What drives interaction in political actors’ Facebook posts? Profile and content predictors of user engagement and political actors’ reactions

# Details

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## Topics

* Learning
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* Digital and socio-cultural environment
* Researching children online: methodology and ethics

## Sample

quantitative content analysis of political actors’ Facebook posts (N = 1915)

## Implications For Policy Makers About

## Other PolicyMaker Implication

Awareness for the needs of the younger generation

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Researchers

# Abstract

Based on a quantitative content analysis of political actors’ Facebook posts (N = 1915), this study investigates profile-level and post-level drivers of user engagement (comments, likes, and shares) by employing a multilevel approach. For the first time in extant research, we also examine the factors that drive political actors to react to user comments. Findings indicate that the number of followers, the use of an official fan profile, and party vote share were negatively related to political actors’ reactions to user comments. Furthermore, party profiles were least successful in stimulating user engagement. On the post level, we found that reasoning, post length, and references to competitive political actors have the potential to increase different types of user engagement. Negative, but not positive tonality increased user engagement and positive emotional expressions had a stronger effect on user engagement than negative emotions. Furthermore, humorous posts were more likely to be commented, liked, or shared, while mobilization cues had predominantly negative effects on user engagement.

# Outcome

"This study has shown that the interactive potential of political actors’ Facebook accounts may be limited, as the more publicity and public attention a profile receives, the less political actors are willing to react to user comments. However, specifically younger and smaller parties may still actively engage in interaction with users and may hence stimulate initial support among voters. Despite the limited willingness of more popular political actors to react to user comments, their Facebook posts may still provide an important space for user engagement. Most importantly, this study has shown that not only mere negativity, but also reasoning, references to competitive party actors, post length, positive emotions, and humor can have positive effects on different types of user engagement. Even though we found overly negative effects of mobilization cues on user engagement, the provision of really meaningful channels of participation may still have a positive potential, as the close to a significant positive effect of online engagement cues indicated. Speaking for the Austrian case, much of this positive potential, however, is yet to be unfolded." (Heiss et al., 2018, 1510)