

Twitter and political communication: the case of the *Partido Popular* and *Podemos* in the 2016 general elections

Uso e influencia de Twitter en la comunicación política: el caso del Partido Popular y Podemos en las elecciones generales de 2016

Uso e influência do Twitter na comunicação política: o caso do Partido Popular e Podemos nas eleições gerais de 2016

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes how Twitter was used by the five official accounts of the Autonomous Communities with the largest number of followers of the Partido Popular and Podemos during the electoral campaign for the 2016 general elections. Based on the content analysis methodology, 1.845 tweets were analyzed. The results obtained confirm the use of Twitter as a unidirectional tool, without establishing a fluid dialogue between parties and voters. Twitter is used to disseminate information and promote aspects of the electoral campaign.

Keywords: *political marketing; political communication; Twitter; cyberpolitics.*

RESUMEN

Este trabajo analiza el uso que hicieron de Twitter las cinco cuentas oficiales de las comunidades autónomas con mayor número de seguidores del Partido Popular y Podemos durante la campaña electoral para las elecciones generales de 2016. Siguiendo la metodología del análisis de contenido, se analizaron 1.845 tuits. Los resultados obtenidos confirman el uso de Twitter como herramienta unidireccional, sin llegar a establecerse un diálogo fluido entre partidos y votantes. Twitter es utilizado como un medio para la difusión de información y la promoción de aspectos propios de la campaña electoral.

Palabras clave: *marketing político; comunicación política; Twitter; ciberpolítica.*

RESUMO

Este trabalho analisa o uso que fizeram do Twitter as cinco contas oficiais das comunidades autónomas com maior número de seguidores do Partido Popular e Podemos durante a campanha eleitoral para as eleições gerais de 2016. Seguindo a metodologia de análise de conteúdo, foram analisados 1.845 tweets. Os resultados obtidos confirmam o uso do Twitter como ferramenta unidireccional, sem chegar a se estabelecer um diálogo fluido entre partidos e votantes. O Twitter é utilizado como meio para a difusão de informação e a promoção de aspetos próprios da campanha eleitoral.

Palavras-chave: *marketing político; comunicação política; Twitter; ciberpolítica.*

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INTRODUCTION

The development of marketing and political communication has been linked, directly, to the evolution and progress of mass media, and they are not understood without them (Jivkova-Semoya, Requeijo-Rey, & Padilla-Castillo, 2017). Each era has been marked by a different type of communication medium and the political class has always taken advantage of the influence and media impact on voters, making intensive use of the media in their electoral campaigns. If in the 20s it was the press and, as of the 50s, television, nowadays it is the Internet that marks a before and after in communication and in the relationship that politicians establish with the population.

The Internet has produced a break with the traditional theory of mass communication, providing citizens with a new tool to send their messages and expressing and transmitting their ideas (Mathieu, 2015), democratizing access to information and offering citizens the possibility to play a more active role in the communicative process (Marcos, Alonso, & Casero-Ripollés, 2017, p. 27).

The so-called web 2.0 (O'Reilly, 2005), with social networks as a spearhead, has led to the transformation of the passive receiver, who only consumes, to an active issuer, who also creates and distributes content, favoring, at least a priori, a less asymmetric relationship between the different actors of the communication process, giving way to a multidirectional exchange (Castells, 2006) that, in the case of politics, has favored the development of a new form of communication between the different political actors.

In this regard, many authors believe that the Internet has become an essential tool for political and electoral communication (Fernández, Hernández-Santaolla, & Sanz-Marcos, 2018; Campos-Domínguez, 2017; López-Merí, Marcos-García, & Casero-Ripollés, 2017; Alonso-Muñoz, Miquel-Segarra, & Casero-Ripollés, 2016; Rodríguez & Ureña, 2011; Hendricks & Kaid, 2010). Parties, candidates, institutions and public administrations have incorporated in their communication strategies the different channels offered by the Internet, and have done so progressively, starting with traditional webpages and blogs and then implementing the use of social networks in their electoral campaigns (Zugasti & Sabés, 2015). This has led social networks to become an essential instrument within the tools that candidates use to spread their messages to the population, to the point that planning political communication without the use of the Web

2.0 and social networks is no longer possible (Alonso-Muñoz *et al.*, 2016).

For Barranco (2010), this fact is key in the current development of political and electoral marketing since, unlike the classic communication tools, social networks add new communication possibilities: on the one hand, they allow parties to segment the campaign depending on the users' different profiles and, on the other, they encourage bidirectionality and the possibility of interacting quickly and easily. As Rodríguez and Ureña (2011, p. 31) point out, "the voter no longer only listens, but also speaks".

Within the paradigm of social networks, Twitter has established itself as a key tool in the development of any marketing and political communication campaign (Campos-Domínguez, 2017). As Micó and Casero (2014) state, the characteristics of this microblog (immediacy, speed, concision and bidirectionality) broaden the ways of contact between the different political actors, encouraging the exchange of messages and even fostering the establishment of relationships, which translates into a transformation of the voter, who becomes a participant in the political arena.

The importance that Twitter has taken within cyber-politics has led to this research, to continue clarifying the use given to it as a tool for political communication.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND POLITICS

The evolution of new information and communications technologies has led to the revolution that has been observed in marketing and in political communication in recent years. According to Tüñez and Sixto (2011), the use of new technologies in political communication for the transmission and exchange of messages has led to the emergence of new terms for the new interaction scenario: teledemocracy (Arterton, 1987; Serra, 2002), virtual politics (Holmes, 1997), cyberdemocracy (Dader & Campos 2006) or, most recently, cyber-politics (Cotarelo, 2013).

The Internet has facilitated greater access to information, in addition to interconnection, interactivity, digitalization, diversity, collaboration and penetration at all levels, without the space/time barrier (Bucheli, 2014). There is now the possibility that any individual acts, from anywhere, not only as a receiver, but also as an issuer, or a transmitter; in addition, as Zugasti and Sabés (2015) explain, their message can reach a large number of recipients, which means a break

with the traditional linear communication system, forcing political actors to adapt to communication 2.0 in order to establish a dialogue (Túñez, Martínez, & Abejón, 2010).

According to Túñez and Sixto (2011), Web 2.0 contributes to constitute a collective intelligence based on the exchange of experiences and knowledge, thanks to the communication tools (from blogs, social networks or mobile device applications) provided by the Internet to facilitate creation, editing and exchange of content. Following Menéndez (2011), Web 2.0 has increased the intervention and citizen collaboration typical of democracy, replacing the one-to-many communication model with a many-to-many model, offering to give voters the chance to develop a greater activity.

SOCIAL NETWORKS AND POLITICS

For the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB, 2008), social media are digital platforms that allow communication between users, who can generate content and share information through their profiles, whether public or private. This category includes, according to IAB (2008), social networks, blogs, professional networks and graphic utilities, among a wide range of devices and mediums, provided that they make available to those who use them the possibility of creating and sharing content. Social networks allow the ordinary individual to share both written and audiovisual messages, and that is where their true strength lies (Paniagua & Gómez, 2012).

In a technological and sociologically advanced society, social networks are established as the most appropriate resource and channel for the implementation of marketing 2.0, making possible the interaction of political parties and their members with the population that uses these media (Túñez & Sixto, 2011). For these authors, social networks represent both a new environment and a new communication support, but for this the user must be proactive within the communities in which he/she decides to participate, because the network, although it has a global reach, is made up of small networks in which each member decides with whom he/she interacts and to whom he/she adds to his/her group of interlocutors.

Due to the volume of users they have and the control that can be exercised over the message, social networks are considered an ideal tool to gain adherents within political activity. They offer facilities to manage powerful actions within the political campaign, develop the politician's interpersonal communication, maintain

or create an image, foster support circles or make a difference with the rivals, among other objectives (Túñez & Sixto, 2011).

Although social networks are a recent phenomenon, at the end of the 1990s, before the emergence of the 2.0, some strategies were already beginning to be developed to bring the political class closer to citizens using the Internet. During the election campaigns, the parties created webpages to support their candidates and even included discussion spaces, such as forums or live chats. As of 2002, politicians began using social networks, such as blogs, for their electoral campaigns, due to the potential they offer. According to a study conducted by the strategic agency of geomarketing and communication Intelligence Compass, already in 2010 94% of politicians valued the utility of social networks as outstanding and 78% saw them as an excellent medium to reach citizenship.

Based on the previous data, it can be said that the Internet and social networks introduced new possibilities for political communication, changed the policy itself and redefined the relationship between it and the media (Holtz-Bacha, 2013). These new opportunities for interaction and communication have transferred political activity to the network, as stated by Cotarelo (2010). Politics are increasingly sensitized to the need to have a presence in the networks and the importance of generating relevant and useful content, of interest for users (Berrocal, Campos, & Redondo, 2014).

TWITTER AND POLITICS

Thanks to all the advances fostered by the digital society, the mass media are no longer the only channel to reach the public. Nowadays, the institutions can contact the citizens directly and vice versa, citizens can get in touch with the power (Castells, 2006); this is reflected in the growing use of Twitter by the population to be in contact with politicians. As the *CIS Postelectoral Elecciones Generales 2016. Avance de resultados* (2016 CIS Post-electoral General Elections. First results) study points out, 25% of respondents acknowledge having followed information on the 2016 elections through this social network, thus avoiding the mediation of the press, which in many occasions is seen more as a barrier than as an efficient communication channel (Fernández, 2012). On the other hand, there is no doubt that the political class, in its marketing and communication strategies, has always been a pioneer in the use and implementation of new media and communication technologies

(Guerrero-Solé & Mas-Manchón, 2017). In this regard, cyber-politics can be considered as a discipline that must be fully integrated into the communicative strategy of an electoral campaign, since this will have a positive impact on relations with the electorate. It is a fact that Twitter has become one of the most relevant social networks for the political and journalistic class. Piscitelli himself (2011) considers it as one of the most powerful communication mechanisms in history.

This social network was created by Jack Dorsey in 2006, although it did not reach popularity until 2007. It currently has more than 200 million users worldwide, which means the exchange of millions of messages daily. It is considered a microblogging network, since its messages are condensed into a maximum of characters, which makes concision another of its main characteristics. The speed (immediacy) in the transmission and reception of messages also stands out, facilitating interaction between users.

In short, Twitter favors communication, direct contact and dialogue, which enhances the bidirectionality of communication between institutions and citizens. Since its inception it has been of increasing importance in the political context, which has led to a growing volume of scientific works that analyze political marketing and communication from different perspectives. As Campos-Domínguez (2017) points out, the academic analysis has focused on the issuers and recipients of the message, whether they are parliamentarians, politicians, political parties, interest groups, institutions or the citizen's own role as a content producer (Bracciale & Martella, 2017; Waisbord & Amado, 2017; López-García, 2016; Boerman & Kruikemeier, 2016; Van-Kessel & Castelein, 2016; Van-der-Graaf, Otjes, & Rasmussen, 2015; Margaretten & Gaber, 2014). También, prosigue esta autora, se ha analizado el debate político que se genera alrededor de Twitter (Herrera-Damas, 2016; Congosto-Martínez, 2016; Castellano-Montero, 2016; Martínez-Rolán, 2016; Hahn, Ryu, & Park, 2015; Bastos, Raimundo, & Travitzki, 2013). The research that analyzes the use of Twitter in elections campaign cannot be ignored (Persily, 2017; Enli, 2017; Marín-Dueñas & Díaz-Guerra, 2016; Casero-Ripollés, Miquel-Segarra, & Alonso-Muñoz, 2016; Kreiss, 2016; Jürgens & Jungherr, 2015; García & Zugasti, 2014), as this is the object of study of this research.

Since Obama's first campaign in 2008 to the last of Trump and Clinton in 2017, Twitter has been increasingly important (Enli, 2017; Bohaty, 2009). Thus, it can be understood as a tool for political

communication, especially during elections. Campaign Twitter studies have therefore been incorporated into the broad field of study of electoral campaigns in a variety of regional, national and extra-national contexts (Campos-Domínguez, 2017, p. 788).

In these investigations, Twitter is presented as a tool with great functionality for citizens, who can expose and exchange their ideas and thoughts, as well as for politicians. This social network, like other tools offered by the Internet, eliminates the barriers established so far for political communication, prioritizing spontaneity and immediacy and fostering a fluid exchange in conversation and political debate. In the previous communication model, if a politician wanted to address the citizenry he had to use the mass media and, therefore, his/her message had to be received, interpreted and filtered by journalists, who did not always do it to the politician's taste nor with the relevance or in the desired informative space. If the politician wanted a more direct type of communication, he should do it through letters, brochures or rallies that lacked the feeling of closeness and personalization, as well as the speed and possibility of interaction offered by Twitter. If the politician wanted a more direct type of communication, he/she needed to do it through letters, brochures or rallies that lacked the feeling of closeness and personalization, as well as the speed and possibility of interaction, offered by Twitter. Nowadays, the new communication tools enable politicians to address a greater number of people without the need for intermediaries, making sure that the message reaches the network user directly without any filter.

Fernández (2012) determines the importance of Twitter to understand the dynamics of the public agenda and specify which issues will have the greatest impact on the media agenda through tools such as hashtags or trending topics.

Rodríguez and Ureña (2011) define the following reasons why the political class should make use of social networks and, particularly, Twitter:

- Twitter (still) provides an image of modernity.
- Allows conversation with the citizen.
- Twitter users are opinion leaders in their environments.
- It is an internal communication tool and generates continuity.

- Twitter is the medium of current affairs.
- It is a source of information for journalists and a way to improve the relationship with them.
- It helps politicians to think and speak in headlines and, therefore, to be better spokespersons.
- Humanizes politicians and increases empathy for them.
- It is a social barometer.
- Helps winning elections.

Although these advantages are very positive for developing political communication, research has shown that the political class is more interested in the dissemination of information and in the retweets than in the debate, making little use of the interactivity that characterizes this social network (Guerrero-Solé & Mas-Manchón, 2017; Alonso-Muñoz *et al.*, 2016; Ribalko & Seltzer, 2017). In short, it is very easy to create an account and have a digital presence, but not so much to generate and manage the political debate and interact with the rest of the users and political actors (Campos-Domínguez, 2017).

In summary, it can be determined that Twitter in particular and social networks in general are a very useful tool for carrying out adequate political communication. An important part of the electorate is made up of undecided people, who decide their vote in the last phases of the campaign, when they have enough proofs to determine which will be the winning party or candidate. In this regard, social networks offer political campaigns the possibility of demonstrating both numerical strength and manifestations of power.

Having a greater number of followers on Twitter or any other social network, gain an advantage in digital polls, get any idea favorable to the election campaign to reach the top positions in terms of the most commented topics on the network or have the support of users who promulgate a good image of the party or candidate, quantitatively determines the probability of achieving an electoral victory. These, among others, are the new variables to determine the achievement of the chosen electoral objectives (Fernández, 2012). Another thing is whether the main political actors, parties, and candidates are able to make proper use of all the

potential that these tools have to make good electoral communication.

OBJECTIVES

The object of this research focuses on the electoral process for the general elections held in 2016 in Spain; specifically, we analyze the political communication made by the political parties Partido Popular and Podemos in Twitter.

Therefore, the general objective is the analysis of the use made by the political parties Partido Popular and Podemos of the Twitter communication tool during the electoral campaign carried out for the 2016 general elections during the week before and after the 26th of June 2016.

To do so, we propose the following specific objectives:

- Determine the communicative behavior of political parties in their official Twitter accounts.
- Measure the interaction between political parties and citizens through Twitter.
- Analyze what kind of messages are sent by political parties in their official Twitter accounts.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

The research technique chosen to conduct this work has been content analysis, widely accepted and used in communication studies. Based on systematic, objective, replicable and valid reading as a procedure for collecting information (Cea, 2001; Andréu, 2001), it allows obtaining reliable, real, rich, and deep data (Krippendorff, 2004; Neuendorf, 2002). It focuses on a set of interpretative procedures of communicative products (messages, texts, or speeches) that come from previously registered singular communication processes and that, based on sometimes quantitative measurement techniques (statistics based on unit count), sometimes qualitative ones (logical based on the combination of categories), seek to elaborate and process relevant data on the conditions in which those texts have been produced or on the conditions that may occur for their subsequent use (Piñuel, 2002).

In short, content analysis is a technique of communication research that is characterized and different from the others, such as surveys or interviews,

| Official Twitter accounts of Partido Popular | Number of followers | Official Twitter accounts of Podemos | Number of followers |
|--|---------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| @ppmadrid | 96,113 | @PodemosCMadrid | 23,465 |
| @PPCatalunya | 57,653 | @Podemos_AND | 22,196 |
| @PPAndaluz | 29,285 | @Podem_ | 12,544 |
| @ppcv | 16,595 | @PodemosAragon | 11,479 |
| @pparagon | 10,801 | @PodemosEuskadi_ | 10,319 |

Table 1. PP and Podemos Twitter profiles

Source: Own elaboration based on the information provided by Twitter.

| Electoral campaign | | | | Closing of the election campaign | Reflection day | Election day | Post-election day | Negotiations | | | | | |
|--------------------|----|----|----|----------------------------------|----------------|--------------|-------------------|--------------|----|------|---|---|---|
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| June | | | | | | | | | | July | | | |

Table 2. Analysis period

Source: Own elaboration.

due to its complexity, the result of combining both the observation and production of data and its analysis and interpretation (Andréu, 2001).

SAMPLE ELECTION

The sample consists of the Twitter accounts of the Partido Popular and Podemos for each autonomous community in Spain. These parties have been chosen since they are of clearly different ideologies and because one represents a traditional party and the other is an emerging formation in the Spanish political landscape. Specifically, we selected the five accounts that had the largest number of followers as of July 20, 2017.

STUDY PERIOD

The time period of the analysis includes the week before and after June 26, 2016, date of the thirteenth general elections held in Spain since the transition to democracy. Thus, we can study four days of the election campaign (June 20, 21, 22 and 23), the end and closing of the election campaign (June 24), the reflection day (June 25), the day of the general elections (June 26), the post-election day (June 27) and six days of negotiations

(June 28, 29 and 30; July 1, 2 and 3). In total, 1,845 tweets were analyzed.

STUDY VARIABLES

To implement an analysis that allows measuring the tweets published by the ten selected accounts, we defined a series of categories and indicators, the choice of which is based on the works of López-Meri, Marcos-García and Casero-Ripollés (2017), Marín-Dueñas and Díaz-Guerra (2016), Zugasti and Pérez (2015), García and Zugasti (2014), Deltell, Claes and Osteso (2013), and Criado, Martínez-Fuentes and Silván (2013).

RESULTS

Before starting the analysis of results, it is worth noting that the most followed accounts of one party and another match in 80% of the cases: Madrid, Catalonia, Andalusia and Aragon, although the number of followers is very different: While the PP accounts together reach 130,444 followers, those of Podemos do not exceed 80,003. Tables 4 and 5 show the disaggregated results (number and type of tweets as well as interactivity) of

| Tweet numbers | | Tweets published every day for each account |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| ELECTORAL COMMUNICATION | Program/Promises | Tweets related to the program and electoral proposals. |
| | Criticism of the adversary | Tweets attacking the performance and/or ideology of rival political formations, or that criticize political opponents. |
| | Political agenda | Tweets informing on acts of the election campaign. |
| | Political achievements | Messages to the formation, the leader or the team praising some achievement. |
| | Values and ideology | Tweets in which the values and ideology of the party are exalted and strengthened. |
| | Humor | Tweets in which humor is used through memes, jokes and other resources. |
| INTERACTIVITY | Retweet | Tweets from other people who have been retweeted by the Twitter account studied. |
| | Acknowledgments | Tweets aimed at thanking or praising another user. |
| | Interaction/dialogue with users | Tweets in which mention (@) is used, regardless of the type of content. |

Table 3. Analysis variables

Source: Own elaboration based on Criado, Martínez-Fuentes, & Silván (2013), Deltell, Claes, & Osteso (2013), García & Zugasti (2014), López-Meri, Marcos-García, & Casero-Ripollés (2017), Marín-Dueñas & Díaz-Guerra (2016), and Zugasti & Pérez (2015).

the analyzed accounts of Partido Popular and Podemos.

The five accounts of the Autonomous Communities of the Partido Popular (PP) analyzed published a total of 616 tweets during the 14 days studied, while those associated with Podemos (POD) double that figure (1229 tweets), an average of 44 and 88 tweets a day, respectively. This data is especially striking, considering that the PP accounts analyzed exceed those of POD in 130,444 followers.

Among the PP accounts, the Community of Madrid stands out, publishing 42% of the tweets (257) of the analyzed accounts of the party, while the Valencian Community was very little active, with only 45 tweets in the analyzed period. In the case of POD there is more homogeneity, although the activity of the accounts is significantly higher in the cases of Andalusia (34%), Euskadi (24%) and Madrid (23%).

As can be seen in figure 1, in the case of the sample analyzed, the types of tweets that are most relevant are those focused on criticism of the adversary and those in which acts of the electoral campaign are promoted (political agenda). In the PP accounts, tweets of criticism of the political contender almost triple those focused

on the proposals of the electoral program (33% vs. 13%). In the Catalan PP account, for example, they account for 50% of the total tweets they publish (table 1). In POD accounts, the figure is also high (27%), although the ratio with respect to program publications is much lower (27% vs. 23%). In this case, it is also the POD Catalonia account (@Podem_) that makes the most use of this type of content (34% of the total of its tweets, as shown in table 2). These data, both in the case of PP and POD, can be explained by the degree of tension that was and is lived in Catalonia in relation to the independence process. In any case, attacks and reproaches, accusations and criticism make up the imaginary of this type of messages. It is curious to see how, although it is the ruling party, the PP focuses its publications on criticism and negative discourse towards the political adversary when, as a ruling party, it should enhance its own achievements.

In fact, another type of message that reinforces the political discourse in the campaign is that of highlighting and reinforcing the political achievements of the parties. In this regard, the PP accounts, the ruling party, makes greater use of this type of tweets (12%)

| | @ppmadrid | @PPCatalunya | @PPAndaluz | @ppcv | @pparagon | TOTAL |
|---------------------------------|-----------|--------------|------------|-------|-----------|-------|
| N° TWEETS | 257 | 107 | 137 | 45 | 70 | 616 |
| ELECTORAL COMMUNICATION | | | | | | |
| Program/ | 23.74 | 10.28 | 2.19 | 4.44 | 11.43 | 13.8 |
| Promises | 29.57 | 55.14 | 40.88 | 4.44 | 14.29 | 32.95 |
| Criticism of the adversary | 15.95 | 26.17 | 34.31 | 66.67 | 38.57 | 28.08 |
| Political agenda | 20.62 | 0.93 | 12.41 | 2.22 | 2.86 | 12.01 |
| Political achievements | 1.95 | 1.87 | 3.65 | 2.22 | 1.43 | 2.27 |
| Values and ideology | 2.33 | 0 | 0 | 2.22 | 0 | 1.14 |
| INTERACTIVITY | | | | | | |
| Retweets | 3.11 | 2.8 | 1.46 | 2.22 | 28.57 | 5.52 |
| Acknowledgments | 2.72 | 2.8 | 5.11 | 15.56 | 2.86 | 4.22 |
| Interaction/dialogue with users | 40.91 | 24.84 | 23.38 | 6.82 | 4.55 | 27.59 |

Table 4. Type of tweets published (% on the party account). Partido Popular

Source: Own elaboration.

| | @PodemosCMadrid | @Podemos_AND | @Podem_ | @PodemosAragon | @PodemosEuskadi_ | TOTAL |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|---------|----------------|------------------|-------|
| N° tweets | 274 | 414 | 185 | 66 | 290 | 1229 |
| ELECTORAL COMMUNICATION | | | | | | |
| Program/promises | 17.52 | 22.46 | 26.49 | 30.3 | 26.9 | 23.43 |
| Criticism of the adversary | 28.1 | 27.29 | 34.05 | 19.7 | 23.1 | 27.1 |
| Political agenda | 33.94 | 24.15 | 27.57 | 31.82 | 32.76 | 29.29 |
| Political achievements | 2.92 | 16.91 | 5.41 | 10.61 | 6.21 | 9.19 |
| Values and ideology | 1.46 | 2.17 | 2.16 | 3.03 | 1.38 | 1.87 |
| Humor | 0 | 1.69 | 0.54 | 1.52 | 1.38 | 1.06 |
| INTERACTIVITY | | | | | | |
| Retweets | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5.52 | 1.3 |
| Acknowledgments | 16.06 | 5.31 | 3.78 | 3.03 | 2.76 | 6.75 |
| Interaction/dialogue with users | 35.39 | 31.41 | 22.78 | 3.5 | 32.38 | 29.72 |

Table 5. Type of tweets published (% on the party account). Podemos

Source: Own elaboration.

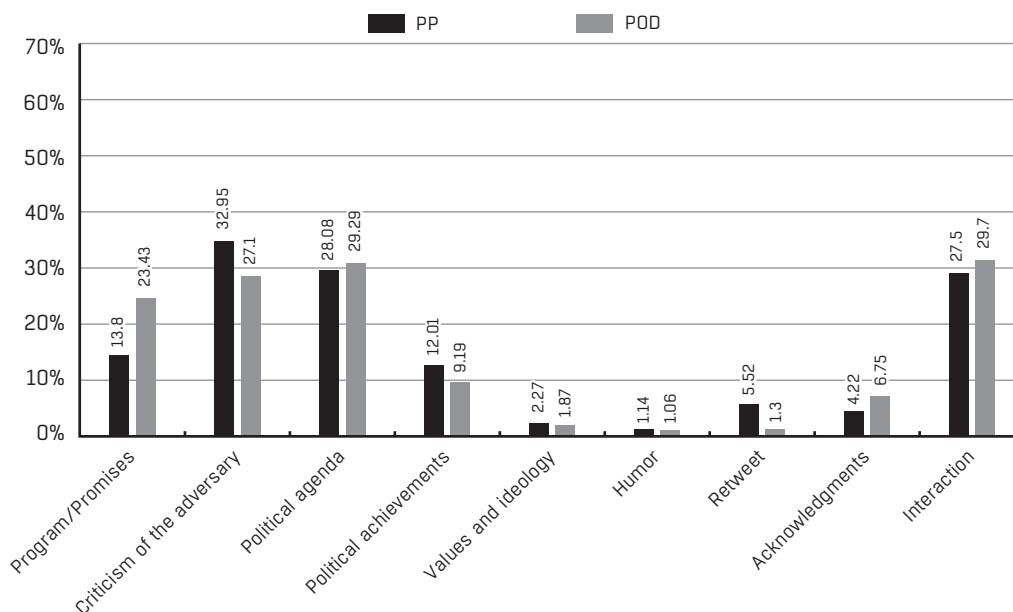


Figure 1. Type of tweets published. PP vs. Podemos

Source: Own elaboration.

than a party like POD (9%), which is opposition. As we said, it is quite striking that the PP prefers to attack the rival (negative use) rather than giving visibility to their successes and achievements as rulers (positive use).

Helping to improve citizen participation and mobilization can be considered another important resource that Twitter offers to political parties as a medium of communication. And in this line, both the PP (28%) and POD (29%) accounts use Twitter to inform about the candidates' political agenda, announcing electoral events in which they will be present, thus promoting such mobilization. It also becomes a good mechanism to reach the press, which finds in it an agile and fast system to be informed.

One of the main functions of Twitter as an electoral communication tool is to publicize the electoral program. For both parties it is the third most used option, although the POD accounts make more active use (23.5%) than those of the PP (13.8%).

Another type of message that strengthens and enhances the parties' electoral communication is the one used to highlight their values and political ideology. In this case, both the PP (2.27%) and POD (1.87%) accounts make little use of these contents.

Now that the main types of content that the parties publish on Twitter from an eminently electoral perspective have been analyzed, we will focus on another issue that makes this social network a tool

of special interest for political communication: the humanization of politicians, who seek the voters' empathy.

In this case, we have used a widely employed resource as an indicator: publications that, through humor, by using memes or comic images, seek to attract attention. In this regard, we can say that this strategy is the least used by both the PP (1.1%) and POD (1%).

Figure 2 shows that the most active PP account, that of the community of Madrid, uses more types of tweets (critical, 30%; promises, 24%; achievements, 21%; agenda, 16%). On the other hand, the least active, that of the Valencian Community, focuses its tweets to inform about campaign events (67%); that is, it gives more use as an information board.

As noted above, the accounts focused especially on criticizing the adversary are first @PPCatalunya and secondly @PPAndaluz.

Regarding POD, as we said before, the accounts are more active in general, and POD Andalucía stands out; there is also more homogeneity in the number of tweets published, as well as in their type.

Although it is understandable that they resort to a lesser extent than the PP to Twitter to publicize their political achievements, because it is a new party, precisely because of this it is striking the almost non-existence of tweets related to values and ideology and humor (the account @PODMadrid does not use any

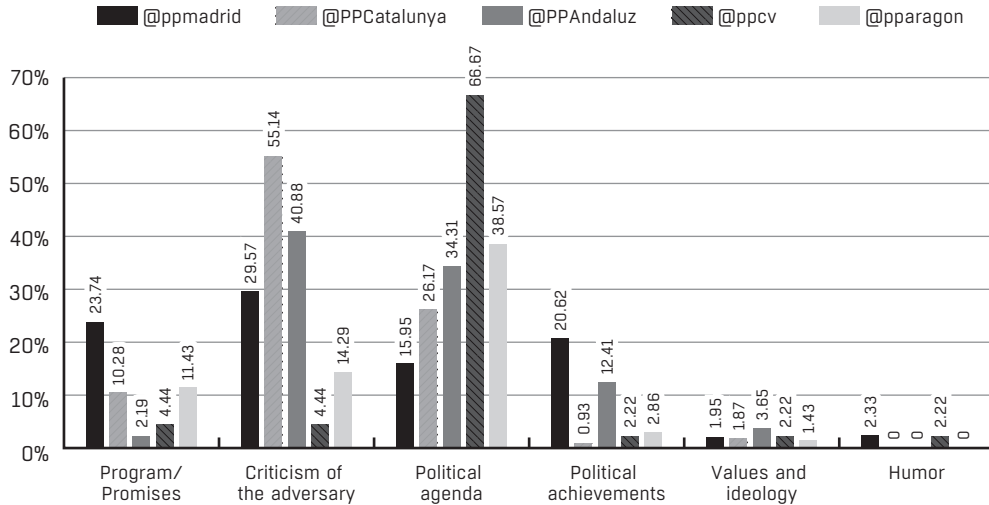


Figure 2. PP tweets by Autonomous Community related to electoral communication

Source: Own elaboration.

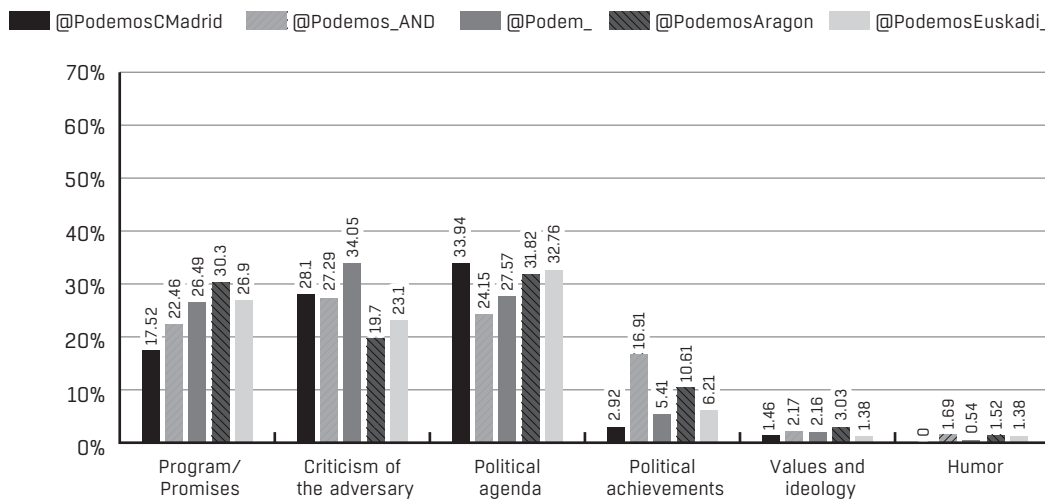


Figure 3. Podemos tweets by Autonomous Community related to electoral communication

Source: Own elaboration.

humorous resource, as can be seen), more in line with Twitter trends and the use given to social networks by 15M, the germ of the POD party.

Finally, we should comment on a key element that Web 2.0 has brought with it: the interactivity between the sender and the recipients of the messages, analyzed by means of three indicators: retweets, acknowledgments and direct interaction with other users via mentions. In the first case, both parties almost do not make use of this option, which consists simply of reposting what another user has written in his/her account before. Even so, the PP uses retweets (5.5%)

more than POD (1%). In this regard, the individual analysis of the accounts leaves us with two interesting facts: on the one hand, the PP of Aragon is the one that makes a notorious use of the retweets, since 28.5% of its publications are of this type (figure 4). On the other hand, in POD only the Euskadi account is the one that uses this resource (figure 5), which confirms that POD accounts are characterized by generating their own content.

The second indicator that has been used to measure interactivity is the acknowledgments or praise to other users. In this case, both the PP (4.7%) and POD

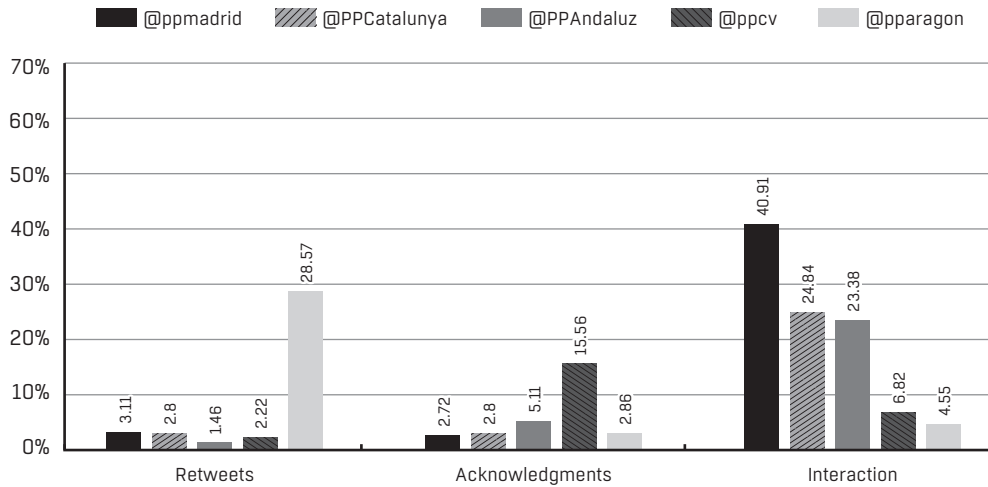


Figure 4. PP tweets by Autonomous Community related to interactivity

Source: Own elaboration.

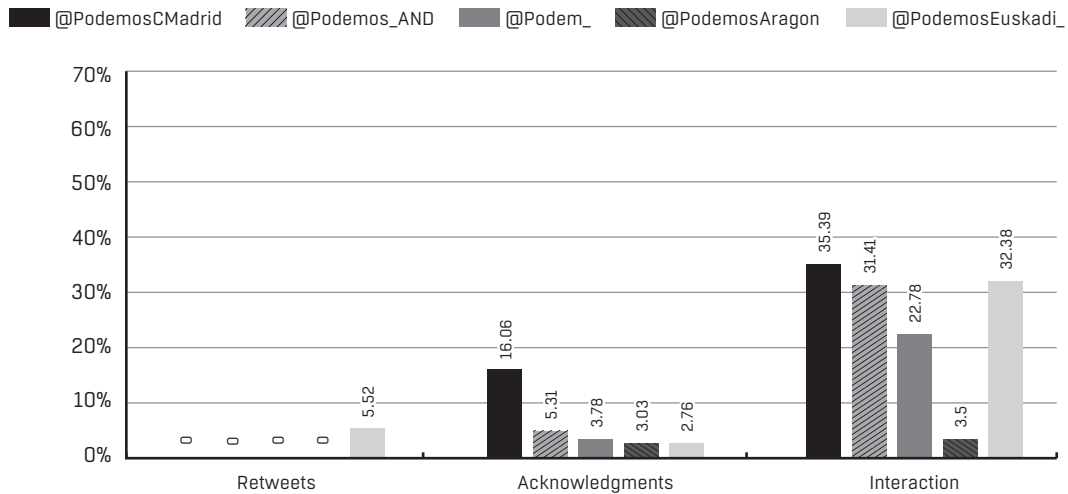


Figure 5. Podemos tweets by Autonomous Community related to interactivity

Source: Own elaboration.

(6.7%) seek with this type of tweets to personally praise the work of their candidates and political referents, highlighting their achievements. There are two accounts that stand out from the others in this type of publications: PP Valencian Community, with 15.5% (figure 4) and POD Madrid Community, with 16.6% (figure 5).

Finally, direct interaction has been measured through mentions (@), so that the content of the messages reaches those users, thus encouraging the response and participation of other users in the communication process. This strategy is used on average in almost 30%

of the tweets published by the PP and POD accounts. From the individual analysis, the PP account of the Community of Madrid stands out, which includes a 40% of mentions on the contents it publishes (figure 4). On the contrary, other accounts such as those of POD Aragon or the PP of Aragon barely make use of this resource.

CONCLUSIONS

In the first place, it is interesting to note that the number of followers of the accounts is not correlated

with their activity, because, as we have seen, the PP accounts analyzed exceed the POD accounts by more than 100,000 followers; however, the level of tweets is double in the latter. Perhaps the largest number of followers of the PP can be explained because it has a greater historical trajectory and a greater number of voters (in the 2016 general elections, the PP obtained 7,906,185 million votes and Podemos, 5,049,734). On the other hand, while in the PP there is much difference between the account of the Community of Madrid and the rest, much less active, all POD accounts show a lot of activity, which obviously has an impact on the fact that POD has published a greater number of tweets. The fact that there is a greater commitment to Twitter in the case of POD may be explained since the party is more aware of the importance of the Internet, without ignoring the majority profile of its electorate.

While there is a lot of difference in the number of followers and tweets published, we have not found substantial differences in the way Twitter is used. In any case, while the PP bet in the first instance for criticism of the adversary and secondly for the information of the political agenda acts, giving less importance to other types of messages, in POD the dissemination of the official acts of the election campaign prevails, followed by criticism of the adversary and the information and promises of the program.

In any case, it can be concluded that both the PP and POD use Twitter as a medium of communication to spread their messages. In this regard, we consider that their use

of Twitter would fit more with the context of traditional politics than with that of cyber-politics, understanding that they do not adapt to the digital environment, a fact that is stated in the type of predominant message they use (humor is almost non-existent) and in that they do not take advantage of the interactivity that this tool allows, which is demonstrated by the null use of retweets and acknowledgements, as well as the low percentage of messages with mentions. We can say, therefore, that although the social network offers a wide variety of possibilities to have conversations with users, political party accounts use Twitter primarily as an eminently unidirectional communication channel, without taking advantage of its dialogic potential, as noted by other recent research to which we have alluded previously.

The messages that these parties share are mainly informative and, therefore, institutional, unlike the emotional and collaborative content generated by 15M activists, who managed to unleash networks of indignation, as Castells (2012) called them or the use that politicians like Trump have given to it, with simple, direct and controversial messages, completely apart from the institutional tone and standards.

In short, although Twitter has become an indispensable channel in the marketing and electoral communication strategies of the Spanish political parties, their use of this network is far from being one that uses it as an open dialogue tool that encourages interaction, exchange and conversation between political parties and citizens.

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