Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies (SGOJAHDS), Vol.6 No.1 March, 2023; p.g. 245 – 250; ISSN: 2695-2319 (Print); ISSN: 2695-2327 (Online)

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING: AN EXPLORATION OF CONTEMPORARY ELECTION COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

FADEYI, ISAAC OLAJIDE
fadeyii@run.edu.ng
Department of Mass Communication
Redeemer's University Ede, Osun State, Nigeria
&
DARE, TEMIDIRE
daretemidiregbemiga@gmail.com
Redeemer's University Ede, Osun State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role that social media has in political campaigns and its effectiveness in election communications strategies. To structure this area of study, it proposed Comparative studies on political campaigning and election communication because it can succeed when they are supported by a thorough theoretical framework and precisely defined, standardised independent and dependent variables. Data were collected from published materials and research conducted by other Scholars. Findings showed some basic level of knowledge about election communication strategies. It was revealed that political campaign managers and candidates are advised to consider users' feelings of belonging in a certain online community and their perceived effort when using a certain social networking site when attempting to strengthen voters' attitudes toward voting in order to enhance voting rates or to raise voters' confidence in their voting decisions on a specific candidate or party. A discussion of current campaign studies' shortcomings and important trends in contemporary campaign communication follows. Finally, there are other issues that need to be addressed in the study on social media and political advocacy.

Keywords: social media, strategic communication, election communication, political campaign.

Background of the study

Election campaigns are fundamentally nothing more than political communication. Communication between the campaign leadership and volunteers, funders, activists, and supporters is necessary if elections are about organization (De Gruyter, 2014). Social media has both positive and negative effects on election campaigns. The risk stems from the possibility that technology could be successfully used to spread propaganda today and contribute to the formation of voter misconceptions. Everyone has a responsibility to utilise social media properly as a tool of oppression and empowerment, including the general population, the media, corporations, candidates, and the government (Debbie Moran, 2023).

Hang Lee (2020) in his research says one of the key media platforms for political campaigns today is social media. Social science studies are beginning to develop a picture of how social networking sites themselves may influence political engagement. However, the impact of social network site usage factors on voters' engagement, attitudes, and confidence have received little consideration. (Martine Ndlela, 2020) Social media is increasingly playing a

significant role in election processes, with sites like Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram having a significant impact on the production, diffusion, and consumption of political information in Africa. The social media sites gather and compile a lot of user data.

(De Gruyter,2014) Communication is necessary to establish and sustain relationships as well as to coordinate efforts if election campaigns are about forming alliances amongst groups with comparable interests and objectives. Communication is necessary to reach out to potential supporters and persuade them to actively support the campaign if election campaigns are about mobilizing supporters.

By Anders Larsson, Twitter has been the main topic of study about social media use during elections. The research given here builds on suggestions from earlier literature and offers comparative insights regarding party and voter engagement on various platforms during the 2017 Norwegian elections, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. The findings reveal the necessity to tailor political messages to each unique source as the themes of successful, "viral" posts differ across platforms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Strategy for Election Communication is crucial to comprehend how various cultures absorb information differently in a world where social media has replaced traditional forms of communication. You can learn from this study how to improve the impact of your political messages in settings with a diverse population (kiran V, 2020).

Numerous communication tactics are typically used in a political campaign. One of the most crucial is political communication strategy, which is using speeches and rallies to support your candidate. It is the process of creating and disseminating political messaging in order to affect voters' opinions on politicians, issues, or voting decisions (Kirav V, 2020).

By ensuring that the public is always provided the correct information, a communications plan enables a political campaign to arrange the dissemination of its message. Media outlets like print media, social networks, and broadcast media are used in strategic political communication. Election communication is a strategic procedure that involves erratic preparation and execution to influence public opinion or achieve a specific political goal. In election campaigns, political communication strategies are designed to win votes and persuade voters to back a specific party or candidate (kiran V, 2020).

(Debbie Moran),Prior to social media marketing playing such a large part in politics, politicians who ran for office frequently preferred one social media platform to another and found it challenging to adopt techniques for setting campaign goals. The group with college degrees was initially drawn to this social media targeting method. Additionally, since the usage of social media increased in society, a candidate's activity on social media is enhanced by their profile engagement. Their genuineness is determined by the activities they engage in. Social media can also be used by agencies to grow revenues. Know about other agency growth secrets too.

Concept of Social Media

Social media makes it easier for people to communicate with one another online. Social media encompasses a wide range of applications and platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, that let users share content, communicate online, and create communities. More than 4.7 billion individuals, or nearly 60% of the world's population, utilize social media (Maya Dollarhide, 2023)

Tuft (2023), Social media refers to methods of communication where individuals produce, share, and/or exchange knowledge and concepts in online groups and networks. The primary accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube are managed by the Office of Communications and Marketing.

Understanding Political Campaign

Each candidate has a well prepared political campaign to reach out to their supporters and present both the candidate and party in the best possible light (Kaitlin Vonderschmitt, Juicer, 2020). You must have a solid grasp of your political brand before announcing your candidature since political campaigns are brands just like any other. Political campaign is defined by (Law Insider) as activities of political campaign participants, voters, and other natural and legal persons during the time frame specified by this Law that are related to elections for the Seimas, the presidency, the European Parliament, municipal council elections, or referendums.

Election communication Strategy

A strategy for communicating with the public during elections involves using a variety of media. To sway people's opinions, it fabricates a picture of a political candidate, party, or issue. A political communication strategy is a technique that aids in spreading your message to the general audience. It is the technique of disseminating a message through various platforms (Kiran V., 2020). Election communication strategies are often used to promote a particular candidate or party. Still, they can also be used to raise awareness about an issue or to build support for a piece of legislation.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There is no denying social media's influence on global political campaigns. According to the most recent figures, approximately three-fourths of American adults use social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter, with young individuals using these sites almost exclusively. (2018). Social networks were used daily by an estimated 2.62 billion individuals globally in 2018, and that figure is expected to rise to 2.77 billion by 2019. (Statista, 2018). Social media, thanks to their explosive growth, have become a crucial component of contemporary political campaigns, both domestically and abroad. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Reddit have transformed the way political campaigns are carried out, how the public and elected officials access and share political information, and how we learn about politics, acquire opinions and attitudes, and ultimately participate in or abstain from the political process.

Although social media has undoubtedly changed how we perceive political discourse and its impact on the populace, it is challenging to identify distinct, uniform consequences. A 2009 meta-analysis revealed that internet use generally had favorable, albeit minor, effects on many political engagement elements (Boulianne, 2009). Similar to this, a 2015 meta-analysis found that the usage of digital media had only modest effects on political engagement, with only

50% of 170 claimed effects from 36 chosen research being statistically significant (Boulianne, 2015). Another meta-analysis that looked at 116 associations and effects that were reported in 22 different research discovered that social media typically had favourable effects on three different engagement characteristics, namely social capital, civic engagement, and political participation (Skoric, Zhu, Goh, & Pang, 2016).

CHALLENGES OF ELECTION COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

The communication surrounding elections faces several difficult obstacles. It might be challenging to decide which strategy will work best for your particular candidate or organisation given the wide variety of approaches to campaigns. What is a person expected to do in this situation of confusion? The process for developing a strategy that benefits both you and your candidate will be laid out in this piece. Whether it's social media, press releases, or television advertisements, there's something for everyone here.(Kiran V,2020).

Theoretical Framework

Comparative research on political campaigning and election communication can only flourish with a thorough theoretical framework precisely defined and standardised with independent and dependent variables, and only then will it be possible to give firm answers to questions about differences and similarities in election campaigning and campaign communication across time or space, their antecedents, and their consequences. However, one thing consistently holds true: At their core, election campaigns are nothing more than election communication (Jesper Strömbäck and Spiro Kiousis, 2014).

Social Media and Politics must, like all sound research, be grounded in solid theoretical frameworks and contribute to the development of new theories. Future study should create more complex models to assist us understand why and how such tools are being used, rather than just stating how social media technologies are used in political campaigning. Since social media is a relatively new phenomenon in our industry, it is best to first approach it theoretically and establish hypotheses, models, and concepts that can then be tested (Daniela V. Dimitrova).

Methodology

This study used secondary sources of data. Data was collected from published materials and research conducted by other Scholars.

Discussion of Findings

Findings shows that candidates who ran for office found it challenging to adopt tactics to develop campaign goals and frequently preferred one social media platform over another before the function of social media marketing became ubiquitous in politics. The group with college degrees was initially drawn to this social media targeting method. Additionally, as social media use rose in society, a candidate's activity on social media enhanced profile engagement. Their level of interaction reveals their honesty. Social media can also be used by agencies to grow revenues. Know about other agency growth secrets too (De Gruyter, 2014).
The study's findings, according to Hang Lee (2020), suggest that political campaign managers and candidates should consider users' feelings of belonging in a particular online community and their perceived effort when using a particular social networking site when attempting to

improve voters' attitudes towards voting in order to increase voting rates or to raise voters' confidence in their voting decisions on a specific candidate or party.

(De Gruyter, 2014). Candidates can use social media to develop both their individual and group identities. It may be said that in this hybrid style of engagement, the candidates have an impact on individuals both personally and professionally. Individual social networks provide the important purpose of disseminating knowledge across various groups with the use of digitally networked action.

With the introduction of social media, electoral communication academics have systematically changed theories and empirical corollaries relating to media use and democracy more generally. It's interesting to note that during around the same time, political populism has resurged in various parts of the world, regardless of latitude. Whether these political systems were established democracies, developing democracies, or communities enmeshed in political environments in danger, the popular populist movement has grown. This study introduces a special issue on populism (Homero Gil de Ziga, Karolina KocMichalska, Andrea Römmele, (2020).

These findings imply that social media effects may depend on a variety of variables, such as the type of channels being examined (e.g., Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat), the audience's specific characteristics and predispositions (antecedents like age, political interest, campaign involvement, and other psychological factors), and user motivations (e.g., relationship upkeep, political participation, promotion of oneself, Informational, expressive, or relational social media use is recorded, and the political campaign context as a whole (Daniela V. Dimitrova &JörgMatthes, 2018).

Conclusion

Using information and communication as strategically and effectively as possible during election campaigns is the aim of strategic political communication. Since parties and campaigns' strategic objectives are crucial, it follows that an understanding of political parties and campaigns as organisations is necessary for understanding political communication during election campaigns. For instance, certain parties may be more focused on winning votes, while others may be more focused on advancing their policies. Such party traits will affect how the parties organise and carry out their campaigns, as well as the importance assigned to campaigning and communication (Jesper Strömbäck and Spiro Kiousis, 2014).

The political system, the media system, rules and regulations, the political culture, and the types of parties and party competition all determine the contextual variables that influence campaign tactics and communication. Therefore, what functions in one setting might not function in another. Nevertheless, our analysis has demonstrated that there are a number of gaps in the literature on political campaigning and election communication. However, one thing is usually accurate: Election campaigns are fundamentally nothing more than political communication (Jesper Strömbäck and Spiro Kiousis, 2014).

Finally, there are other issues that need to be addressed in studies on social media and political campaigning. We hope that academics from all over the world will use this special issue as a springboard for theory development and as motivation to create theoretically and

methodologically challenging investigations. There is no question that social media's uses, content, and impacts will play a significant role in political campaigning in the future. As a result, how our discipline approaches these issues in the future will be evaluated. addressing these issues in our next work (Daniela V. Dimitrova &JörgMatthes, 2018).

References

Boulianne S. (2009). Does Internet use affect engagement? A meta-analysis of research. *Political Communication*, 26, 193-211.

Boulianne S. (2015). Social media use and participation: A meta-analysis of current research. *Information, Communication & Society*, 18, 524-538.

Chan M. (2016). Social network sites and political engagement: Exploring the impact of Facebook connections and uses on political protest and participation. *Mass Communication and Society*, 19, 430-451.

De Gruyter Mouton (2014) ,6. Strategic political communication in election campaigns https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783110238174.109/html?lang=en

Dimitrova , D. V. &Matthes, J. (2018), Social Media in Political Campaigning Around the World: Theoretical and Methodological Challenges, *sage journal*, vol. 95 (2). https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699018770437

Dollarhide, M. (2023), Social Media: Definition, Effects, and List of Top Apps, Investopedia https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/social-media.asp

Hang, . L. (2020), Voters' involvement, attitude, and confidence in the era of new media *Palgrave Communications* 6 (1), 1-7, 2020, www.Nature.com

Homero Gil de Zúñiga, Karolina KocMichalska, Andrea Römmele, (2020), Populism in the era of Twitter: How social media contextualized new insights into an old phenomenon. *Sage journal*, New Media & Society 22 (4), 585-594, 2020

Juicer,(2020), 21 Tips for Creating a Successful Social Media Political Campaign https://www.juicer.io/blog/21-tips-for-creating-a-successful-social-media-political Campaign

Strömbäck, J. and Spiro Kiousis, J. Strategic (2014), Political Communication in Election Campaigns, DOI:10.1515/9783110238174.109

Larsson, O. A. (2020), Winning and losing on social media: Comparing viral political posts.

Moran, D. (2023), What is the Role of Social Media in Election Campaigns*? RECURPOST*,https://recurpost.com/blog/what-is-the-role-of-social-media-in-election-campaigns/

Ndlela. M. N. (2020), Social media algorithms, bots and elections in Africa, link.springer.com across platforms. *SageJournal*.Convergence 26 (3), 639-657, 2020

Neo R. L. (2015). Favoritism or animosity? Examining how SNS network homogeneity Influences vote choice via affective mechanisms. *International Journal of Public Opinion, Research*, 28, 461-483.

Shah D. V., Cho J., Eveland W. P., Kwak N.Jr. (2005). Information and expression in a digital age: Modeling Internet effects on civic participation. *Communication Research*, 32, 531-565.

Valenzuela S. (2013). Unpacking the use of social media for protest behavior: The roles of Information, opinion, expression, and activism. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57, 920 - 942

Vonderschmitt, K. (2023). The Growing Use of Social Media in Political Campaigns: How to use Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to Create an Effective Social Media Campaign.