Broadcasting Achievements

Swedish Parties Social Media Posting Practices in-between Elections

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Rationale

Social media use during a non-election period

Focus has been to election periods

*Does social media use drop substantially after election day?*
(see Larsson 2011; Karlsson et al. 2012)

*Accounts of the permanent campaign suggest otherwise*
(see Blumenthal 1982; Doherty 2012)

Campaigning actors take a social media break after the climax of an election is understandable, but does this still hold true 18 months after an election?
Rationale

Cross platform comparison

Most studies also focus on only one platform at a time.

Parties today are present on many different social media platforms. But their presence is most often managed by one social media team (see Russmann 2014)

What are similarities and differences between the platforms used (here the most frequently used platforms in Sweden (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter))
RQ1
To what extent do parties use social media platforms in-between elections (compared to the 2014 elections)?

RQ2
For what purposes (mobilizing, broadcasting, image management)?

RQ3
Did parties use social media to interact/deliberate with followers or not?
Setting

Sweden

Internet penetration in the country is high

**Facebook** most popular, 70% of all internet users visiting sometimes and 50% daily.
**YouTube** 82% (visiting sometimes, 18% daily)
**Instagram** 40 % (visiting sometimes, 23% daily)
**Twitter** 22% (visiting sometimes, 6% daily).
(http://www.internetstatistik.se, accessed May 15th 2016)

Party-based democracy (≠ candidate centered)
Hence we direct our attention to the posting practices of **political parties**
Three different parties

| S  | the Social Democrats (incumbent), |
| FI | the Feminist Initiative (underdog) |
| SD | the Sweden Democrats (populist right-wing) |

Underdogs have different rationales for using social media (Lisi 2013; Larsson & Kalnes 2014)

More established political parties can rely to a greater extent on traditional media outlets

Anti-establishment and populist right-wing parties that are currently very successful
Method

The data comes from a content analysis of the social media postings on the official Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (and YouTube) accounts of the three parties.

For the sample we randomly selected two weeks: The second week of February 2016 (08.–14.02.2016) and the second week of March 2016 (07.03–13.03.2016).
Results

Size of Communities (13.03.2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Democrats</th>
<th>Feminist Initiative</th>
<th>Sweden Democrats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook (No. of likes)</td>
<td>129365</td>
<td>10884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter (No. of followers)</td>
<td>60855</td>
<td>35234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram (No. of followers)</td>
<td>3118</td>
<td>24589</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During 2014 elections

FI, the underdog – most active (no results for YouTube)

Parties did receive comments, shares, retweets and @replies, especially S and SD, FI was better in gathering followers than getting them to interact. Little interaction of deliberative nature
(see Larsson; Russmann; Svensson)
RQ1 – comparison with 2014 elections

Postings by political parties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political party</th>
<th>Facebook (for two weeks)</th>
<th>Twitter (for two weeks)</th>
<th>Instagram (for two weeks)</th>
<th>YouTube (for one year)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Democrats</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminist Initiative</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden Democrats</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
<td><strong>320</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>74</strong></td>
<td><strong>458</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Less used than 2014 elections

Facebook is the most frequently used social media among the population and followers - the parties themselves focused on Twitter profiles.

Dominated by S on Twitter
Decline of FI (compared to election)
Non-use of SD
RQ2 – For what purposes?

Rather used for broadcasting and not mobilizing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>rather broadcasting</th>
<th>rather not broadcasting</th>
<th>rather mobilizing</th>
<th>balanced/ambivalent</th>
<th>rather not mobilizing</th>
<th>balanced/ambivalent</th>
<th>rather personalized</th>
<th>balanced/ambivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Democrats</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminist Initiative</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden Democrats</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Facebook
RQ2 – For what purposes?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Social Democrats</th>
<th>Feminist Initiative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rather broadcasting</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>balanced/ambivalent</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rather not broadcasting</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rather mobilizing</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>balanced/ambivalent</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rather not mobilizing</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rather personalized</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>balanced/ambivalent</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rather not personalized</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RQ3 – Did parties interact with followers?

Did parties’ postings attracted any follower comments? (up to) three comments (if available, sometimes labelled *top comments*).

Did parties respond to the follower comments?

The deliberative nature of this interaction. Deliberative nature is defined in terms of giving relevant and substantive information about political issues (which is required for deliberative discussion) or are participants only referring to trivia, nonsense or giving plain encouragement for the political actor (so-called intrinsic or non-intrinsic values). Also coded for emoticons.
RQ3 – Did parties interact with followers?

Number of Follower Comments (08 -14.02.2016 and 07.03-13.03.2016)

Deliberative Potential of Followers’ Comments
RQ3 – Did parties interact with followers?

Parties comments /captions were generally of intrinsic value

However, although followers generally gave some input, parties did not engage in two-way interaction with them.
Conclusion

- Parties post little on their social media accounts in-between elections

- When they post, they do it for broadcasting purposes

- Twitter is best for this and this is also more interesting for the incumbents (here S)

- Underdog (FI) pool their resources to elections, SD hardly visible

- There were attempts of broadcast information of intrinsic value (≠ during the 2014 elections – exception Instagram)

- However little interaction was sparked
Thank You for Listening!

LIVE AS IF YOU WERE TO DIE TOMORROW
LEARN AS IF YOU WERE TO LIVE FOREVER.
-MAHATMA GANDHI

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