observed in terms of gender, ideology, or regional background. Among the variety of styles using the platform (e.g, serious, playful, journalistic), the profiles studied clearly appeal to different types of viewers. However, speakers tend to have keen eye contact with the camera, i.e. their watchers and potential voters.

Key Words

TikTok, politicians, performative analysis, social media, Latin America, Europe

“We live in a sausage”: expression of political mistrust on Twitch political streams. A case study of France Télévisions’ channel during the 2022 French presidential election.

Authors

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Abstract

Although Twitch has been a streaming platform mainly used by gamers to show and discuss how they play massive multiplayer games, literature has stressed that political discussions can occur during Twitch chats organized for e-sports conventions (Ruiz-Bravo, Selander and Roshan, 2022). Moreover, political parties and politicians, but also media, have tried to use this new channel to expand their traditional audiences, especially during electoral campaigns. During the 2022 French presidential campaign, *France 2* – a public broadcast channel – launched a new kind of political interview on Twitch where the candidates faced two journalists who selected live questions written in the chat by viewers. The program claimed to be a direct discussion between candidates and citizens, with the journalists simply playing the role of mediators with the viewers. However, the chat was far more than a space where questions were asked. People used it to express themselves in various ways such as voicing political views or supporting a candidate. They could comment the interview or be engaged in a polyphonic conversation.

Social media have usually been a place for negative political expression (Mercier, 2015) from campaigning activists and citizens (Chavalarias, Gaumont and Panahi, 2019; Stephan, 2020). Therefore, we can assume that Twitch chat should contain criticism directed against the presidential candidates, or more broadly against the political system. In addition, many studies highlight the polemical nature of comments produced in other digital arenas such as Twitter. These 'polemical conversational spaces' (Jehel, 2018) often rely on testimonies and storytelling based on affect and emotion. The place of narratives, testimonies, and storytelling mechanisms should also be considered on Twitch chat.

Our study is based on direct observations during the live-streaming and an ex-post analysis of the data and metadata collected with TwitchDownloader for four interviews in January and February 2022 with the following candidates: Anne Hidalgo (Left-wing party, Parti socialiste), Eric Zemmour (Far-right party, Reconquête), Marine Le Pen (Far-right party, Rassemblement national) and Valérie

Pécresse (Right-wing party, Les Républicains). More precisely, the study focuses on 5031 comments: 4583 from the 77 more active viewers (who posted at least 40 messages in the chat during the four interviews) and 448 issued by a random sample.

Firstly, we propose to categorize the comments in three types: conversation with other viewers, challenging candidates or journalists by asking a question, or reaction to the interview (comment). Then, we focus on the comment category and explore it in a more qualitative way: how do the viewers express their opinions on candidates and journalists, and how do they interact when discussing media (broadcasting channels, political streaming, journalistic landscape), institutions (elections, representative system, government, political parties) or policies and political pledges? In the end, the study highlights the argumentative and emotional discourse schemes based on textual or visual modes of expression for the four selected political streams.

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Key Words

Twitch, citizen participation, political expression, media criticism, election, France

Understanding the influence of irregular political conditions on pre-election political engagement preferences

Authors

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Abstract

Between April 2019 and May 2021, Israel's citizens were called upon to participate in four general elections, an unprecedented situation in the country's history. Among the most noticeable features of the fourth consecutive round of elections was the unusual scope of intensive, grassroots oppositional activities that took place over several months: mass rallies and demonstrations in symbolic, as well as at dozens of bridges and crossroads across the country.

To better understand the unique situation of the fourth round of national elections in two years, this study examined variables that might have predicted voters' online and offline political participation during the campaign. It focused on the potential influence of voters' political trust and desire for political change on online and offline engagement patterns during Israel's May 2021 electoral campaign. The study examines the unique political situation and raises the question: Which of the two types of political engagement—online (using social networks) and offline—will be more common under political instability?

A representative sample of 540 Israeli participants were surveyed for this study. The sample was selected from an online panel through a quota sampling method, taking into consideration the demographic variables of age, gender, and education. Aged ranged from 18 to 90 ($M=42.93$, $SD=14.72$), and gender was evenly distributed; most participants were married (59%).

The results showed a significant difference ($t(df=504) = 14.45$, $p < .01$) between offline and online political engagement, with offline political engagement being higher than online political engagement. In addition, a significant positive correlation was found between voters' trust in the political system and both offline ($r = .31$, $p < .01$) and online political engagement ($r = .25$, $p < .01$). Similarly, a significant positive correlation was found between voters' trust in politicians and both offline ($r = .36$, $p < .01$) and online political engagement ($r = .34$, $p < .01$). Additionally, no significant correlation ($r = -.07$, $p > .05$) was found between the desire for political change and offline political engagement, but rather a significant negative correlation ($r = -.10$, $p < .05$) between the desire for political change and online political engagement.

Multiple linear regression was utilized to predict offline political engagement ($R^2 = 12.4\%$, $F(4, 500) = 16.81$, $p < .001$). The results showed that the desire for political change, trust in politicians, and trust in the political system were all significant predictors. Similar regression was performed to test

which variables predict online political engagement ($R^2=11.9\%$, $F(4, 500)=16.05$, $p<.001$). It was found that only trust in politicians significantly predicted.

Overall, findings suggest that online and offline political engagement are motivated by different sources as two distinct types of political behavior. According to the findings, the desire for change is more prevalent in offline political engagement than online political. Several explanations for this phenomenon may apply, among them: the repetitive nature of elections in a brief period might lead to disillusionment among voters regarding the efficacy of online activism, and the growing toxicity of the political discourse on social media has deterred voters from expressing their positions. The study's findings must be considered in light of the complex political context in Israel at the time.

Key Words

Political engagement, Political trust, Desire for political change, Online

Pandemic Communication in Times of Populism

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Abstract

Media serve as important sources of information about health, and their role increases during public health crises. We know that the way media select and present information during a crisis can have a significant impact on public attitudes and behaviour; it can encourage social cohesion and compliance with public health measures, or alternatively sow division and distrust (e.g., Van Bavel et al., 2020). However, less is known about how the presence of populist actors or attitudes changes this dynamic. Research on public health is increasingly acknowledging the adverse effect of populism on the successful management of public health crises (e.g., Hedges and Lasco, 2021), and it is therefore feasible to argue that the presence of populism can obstruct the ability of media organisations to engage in effective health crisis communication. It is also likely that the presence of populist politics, due to its reliance on anti-elite discourse and divisive rhetoric (e.g., Moffitt, 2020; De Vreese et al., 2018), may encourage polarized attitudes and distrust among citizens, making them more vulnerable to misinformation. But does evidence support these arguments? How and why do experiences vary across different countries, and across different types of populist leaders?

This paper presents the preliminary results of a comparative research project entitled *Pandemic Communication in Times of Populism (PANCOPOP)*, launched in 2022, which examines health crisis communication in the context of populist politics. Funded by the Trans-Atlantic Partnership involving an international team of twelve researchers based in five countries, the project examines the impact of populism on four aspects of the pandemic communication circuit during COVID-19: government-led health crisis communication, media policy, media coverage, and public attitudes. The fifth strand of the project takes a transnational perspective and analyses how the interaction between populism and pandemic communication was shaped by China and Russia's pandemic geopolitics. The focus is on four countries that were led by populist leaders during the pandemic,

and which capture different types of populist responses to the pandemic: Brazil, Poland, Serbia, and the USA. The project uses a combination of four key methods – elite interviews, media policy analysis, quantitative and qualitative media content analysis, and population surveys – alongside analysis of publicly available secondary data.

This paper will present a selection of preliminary insights based on the first two strands of the project, which examine government-led pandemic crisis communication and media policies during the COVID-19 pandemic, drawing on elite interviews, media policy analysis, and publicly available secondary data. Questions addressed will include: What was the relationship between political and scientific actors in processes of pandemic communication? Which actors and choices pushed toward polarization and partisanship, or toward solidarity, and what was the role of populist leaders in this context? How did media policies (e.g., freedom of expression and right to information, distribution of advertising) change during the pandemic, and what role did populist leaders play in these changes?

Key Words

COVID-19, health crisis, populism, communication, media policy

Changes in public attitudes towards political participation in the post-pandemic era

Authors

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Abstract

Over the past three years, the political landscape of the world has quietly changed amid the coronavirus pandemic. Among these changes, some countries have gone through the double test of epidemic and war (take Russia and Ukraine as examples), while others have been quarantined for several times in three years, greatly reducing domestic and international travel of their citizens (take China as an example).

Has the pandemic changed the public's willingness to participate in politics, or changed the public's attitude toward it? In the past three years, some changes have also taken place in the media in terms of content narrative, technological iteration and communication path, and the changes in the attitudes and willingness of the public to participate in politics after the epidemic are also reflected in their participation in and responses to some public issues.

This paper measures the impact of the epidemic on the change of public attitude towards political participation by digging out the comparison of discussions between Russia and China in the news related to international political issues before and after the epidemic, as well as interviews with some participants. There are also some important attitudinal measures that are used.

Key Words

Public political participation, Post-epidemic era, Attitude change

"People are Saying": Figleaves and the Mainstreaming of Mis/disinformation Online

Authors

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Abstract

Before 2016 there was a consensus in political psychology that national politicians in the US could no longer succeed if they were too explicitly racist (Mendelberg, 2001). This led politicians to use devices of coded and deniable speech (e.g., dog whistles) to play to voters' racial resentments without being too obvious. More recently, political success has been achieved by *openly and brazenly* appealing to racist and extremist sentiments. How have overt expressions of racism and falsity come to be accepted in the mainstream? What mechanisms are at play when this helps rather than hinders political careers? There has been a great deal of attention in recent years to the dramatic rise in and spread of blatant racism and obvious falsehood online. However, little empirical attention has been paid to the specific linguistic mechanisms that may facilitate this. This paper explores the rhetoric that allows speakers to "say the quiet part loud" without the perception of doing so, facilitating the mainstreaming of racism and falsehood in online communication.

Saul (2017, 2019, 2021) posited a novel linguistic device theorized to aid in the dissemination and uptake of messages of racial hatred and conspiracism online. After its namesake, a figleaf is a bit of speech that provides *cover* for that which might otherwise be easily recognized as blatant racism or obvious falsehood. Common figleaves include: "just asking questions," "people are saying," "just joking," and many more. Figleaves raise doubt that a norm has been violated, functioning to reassure uncertain audiences and allow them to deny that deeply held norms against racism and untruthfulness are being violated, thereby facilitating their acceptance and spread to the mainstream. Figleaves pose a particular danger to political discourse because they have the potential to change norms for what counts as acceptable speech. By providing cover for otherwise outrageous speech acts, figleaves can shift the boundaries of acceptable discourse and pave the way for more inflammatory speech.

Drawing on the philosophy of language, digital media analytics, and political communication, we employ a range of data analytic approaches—including NLP and corpus linguistics—to operationalize and validate a measure of figleaves. We assess two hypotheses relating to the theorized role of figleaves in the mainstreaming of racist and conspiracist discourse: 1) figleaves will be more prevalent on mainstream than extremist venues, and 2) messages with (versus without) figleaves will be shared more widely on mainstream venues. This allows us to assess the role of figleaves in the transmission of such messages outside of racist or extremist communities

and to identify which figleaves are most effective in spreading harmful mis/disinformation. We can thus better understand the justifications behind positive assessments of, and decisions to share those claims on various venues. In so doing, we will come to a greater understanding of a potentially very important method for the spread of racism and conspiracism. We hope this study will lay the groundwork for the exploration and development of effective techniques to identify and ultimately combat the workings of figleaves online.

Key Words

figleaves, speech acts, conspiracism, racism, mis/disinformation, social media, data science

Comparing National and Regional Media framing of 'Vizhinjim Seaport' Protest in India through the lens of Protest Paradigm

Authors

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Dr. Sarvesh Tripathi - Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University

Abstract

India is the largest democracy in the world, with a diverse, heterogeneous population and an equally diverse socio-political system. In such a complex democratic system, public action through protests, demonstrations, and strikes has become the norm for the people to express their grievances, question their governments, and make themselves heard. While the media that played a crucial role in the country's freedom struggle has become elitist, it remains an essential vessel for espousing the rights of common people and their pursuit of justice.

This study examines and compares the news coverage of protests against Vizhinjam Seaport by the fishing community of *Kerala*, who claim that the seaport will cause coastal erosion and, as a result, threaten their livelihoods. *Kerala* is the southernmost state of India, governed by the *Communist Party of India (Marxist)*. The state is distinct in that it has a long history of activism in which people have repeatedly stood up to caste discrimination, social and economic inequality, and the fundamental right to protest. The state has one of the highest literacy rates in the country, and people are often part of larger collectives like political parties, unions, neighbourhood organisations, and other influencing stakeholders (Kideckel, 2009).

For the study, media framing of the protest was analysed in the English websites of '*The Hindu*', a prominent media organisation with a nationwide presence, and '*Malayalam Manorama*', the most popular news organisation in *Kerala*. A qualitative frame analysis was undertaken of the news articles extracted from their websites, and the coding scheme was guided by McLeod (2007) and Dardis (2006). The study found that the coverage of both media organizations stuck to the Paradigm- a typical media phenomenon where the media focuses on negative aspects of the protest and therefore marginalises the protestors. The Indian media's over-reliance on official sources, as well as its emphasis on violent protestor acts, is a major concern. Media reporting on political back and forth draws away attention from the core issues of the fishermen's protest and makes the protestors a part of a larger political game. The results do show a certain variance in coverage as the regional '*Malayalam Manorama*' is found to be more sympathetic to the protestor's cause and that may have resulted in a more balanced coverage unlike that of the '*The Hindu*'. The results are in contradiction with the study done by Shahin et al. (2016), which said that Indian media does not adhere to the protest paradigm. The undermining of protest movements in a democratic country like India is also a barrier to achieving SDG 16, which aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Key Words

Protest Paradigm, Democracy, Social Protest, Public Action, Citizen Action

Varieties of information control in populist and authoritarian political regimes and conjunctures

Authors

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Abstract

Authors of the paper aim to explore how right-wing populists in power use various ideological, technical, personal and financial means to influence media systems, organisational culture(s), journalistic work as well as content in order to reproduce political and communicative hegemony in national political and media systems. Controlling the scope and types of messages combined with political pressures on journalists, influencing media owners, editors and managers as well as re-establishing favourable conditions for political self-presentation all remain crucial in continuous attempts to (re)create this highly interventionist information sphere.

Combining theoretical premises developed in Shoemakers and Reese's 'hierarchy of influence model' with recent extensive critical research on authoritarian right-wing populism, the paper explores numerous political, economic and technological forms of information control in various authoritarian-populist contexts: in Austria, Hungary, Slovenia and Turkey. Countries which intersect in some common historical transitions and political conjunctures also differ significantly and thus represent a fruitful ground for a comprehensive comparative media analysis: two postsocialist countries have a one-party historical experience, one country is not a member of EU, while Austria is one of the earliest cases of populists in power ("Haiderization" of politics) and one of the clearest cases of recent islamophobic populist backlash and democratic backsliding. Two countries have a long authoritarian and illiberal regimes in power (Hungary and Turkey), while two others, like Slovenia and Austria, experience populists in power interchangeably. All this historical transitions are reflected in idiosyncratic as well as partly comparable or similar media systems, generating similar or differing tendencies, processes, patterns and outcomes.

Using the data collected through in-depth interviews conducted with over 80 seasoned and experienced professional journalists and editors in all four analysed countries, while extensively coding transcripts with computational tools (NVivo and MAXQDA) to interpret the data we illustrate how and why control mechanisms experienced by the professional journalists in selected countries expand broadly and encompass an ever larger space of journalistic work. Control in authoritarian populist contexts, as paper shows, expands from micro to macro level of the media system and is disseminated at the individual, organisational as well as institutional level of journalistic practice. Information control encompasses individual threats and discrimination at personal, influencing changes of owners and editors at organisational and exerting financial as well as legal pressures while simultaneously establishing party-owned media outlets at the media field level. Various coping and resistance mechanisms are acknowledged as a sign of journalistic

reinvention of their profession while also serving as a broad proposal of wider journalistic confrontation with authoritarian populist regimes.

Key Words

authoritarian populism, journalism, information control, media system, hierarchy of influence

Between fact and illusion: An experimental study on acquiring political knowledge on social media

Authors

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Abstract

Social media platforms such as Instagram have gained importance in online news reception as more than four billion people worldwide use social media to stay informed (Montag & Hegelich, 2020); users are confronted with short news postings on current topics and events on a daily basis. However, it remains questionable whether such short news items, often referred to as *snack news* (Schäfer et al., 2017), actually provide the users with political knowledge or only the perception of being informed. A possible divide in factual and perceived knowledge is identified as *Illusion of Knowing*. Such an illusion would have implications on the formation and development of political views and processes thereafter such as e.g., voting behavior or political participation.

This study aims to gain an understanding of the gap between factual and perceived knowledge and observe the factors that lead to a potential difference in both forms of knowledge. To analyze the process of acquiring political knowledge, both, factors related to the news clips and personal/ motivational factors, are taken into account. News-related factors include personal relation to a topic, social relevance of a topic, and respectability of a news outlet; personal or motivational factors relate to elaboration, which in this case describes the processing of content and consequent knowledge-gain, and a person's need for cognition.

Students of German universities ($n = 322$) participated in an online experimental survey. The survey consisted of multiple questions assessing their level of elaboration and need for cognition, as well as the experimental design of a newsfeed that resembled Instagram's layout. To ensure comparability, the topics of the news posts were all thematically related to right terror. The students were randomly assigned to one of eight groups with either high or low personal relation to a topic, social relevance of a topic, and respectability of a news outlet. The different factors were manipulated by choosing news about right terror in Germany (high personal relation) or Sweden (low personal relation), posts with a high amount of comments as indicated underneath the respective post (high social relevance) or a low amount of comments (low social relevance), and a newsfeed either only containing posts by the German newspapers *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (high respectability) or *Bildzeitung* (low respectability). Afterwards their perceived and factual knowledge was assessed.

Results indicate that elaboration has a significant effect on knowledge-gain for both factual and perceived knowledge, and furthermore, higher levels of elaboration result in a higher Illusion of

Knowing. Factors related to a news post itself such as personal relation to a topic, social relevance of a topic, and respectability of a news outlet seemingly aren't as important in the prediction of a person's news elaboration. However, individual factors that are distinguished from the news post itself, such as a person's need for cognition, have a pivotal influence on the level of elaboration. This is crucial for the understanding of how persons perceive and elaborate news in an online environment and focus should shift towards a more individual and intrinsically motivated news reception to ensure political knowledge learning.

Key Words

Illusion of knowing, Political knowledge, Online news, Social network sites

Mapping the nodes of 'guerrilla' political communication in contemporary Zimbabwe

Authors

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Abstract

In November 2017, a coup in Zimbabwe overthrew the country's authoritarian President Robert Mugabe, and replaced him with his long-time ally and deputy, Emmerson Mnangagwa, who instantly pronounced his reign as marking a 'new dispensation' and the birth of a 'second republic'. Amid the euphoria that followed the coup, the new regime appropriated the mainstream media—both local and international—to present itself as open, democratic and radically different from its predecessor. In the months and years that followed, the 'new' political elite began to display the same autocratic tendencies of the old regime, characterised by brutal military crackdown of dissent and protest, suppression of free expression and the media, among other things.

In this context, this paper seeks to explore the ways in which citizens are appropriating digital media platforms to confront and 'talk-back' to the 'new' regime's official narrative of change. This in a context where a combination of a failing economy, political repression and broader technological changes have pared down the country's mainstream media. It is also in the context where the mainstream political opposition have weakened due to years of in-fighting and infiltration by the ruling party. The paper identifies two sites of counter-regime critique, namely a regular satirical programme called BusStop TV (run by two Zimbabwean women), and a one-man investigative journalism platform run by a local journalist and film-maker (Hopewell Chin'ono, Twitter: daddyhope). Both case studies have over the past few years become extremely popular in and outside of Zimbabwe and regularly attract harsh responses from the state through arrests and intimidation.

Building on burgeoning work around digital media and possibilities of alternative political communication in authoritarian contexts in the Global South, this paper seeks to bring to the fore the ways in which ordinary individuals are nibbling away at the communicative colossal of state power through deploying small and relatively simple digital tools and interventions. The study is mindful of the pitfalls of deterministic approaches to the uptake of digital media, and engages the case studies under research from a more social constructivist perspective. Methodologically, the study employs a combination of social media content analysis and in-depth interviews with the producers of the two platforms under study. As the study is still ongoing, we anticipate that the findings will point to both the possibilities and limits of counter-hegemonic political communication in an authoritarian political context in the digital era.

Key Words

Activism, digital media, Zimbabwe, counter-hegemony, political communication

Communal Collective Narcissism and the Connection to Protest Attitudes

Authors

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Abstract

This study addresses American support for protest actions through the lens of communal collective narcissism, a psychology-based concept wherein people feel strong senses of identification with an in-group while also believing that this group's greatness is not appreciated by others (Žemojtjel-Piotrowska et al., 2022; Žemojtjel-Piotrowska, M. et al., 2021). We apply this concept to protest, a behavior practiced by Americans across the political spectrum, to determine how attitudes towards protest relate to feelings about America's relative global status. We explored demographic identifiers associated with CCN traits, such as the belief that one's country is not appreciated by other nations. Demographic identifiers associated with support for protest actions were then considered. Finally, we specifically addressed the relationship between CCN traits and attitudes towards protest.

People protest when there is a collective sense that other forms of political participation are not effective (Boyle et al, 2012; Heaney, 2020). Protest is also a means of connecting with a community with whom one identifies (Hope et al, 2019; Mathews, 2020), satisfying a need for belonging in people who are highly sensitive to social rejection (Bäck et al., 2013). Applying a CCN lens allows for exploration of how protest behaviors—themselves a means of creating localized identities—relate to an overall sense of *national* identity.

A representative quota-based study was used to explore attitudes towards protest as well as perceptions of the United States itself. Survey measures were adapted from Žemojtjel-Piotrowska and associates' (2021) communal collective narcissism scale as well as Kilgo and Mourão's (2019) protest attitudes scale. Chi-square testing determined relationships between variables.

Overall, findings indicated that protest is considered important to Americans *regardless* of how they may feel about their country as a whole. People across all levels of communal collective narcissism demonstrated some level of support for protest. However, people with the highest levels of communal collective narcissism—that is, who believed the United States was both a great nation and one not sufficiently appreciated by other nations—also had the highest levels of protest support. This indicates that Americans may indeed believe that protest is a central part of what makes the country a model for others, to be respected on a global scale.

Gender, education level and income level all had significant relationships to protest attitudes; there were no significant relationships between racial identity and protest attitudes. Age, however, was a

significant factor associated with American perceptions of their own country. Younger people were less likely to have feelings of communal collective narcissism, even as they were likely to support protest. This aligns with research showing that emerging adulthood is a time of identity formation, when people seek out means of belonging (Schwartz et al, 2005). Engaging in protest could therefore be a means of connecting with community, being socially accepted, and building identity as a younger person. At the same time, younger generations may not feel represented by the broader idea of “America.” We recommend follow-up studies focused on young adults to explore this finding in more detail.

Key Words

Protest, collective narcissism, survey research, United States

Do we make a Difference between Opinion Climate and Opinion Distribution?

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Abstract

Talking about public opinion and public opinion formation the spiral of silence theory (SoS) (Noelle-Neumann, 2001) is one of the most important approaches to be kept in mind (Matthes, Knoll, & Sikorski, 2018). At the core of the SoS is the opinion climate perception. People want to avoid social isolation and therefore need to know what opinions will isolate them socially. Therefore, they observe their social environment to find out how the majority thinks about a topic. But they can't really determine what people think about an issue, they can only observe how they behave and what opinions they express. But the SoS teaches us that people are not always outspoken in expressing their opinions, it shows us that the people who feel in the majority express their opinions openly, while the supposed minority remains silent. This necessarily distorts the public opinion picture. This can even go so far that the perceived majority and the actual majority differ. Thus, the distribution of opinions and the climate of opinions are distinguishable phenomena. This leads to the following research question: *Do people distinguish between the perceived public opinion and the distribution of opinion in society?*

If we assume that people have the tendency to agree with their environment and they have to perceive that this is not the case, then this results in a high cognitive dissonance. This can be managed by doubting the credibility of the climate of opinion. Hypothesis 1 follows from this: The more people deviate in their opinions from the observed climate of opinion, the greater the tendency to see a difference between the climate of opinion and the distribution of opinion. If we assume people do distinguish between opinion climate and opinion distribution, we asked, under what circumstances is this the case. Since people draw their idea of the climate of opinion largely from the mass media, it is conceivable that their attitudes toward journalism Media might influence their opinions. Thus, one could assume that people who have a high Hostile Media Perception see larger differences between opinion climate and opinion distribution. This leads us to our hypothesis: If hostile media perception is more pronounced, the difference between opinion climate and opinion distribution is greater.

We conducted a three-wave panel survey via a German access panel provider. The first wave started with a survey in June 2022, and the time interval between each wave was two weeks. To

ensure generalizability of the results, participants all answered questionnaires on four different socially relevant topics. A total of 942 respondents answered the survey in all three waves.

The results of an ANOVA with repeated measurement showed regarding our research question that, controlled for different topics and times of measurement, there is no significant difference between the perceived public opinion in society and the distribution of opinion in society ($F(1, 941) = 0,182; \eta^2 = .00; p = .670$). However, this should not be taken as a falsification of our assumption that people are capable of this distinction. Our multilevel models showed that the hostile media perception was significantly associated with the difference between perceived climate of opinion in society and the distribution of opinion in society. Thus, we can assume that not every individual, who perceive the opinion climate as dissonant to their own opinion, does transfer their opinion climate perception to their perception of the opinion distribution. They may perceive an opinion climate that is hostile to them, but they still do not see themselves in the minority. In this way, they resolve the cognitive dissonance.

Key Words

spiral of silence, public opinion, public opinion formation, opinion climate,

Hegemony, Discourse, and Political Strategy

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Abstract

'Hegemony, Discourse, and Political Strategy' revisits a question that has long fascinated socialists, progressives, democrats, Greens, Marxists, and other left-wing political forces – how does the left win at politics? Thirty-five years ago, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe tackled this puzzle in ground-breaking fashion, by drawing on a signature blend of linguistics, Marxist theory, and poststructuralism that came to be known as post-Marxist Discourse Theory (PDT) or the Essex School of Discourse Analysis. 'Hegemony, Discourse, and Political Strategy' takes up the legacy of Laclau and Mouffe, and elaborates PDT into a full-fledged theory of political strategy for the first time.

The core argument of 'Hegemony, Discourse, and Political Strategy' is that PDT provides the foundations for a form of discourse analysis that can explain how political strategies play out in political communication, as well as why they fail or succeed at achieving certain communicative goals. In doing so, it seeks to demonstrate that the Essex School provides a powerful heuristic to think about the impact and the effectiveness of various forms of political communication in the current conjuncture of multiple overlapping crises. To realise these goals, 'Hegemony, Discourse, and Political Strategy' provides a concrete and hands-on but theoretically informed introduction as to how discourse-theoretical insight can inform real-life thinking about political strategy and political communication. It draws heavily on poststructuralist theory in order to create a novel, discourse-analytic approach to the study of strategy in political communication, but at the same time, it intends to present this approach to a broad audience in an accessible fashion.

The focus of 'Hegemony, Discourse, and Political Strategy' is predominantly on theory-building, and notably the bridging of the respective fields of discourse studies, political communication, and political strategy. However, it also provides a concrete case study demonstrating the added value and the potential of a discourse-theoretical approach to political strategy and political communication, drawing on the debates and discussions about commercial policy in the European Parliament.

This contribution is partially based on a research monograph which was published under the same title with John Benjamins Publishing. However, it also constitutes an attempt move beyond this monograph; both by rearticulating and condensing its ideas in a manner that can reach new audiences, and by drawing on the insights and comments delivered by these audiences in order to continue to develop and evolve the research agenda that informed the book in the first place.

Jacobs, T. (2022). *Hegemony, Discourse, and Political Strategy: Towards a post-Marxist understanding of contestation and politicization*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (2014). *Hegemony and socialist strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics*. London: Verso Books.

Key Words

Laclau, Mouffe, discourse, discourse analysis, political strategy, rhetoric, European Parliament

Political campaigning on TikTok: the Italian case

Authors

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Abstract

TikTok has grown into one of the most popular social media platforms, reaching over a billion monthly active users in 2021 and becoming the highest-grossing app in the world in 2022 .

With the explosion of its popularity, the platform has somehow naturally mutated from a place for jokes, pranks, and viral dance challenges to an environment where Gen Zers rally around social issues.

Even if TikTok has an explicit ban against paid political advertisements, this “Tiktokisation of global politics” has stimulated political actors worldwide to join the app regarding it as a unique opportunity to (re)connect with young people.

Nonetheless, while general TikTok research is booming, specific academic research on the political uses of the platform for promotion, communication, and especially campaigning, is still extremely scarce.

Previous works have disclosed TikTok can help new or marginal candidates get in the spotlight during an election campaign. However, most works reveal that political actors tend to either struggle in adapting to the platform’s vernaculars and general techno-cultural environment or concentrate on the performativity side of the platform, leaning towards politainment, rather than optimizing the possibilities it offers to generate a new/alternative form of (more) direct communication with the audience.

This study aims at contributing to this emerging stream of research examining the use of TikTok in the last Italian elections of 2022.

Following an affordance-based approach, we analyze all the TikToks published by the main candidates (Matteo Salvini, Silvio Berlusconi and Giorgia Meloni for the Center-Right coalition; Enrico Letta and Luigi Di Maio for the Center-Left coalition, Giuseppe Conte for the

M5S and Carlo Calenda for Azione - Italia Viva - Calenda) during the electoral campaign, to understand if and how candidates have integrated this platform as part of their electoral strategy and what kind of content they publish and share.

Through an affordance-centered multi-modal content analysis, that combines quantitative and qualitative elements, we disclose a clear difference. Right-wing candidates use the platform more frequently and in a more personalized way, focusing mainly on candidates’ political and private personae and on the performative affordances of the platform, leaning towards politainment. Left-

wing candidates, on their side, tend to focus more on political issues and tend to use TikTok as an “old” medium, mainly for promotion.

Engagement rates confirm that the first strategy attracts more interaction confirming the thesis of a growth in politainment.

Key Words

TikTok, political communication, political campaigns, Italy; affordances;

“Why is Biden always on your Instagram Story?”: Personality trait correlates of sharing political content via Facebook and Instagram “Stories” in the United States

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Abstract

Lit Review: Recently, ephemeral features of social media platforms have acted as a hub for the dissemination of political messages and political campaigns (Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2019; Towner & Muñoz, 2022). Despite the popularity in the use of Facebook and Instagram Stories for political content sharing, there is scant research on what predicts such use. Little research that exists on the topic has either looked at context-specific use (Villaespesa & Wowkowych, 2020; Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2019), or its relationship with social media addiction and narcissism (Yu & Chen, 2020), for example. One likely reason is because Facebook and Instagram Stories are a relatively recent feature. Further, while prior research on political content sharing has looked at partisanship and political news consumption as potential correlates (Wischnewski et al., 2021), it has not combined these two factors with individuals’ personality dispositions, particularly in the context of ephemeral sharing, examining if either, both, or none matter while trying to predict such a behavior. Sharing political content on the internet can inform individuals, facilitate political discussions, but might also worsen partisan divide by creating echo chambers within which the political information is shared. Therefore, understanding what kind of individuals frequently share such content can provide us important insights. In this study, we examine the Big Five personality traits, political partisanship, and other traits such as self-esteem and narcissism as potential correlates of political content sharing behavior on Facebook and Instagram Stories, while controlling for frequency of use, time spent, news consumption on the platforms, and demographic characteristics in regression models.

Method: The author of the study commissioned Qualtrics to collect nationally representative data from (n=694) resident U.S. adults., from July 26 to August 4, 2021. Respondents were part of a Qualtrics sample, which consists of verified respondents from across the U.S. For this survey, Qualtrics randomly chose respondents representing different regions, age groups, and gender categories. Data were weighted for age, gender, education, region, and household income to more closely resemble the adult U.S. population. Response rate for the survey was about 69%.

Results & Conclusion: Adjusted R-squared for the regression models were strong (47.8% while predicting political content sharing on Facebook Stories, and 53.5% while predicting political content sharing on Instagram Stories). Expectedly, being a partisan (either a Republican or a Democrat) was associated with political content sharing on Facebook Stories, and being a Democrat was associated with political content sharing on Instagram Stories. Agreeableness

negatively predicted sharing ephemeral political content on both platforms, while self esteem negatively predicted political content sharing on Instagram Stories only. Apart from time spent on the platforms, narcissism was the biggest positive predictor of sharing political content. Findings suggest that although individuals' personality traits are not often used side-by-side with other factors such as, say, political partisanship, ideology, or political news consumption as predictors of political behaviors online, Big Five personality traits play a crucial role in, at the very least, ephemeral political content sharing behavior.

Key Words

Political content sharing, personality traits, Big Five, Instagram Stories

Politics, Journalism and Public Relations at a crossroads: Explicating Crisis Communication During COVID19 in Botswana

Authors

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Abstract

Effective communication during a crisis entails timely dissemination of accurate information to facilitate appropriate response in order to reduce risk and manage the crisis. The COVID 19 pandemic presented fresh challenges amid existing concerns regarding reporting of scientific information by non-scientists, coupled with the disruptive nature of online communication. These concerns were exacerbated by the infodemic as voices of politicians, public relations practitioners, journalists, scientists and the audiences collided in the public sphere. This study draws on the semiotics of social networking theory to examine patterns and spaces of information dissemination during the COVID-19 pandemic, in Botswana. The aim of the study is to investigate and explain how the crisis communication landscape was affected and potentially transformed by the contests over the public sphere. Such enquiries are critical in providing a wide spectrum of perspectives and understandings of the evolving digital landscape as well as provide insights on how the emerging challenges were managed in different contexts. The study argues that the compulsory enforcement of extreme social distancing resulted in the predominant use of digital platforms for instant message dissemination, audience reach and participation, and social cohesion to curb the immediate and residual threat associated with the virus and that communication in these circumstances was fraught with disruptions. Using social media ethnography, qualitative data was collected through screenshots of COVID 19 updates shared on the official Facebook pages for the government of Botswana (BWgovernment), the national broadcasting television station (Botswana Television BW) and the national newspaper (DailyNews). A post-structuralist discourse analysis of COVID-19 message dissemination patterns and content confirms the role of governments in crisis communication perpetuated through institutional legitimacy. The findings also reveal an axiomatic propensity towards digital public relations as the mainstream crisis communication strategy facilitated by leveraging on the various affordances of social media. The findings further highlight the inadvertent negative consequences of online crisis communication. The paper concludes with a strong assertion that 21st century public relations practice requires deliberate critical attention to the dynamics of social media by journalists and public relations practitioners in public and private institutions. Along with this, is the need to reflect on the implications of increased online presence by traditional institutions on public perceptions and attitudes towards online technologies and the effects these may have on the digital practices of the citizens.

Key Words

digital public relations, crisis communication, political communication, social media, COVID19

Network Brokerage roles and Moral Foundations: Moral Language Use by US and UK Political Elites in Online Climate Change Discourse Network

Authors

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Abstract

Social media renewed the form and function of political discourse. Political elites increasingly adopted Twitter to gain attention and propagate ideologies (Masroor et al., 2019). Social media shaped networked political interaction and fostered communication between ideologically opposed parties through retweets and mentions (Conover et al., 2011). Studies have examined the social media uptake by politicians in campaign debates, the formation of communication ties, and the degree of homophily and polarization in the Twitter political network (Esteve-Del-Valle, 2022; Esteve-Del-Valle et al., 2022).

However, studies have yet to incorporate the functional role of politicians in online social networks to investigate the interaction pattern between members of ideologically opposed parties. Guided by the social network brokerage definition (Gould & Fernandez, 1989), we examine the extent to which broker roles (coordinator, itinerant, representative, gatekeeper) occur among political elites along the party line and across countries in Twitter retweet and mention networks.

Moreover, politicians often utilize moral rhetoric in persuasive messages to intensify belief and change attitudes (Miles, 2016). The moral dimensions are incorporated in the conceptual framework of moral foundations theory (MFT) (Haidt & Graham, 2007): (1) harm/care, (2) fairness/reciprocity, (3) ingroup/loyalty, (4) authority/respect, and (5) purity/sanctity. Political elites employ moral frames as persuasion strategies to consolidate polarized and politicized issues such as climate change.

The present study seeks to explore the difference in functional brokerage roles adopted by political elites across partisan lines in the US and the UK. Further, we consider how politicians with different communicator roles frame climate change by moral foundations with linguistic cues. And how elite broker roles and valence-based messages trigger public attention.

Data will be collected from Twitter using keywords about climate change, and identified politician user handles. Political elites will include left- and right-oriented parties from the US and the UK. First, to estimate how congresspeople adopt broker roles, we analyzed politician interaction with other members through the Twitter communication network using addressivity markers (i.e., RT, @) indicating information flow directions. Specifically, broker roles are identified by probability scoring of information transmitted by politicians to in-group and out-group members, where retweet

refers to incoming information and mention refers to outgoing information (Figure 1). Then, the moral dimension scoring of virtue and vice will be calculated by the most up-to-date extended Moral Foundations Dictionary (eMFD) (Hopp et al., 2020). Using a dictionary-based approach, eMFD computes the moral values of given text based on the pre-established dictionaries of words in each of the ten moral dimensions. Finally, to examine the purpose of adopting the broker roles by politicians, we examine the underlying connection between brokerage roles, moral dimensions, and public attention.

Figure 1: Politician brokerage roles. One unit of analysis is one member, shape and color indicate partisanship. Edge arrow points to information flow direction.

Key Words

political discourse, social network, brokerage roles, moral foundations, climate change

Telegram as the Backbone of Dark Communication Repertoires: On the Role of Different Social Media Platforms in the Dissemination of Conspiracy Narratives

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Abstract

The COVID-19 crisis was accompanied by protests against the policies of national governments worldwide, and conspiracy theories disseminated via social media played a crucial role in informing and mobilizing these protest movements. In complex media environments, the spread of conspiracy theories must increasingly be understood as a cross-platform phenomenon (Mahl et al., 2022), especially with the emergence and increasing use of less regulated "dark platforms" (Zeng & Schäfer, 2021).

Most existing studies in this field focus on comparatives from a platform-centric perspective (see Heft & Buehling, 2022). In contrast, this paper adopts an actor-centred approach, which understands different platforms as elements of a cross-platform, collective process of consuming, producing, and updating conspiracy theories (Madisson & Ventsel, 2021). The objective of this paper is to capture the production side of this process in more detail. To that end, the paper explores how central actors of the Austrian corona protest movement integrate different platforms in their dissemination of conspiracy theories.

As a theoretical basis of this presentation, we suggest the concept of "dark communication repertoires", which combines the concepts of "digital network repertoires" (Chadwick, 2007) and "online communication repertoires" (Nitschke & Donges, 2014, 2016) with the specific communication modes of "dark participation" (Quandt, 2018). Dark communication repertoires are defined as the combination of digital platforms and particular modes of communication, as well as discourse formations, which no longer refer to democratic norms, used by an actor involved in online participation.

The methodology of this paper proceeds as follows: first, relevant actors were identified during the peak of the Corona protest in Austria (9.12. - 23.12.2021) (n = 122). Using manual content analysis, the authors investigated the dissemination of conspiracy theories by these actors across different social media platforms through the occurrence of elements commonly used in definitions of

conspiracy theories (Samory & Mitra, 2018). Based on these data, dark communication repertoires were determined using "latent class analysis" (e.g., Collins & Lanza, 2009).

Preliminary results suggest four types of dark communication repertoires, with Telegram forming the backbone of the analyzed repertoires: (1) "Telegram Minimalists," who hardly use other social media platforms in addition to Telegram, (2) "Mainstream-oriented Low-performers," who combine Telegram with mainstream social media platforms but with limited reach success, (3) "Mainstream-oriented High-performers", who achieve high reach success by combining mainstream social media platforms with Telegram, and (4) "Dark-platform High Performers," who have an extensive social media platform repertoire and also disseminate high-reach conspiracy theories through dark platforms. These results support the proposed concept of dark communication repertoires and provide empirical findings on the cross-platform dissemination of problematic information. This overarching perspective on the interplay of different platforms in the dissemination of conspiracy theories can help integrate findings from individual or comparative platform studies into a comprehensive picture.

Key Words

conspiracy theories, cross-platform, online communication repertoires, dark participation, COVID-19 protest