

Research Project

Visual Politician

Project funded by own resources

Project title Visual Politician

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VIP – the VIsual Politician

Citizens and especially the younger generations increasingly turn towards digital forms of information when they update themselves about political matters: Not only do established media invest in their online presence, social media platforms also allow politicians to distribute information more directly and without an intermediary (eg. Kruikemeier, Van Noort et al. 2013, Rauchfleisch and Metag 2015).

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We aim to shed new light in this field of representative- voter communication by analyzing how politicians use visuals in their online communication with voters and how they react to it. In particular, the use of images (visuals) has mostly been neglected or investigated on a small scale (see e.g. Kruikemeier, Gattermann et al. 2018) since it is technically demanding. However, visual – photos and videos – of politicians in social media are of particular interest since visuals have the potential to have a different effect than verbal communication. Visuals show a more human image of politicians (Loader, Vromen et al. 2016) and have the potential to transmit personalized information better than ideas (Zamora 2010) and have a stronger emotional effect (Samuel-Azran, Yarchi et al. 2018).

Online news consumption has been linked to the filter bubble and echo chamber by various authors (Conover, Ratkiewicz et al. 2011, Bessi, Coletto et al. 2015, DiFranzo and Gloria-Garcia 2017). Both terms capture the notion that users on social media have a tendency to build homogeneous communities with polarized views of the world. Thus, we will track how visuals are shared, quoted, or re-used otherwise. This audience engagement plays a particularly central role in politicians – voter communication since it gives a measure how users react to the signals sent by politicians (Metz, Kruikemeier et al. 2019). This will be done based on existing applications (e.g. TwitterStand (Sankaranarayanan, Samet et al. 2009)) which need to be further developed to include visual information. In a last part of the project, we will focus on the perception of visual information by politicians and study experimentally how citizens react to it.

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Keywords social media - representation- twitter - communication

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Follow-up Project of... [4484481 New Relations Between Voters and Representatives in the Age of Social Media](#)

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