A study of Emotion Displays on Twitter during the 2014 Swedish Elections

Attends to the emotional framing of interactions between politics and traditional broadcast news media on Twitter

**RQs**

*How did campaigning politicians interact with journalists and broadcast news media?*

*What was the emotional and the affective aspects of these interactions?*
Hybrid Media

The online and the offline intersect and feed off each other increasingly complex ways (Chadwick, 2013).

Chadwick underlines that so-called new media does not displace so-called old media, but rather facilitates the emergence of a hybridised media system, that there is a degree of interdependence between traditional broadcast media and digital media.
One way hybridity is manifested is through the linking to broadcast news media and journalists online.

Broadcast news media (and their online presences) have represented a form of authority (Svensson, 2015; Svensson & Larsson, 2016).

To link to broadcast news media in online discussions becomes a ‘link to verification’ (Svensson, 2015); displaying a ‘privileged access to the truth’ (Carpentier, 2014).
When MPs attacked political opponents on Twitter, or retweeted party/alliance comrades, journalists and links to broadcast news texts were often used (Svensson & Larsson, 2016).

Here I zoom in on here, is that of the presence of traditional broadcast news media and their representatives in an online space of political communication.
Emotions can be understood as biological, cultural and **strategic**

It is known that emotions may be displayed strategically in order to negotiate status and group belonging.

**Reflexive emotion display** (Svensson, 2013). On social media users negotiate their identities and belongings through displaying emotions.

Emotion displays in campaigning Swedish MPs interactions = reflexive and strategic
Emotion Displays & Social Media

Social media are loci for displaying emotions.

Socio-emotional content constituted 30 percent of messages online (most positive, Rice & Love, 1987).

Social media practices = social glue
'phatic' communication reassuring social bonds rather than for exchanging information (Miller, 2008).

Users hope that postings will be recognised by likes, links and thumbs up from selected peers.
Emotion Displays & Social Media

Politicians (in a party-based democracy) have their own peer group (party)

→ Virtual back patting (Svensson 2014)
Elections 2014

Study of with whom did MPs interact up to 2 weeks before the elections

23,825 tweets
11,467 were RTs \(\approx 50\%\)
5,685 were @messages \(\approx 25\%\)
in 1488 out of these (9%) MPs interacted with broadcast news media

I have selected the ten most retweeted and the ten most @messages broadcast news media accounts for an in-depth study
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Account</th>
<th>Username</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>RTs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Niklas Svensson</td>
<td>@niklassvensson</td>
<td>Journalist at Expressen</td>
<td>97 RTs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressen</td>
<td>@Expressen</td>
<td>Tabloid Newspaper</td>
<td>87 RTs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV4 Nyheterna</td>
<td>@Nyheterna</td>
<td>Channel 4 news</td>
<td>59 RTs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tove Lifvendahl</td>
<td>@ToveLifvendahl</td>
<td>Political editor at SvD</td>
<td>50 RTs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVT Nyheter</td>
<td>@svtnyheter</td>
<td>Public Service TV news</td>
<td>31 RTs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anders Lindberg</td>
<td>@anderslindberg</td>
<td>Editorial writer at Aftonbladet</td>
<td>30 RTs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVT din röst</td>
<td>@svtdinrost</td>
<td>SVT calling for viewers participation (27 RTs)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helle Klein</td>
<td>@HelleKlein</td>
<td>Editor in chief at Dagens Arbete</td>
<td>25 RTs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Svenska Dagbladet</td>
<td>@SvD</td>
<td>Broadsheet Newspaper (24 RTs)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Swedin</td>
<td>@danielswedin</td>
<td>Editorial Writer at Aftonbladet (24 RTs)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: 10 most retweeted broadcast news media accounts

an account with RTs across the political alliances then we could be almost certain a journalist was behind the account. MPs indeed considered it important to align themselves and their campaign to broadcast news media actors and mass media texts.
It seems that MPs sought attention from traditional broadcast news media actors.
Expressed emotions 

Negative emotions:

- Expressions of anger, dissatisfaction, disappointment, disapproval, frustration, criticisms, lack of faith and fear for the future (see Boote, 1998; Wirtz & Mattila, 2004) were identified as negative emotion displays (see Russmann, in review).

Positive emotions:

- When something or someone were optimistically highlighted or applauded such as focusing on qualifications and accomplishments, in a celebratory fashion (see Djupe & Peterson, 2002; Lau & Pomper, 2001). Also expressions of pleasant surprises were identified as positive.

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In 69% of the tweets, emotion displays were identified. About two thirds were identified as negative emotion displays.
Retweets

News broadcast media is treated as an authority; a link of verification, showing that your opinion is true and that of your opponent is false

⇒ negative emotions, and by retweeting them the MPs in a sense attacked their political opponents

Portraying opponents in an unflattering manner in front of their party comrades = reflexive and strategic emotion displays, negotiating status and group belonging

⇒ Positive, when retweeting broadcast news media actors when they wrote something positive about the party (ex. winning a debate)

Broadcast news media was used as a mouthpiece
Clear connection between MP and to the colour of the editorial page being retweeted

Mostly it was the emotions of the broadcast media actor – sometimes underlined by the MP

Live tweeting from televised debates—the PM laughed – was live tweeting by news media – then RTed by MPs

➡ personalization?
More conversational (obviously)

Through the @message function, Twitter allowed MPs to enter into discussion about the content of news media texts that MPs sometimes thought were untruthful or that issues and persons were incorrectly framed by the broadcast news media actors.

This was mostly about contesting details in reported stories, what was considered unfair criticism ➔ raised emotions among the MPs.

Other broadcast news media actors could also be used when arguing with a journalist.
In the RTs the vast majority of the emotions was those already displayed in the original tweets, gestured by the broadcast news media actor. In the @messages the emotions displayed were gestured by the MPs themselves, i.e. their emotional reactions to coverage in broadcast news.

Emoticons were virtually absent in the RTs, but not in the @messages. In a more conversational context, emoticons were used to replace body language, mostly a smiley 😊 in order to underline that the MPs were stating something/ criticising in a friendly manner.
Some MPs clearly used the @messages to simply make their disagreement with a journalists visible in front of their party comrades and also to other broadcast news media actors (cf. RTs)

Advising/ pushing journalists to attack opponents

MPs praising journalists when they did report on an opponent in an unfavourable manner.
Starting points confirmed

Broadcast news media actors are still the authorities in that politicians use their tweets as trustworthy sources in their political attacks and identity expressions, and that they @messaged with broadcast news media in order to correct stories or to get into the news themselves.

Emotions were used strategically and reflexively in order to attack opponents in front of the peer group of party comrades.
Concluding Thoughts

Polarization and dissent in a hybrid media setting

in line with the mass media logic of conflict and dissent. To be angry, upset and even outraged by political opponents was the expected behaviour by the MPs here.

Mass media logic of conflict is transferred online and intersects with the network media logic of short retweetable and catchy one-liners, polarisation is foregrounded even more at the expense of deliberation and debate.
Thank you for listening!

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