Interaction (Election Campaigning Communication)

AUTHOR
Desiree Steppat, Laia Castro Herrero

KEYWORDS
election campaigns, interaction, campaign strategies, interactivity, discussion, engagement

BRIEF DESCRIPTION
Interaction is described as a way to persuade citizens through direct contact allowing for a dialogical encounter between political actors and citizens (Magin, Podschuweit, Haßler, & Russmann, 2017). Although the new online environment can facilitate direct communication between politicians and citizens, empirical findings indicate that, to date, a unidirectional communication style between voters and politicians predominates (Jackson & Lilleker, 2010; Lilleker & Koc-Michalska, 2013; Stromer-Galley, 2000). To a large extent, politicians still employ the broadcasting style for campaign communication (Graham, Broersma, Hazelhoff, & van ,t Haar, 2013) and retain communication strategies from the mass media era (Margolis & Resnick, 2000), as few voters visit their websites on a regular basis (Gibson & McAllister, 2011) or follow politicians' profiles on social media (Vaccari & Nielsen, 2013). However, research in campaign communication also shows that the Web 2.0 provide new opportunities for politicians to address an expanded, new electorate and **engage** them. As an example, studies show that posts that are frequently liked, commented, or shared can reach a much wider circle of users known as secondary audience or second-degree followers (Jacobs & Spierings, 2016; Vaccari & Valeriani, 2015). Interaction through social media channels furthermore enables face-to-face-like communication with individual voters, with whom politicians can also ex-change ideas and negotiate **campaign strategies** (Magin et al., 2017).

FIELD OF APPLICATION/THEORETICAL FOUNDATION
In recent years, interaction has been recognized as a central aspect of dialogical communication in the field of public relations (Sweetser & Lariscy, 2008; Taylor & Kent, 2004). The theory states that symmetrical and dialogical two-way communication between an organization and its audience can sustainably support relationship building and their maintenance (Zhang & Seltzer, 2010). By applying this approach to the field of online political communication, it is possible to understand the interactions between politicians and citizens as a form of strategic communication and how they attract and persuade voters.

REFERENCES/COMBINATION WITH OTHER METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION
Interaction in the last twenty years has been mostly studied in the context of the online environment either by looking at structural features of candidates' online tools that enable interactions with users (e.g., Druckman, Kifer, & Parkin, 2007, 2009; Schweitzer, 2008); or by studying actual interactions between candidates and citizens on social media (e.g., Graham et al., 2013; Klinger, 2013). Both quantitative manual and automated content analyses thereof have been employed to in research on social media interactions). Quantitative content analysis have been also been combined and compared with qualitative interviews with campaign managers (e.g., Magin et al., 2017).

EXAMPLE STUDIES
see Table 1

REFERENCES

Bene, M. (2017). Go Viral on the Facebook! Interactions between Candidates and Followers on Facebook during the Hungarian General Election Campaign of 2014. Information, Communication & Society, 20(4), 513–529. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2016.1198411

Druckman, J. N., Kifer, M. J., & Parkin, M. (2007). The Technological Development of Congressional Candidate Web Sites. Social Science Computer Review, 25(4), 425–442. https://doi.org/10.1177/0894439307305623

Druckman, J. N., Kifer, M. J., & Parkin, M. (2009). Campaign Communications in U.S. Congressional Elections. American Political Science Review, 103(3), 343–366. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055409990037

Gibson, R. K., & McAllister, I. (2011). Do online election campaigns win votes? The 2007 Australian "YouTube" election. Political Communication, 28(2), 227–244.

Graham, T., Broersma, M., Hazelhoff, K., & van ,t Haar, G. (2013). Between Broadcasting Political Messages and Interacting with Voters. Information, Communication & Society, 16(5), 692–716. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2013.785581

Graham, T., Jackson, D., & Broersma, M. (2016). New Platform, Old Habits? Candidates' Use of Twitter during the 2010 British and Dutch General Election Campaigns. New Media & Society, 18(5), 765–783. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444814546728

Jackson, N., & Lilleker, D. G. (2010). Tentative Steps towards Interaction. Internet Research, 20(5), 527–544. https://doi.org/10.1108/10662241011084103

Jacobs, K., & Spierings, N. (2016). Social Media, Parties, and Political Inequalities. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137533906

Keller, T. R., & Kleinen-von Königslöw, K. (2018). Pseudo-Discursive, Mobilizing, Emotional, and Entertaining: Identifying Four Successful Communication Styles of Political Actors on Social Media during the 2015 Swiss National Elections. Journal of Information Technology & Politics, 15(4), 358–377. https://doi.org/10.1080/19331681.2018.1510355

Klinger, U. (2013). Mastering the Art of Social Media. Information, Communication & Society, 16(5), 717–736. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2013.782329

Lilleker, D. G., & Koc-Michalska, K. (2013). Online Political Communication Strategies: MEPs, E-Representation, and Self-Representation. Journal of Information Technology & Politics, 10(2), 190–207. https://doi.org/10.1080/19331681.2012.758071

Lukamto, W., & Carson, A. (2016). Politweets: Social Media as a Platform for Political Engagement between Victorian Politicians and Citizens. Communication Research and Practice, 2(2), 191–212. https://doi.org/10.1080/22041451.2016.1186485

Magin, M., Podschuweit, N., Haßler, J., & Russmann, U. (2017). Campaigning in the Fourth Age of Political Communication. A Multi-Method Study on the Use of Facebook by German and Austrian Parties in the 2013 National Election Campaigns. Information, Communication & Society, 20(11), 1698–1719. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2016.1254269

Margolis, M., & Resnick, D. (2000). Politics as Usual: The Cyberspace „Revolution". Contemporary American politics. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Schweitzer, E. J. (2008). Innovation or Normalization in E-Campaigning? European Journal of Communication, 23(4), 449–470. https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323108096994

Stromer-Galley, J. (2000). On-line Interaction and Why Candidates Avoid It. Journal of Communication, 50(4), 111–132.

Sweetser, K. D., & Lariscy, R. W. (2008). Candidates make good friends: An analysis of candidates' uses of Facebook. International Journal of Strategic Communication, 2(3), 175–198.

Taylor, M., & Kent, M. L. (2004). Congressional web sites and their potential for public dialogue. Atlantic Journal of Communication, 12(2), 59–76.

Vaccari, C., & Nielsen, R. K. (2013). What drives politicians' online popularity? An analysis of the 2010 US midterm elections. Journal of Information Technology & Politics, 10(2), 208–222.

Vaccari, C., & Valeriani, A. (2015). Follow the leader! Direct and indirect flows of political communication during the 2013 Italian general election campaign. New

Vaccari, C., & Valeriani, A. (2015). Follow the leader! Direct and indirect flows of political communication during the 2013 Italian general election campaign. New Media & Society, 17(7), 1025–1042. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444813511038

Zhang, W., & Seltzer, T. (2010). Another piece of the puzzle: Advancing social capital theory by examining the effect of political party relationship quality on political and civic participation. International Journal of Strategic Communication, 4(3), 155–170

Table 1. *Overview exemplary studies measuring interaction, discussion, participation, and related constructs.*

Study	Medium	Constructs	Operationalization	Coding
Druckman et al. (2007); Druckman et al. (2009)	Candidate websites	Interactivity	Web sites were scrutinized in light of their ability to create someform of interaction by e.g.enabling users to personalize information, arrange information, add information, and/or communicate with other voters and/or the candidate	Additive index
Schweitzer (2008)	Candidate websites	Interactivity provision strategies	Possibility to comment on news; Agenda can be updated by visitors; A channel on video sharing websites; Possibility to comment (a video sharing website); Life webcam; Online photo gallery; Possibility to comment (online photo gallery); Easy contact; Online polls; Profile on SNS; Online forum or chat (among visitors); Online forum or chat (with politicians); Possibility to share content of the website; Possibility to share content on social media; Information about political program (interactive format)	Additive index
Magin et al. (2017)	Facebook posts	Interaction	Index including (1) number of parties' comments, (2) the number of users' comments per 1,000,000 eligible voters, and (3) the share of posts in which the parties encourage the voters to discuss politics on the parties' Facebook page (reciprocity).	Combined index

Study	Medium	Constructs	Operationalization	Coding
Graham et al. (2013), Graham, Jackson, and Broersma (2016)	Twitter posts	Interaction	Tweets including: Debating/position taking; Acknowledging; Organizing/mobilizing; Advice giving/helping; and/or Consulting. Furthermore @Tweets were scrutinized with whom politicians interacted: Public; Politician/candidate; journalist/media; Party activist; Lobbyist; Expert; Celebrity; Industry; and/or Authority	(0) Not present (1) Present
Lukamto and Carson (2016)	Twitter comments, @ mentions, and retweets (RTs)	Discussion	Measures quantity of one-way and two-way messages between members of parliament (MPs) and citizens and who they interact with: 'citizen to politician'; 'politician to citizen'; or 'politician to politician'	Count variable
Bene (2017)	Facebook posts	Engagement	Engagement content is coded if the post contains either requests for likes, comments, and/or sharing or whether it poses a question. All of these individual elements were also coded on their own and analyzed in specified models with all dependent variables	(0) Not present (1) Present
Klinger (2013)	Facebook & Twitter posts	Participation	Posts including calls for discussion, appeals to collect signatures and mobilize other people to participate and to vote as well as general community-building	(0) Not present (1) Present
Keller and Kleinen-von Königslöw (2018)	Facebook & Twitter posts	Pseudo discursive style		(0) Not present (1) Present
Graham et al. (2013), Graham et al. (2016)	Twitter posts	Interaction	Tweets including: Debating/position taking; Acknowledging; Organizing/mobilizing; Advice giving/helping; and/or Consulting. @Tweets were also scrutinized with whom politicians interacted: Public; Politician/candidate; journalist/media; Party activist; Lobbyist; Expert; Celebrity; Industry; and/or Authority	(0) Not present (1) Present