

Social Media Campaigning by Candidates in the 2010 Greek Municipal Elections

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Abstract: *Web campaigning has been an established political marketing approach used by politicians and parties in various electoral contests. The emergence of web 2.0 tools and social media offer new challenging promotional tools for politicians. The aim of the present study is to explore the use of social media by candidates for the municipality seats of the 2010 local elections. Specifically, this study investigates a) the preferences of candidates in using a mixture of various social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube as well as using a website for their electoral campaign b) the urbanization factor in the use of web tools in the 2010 municipal electoral campaign (c) the influence of web campaign in the outcome results of the local municipal elections. The analysis is based on a sample of 1284 candidates who ran in the 2010 Greek local elections for the municipality seats. Our results demonstrate that a) the urbanization factor is influencing candidates to run a social media electoral campaign and b) Facebook was the leading web campaign tool in the 2010 municipal elections in Greece due to its widespread use by candidates as well as its effectiveness in the outcome of the electoral result.*

Keywords: *Social Media Marketing, Political Marketing, e-Politics, Web 2.0, Social Informatics.*

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of Web 2.0 tools allowed users to change roles from a passive audience of a web page to becoming actual contributors of web content. This dialogic feature brought people together providing opportunities for social networking and dialogic communication. Wikis, Facebook, My Space, YouTube, Flickr and any web medium that users may contribute with content is referred to as social media. The massive content contribution by group of users held the promise for better citizen participation in politics enhancing the potential of e-democracy. Web 2.0 provides opportunities for individuals to become citizen-campaigners capable of assuming a more direct or organized role in a campaign (Gibson, 2009), elevating hopes for the growth of “bottom-up” campaigns. Initial studies of parties experimenting with web 2.0 (Kalnes, 2009) showed that although Web 2.0 offers a weak pluralizing effect in party communication, it enhanced participatory democracy by lowering the threshold for the involvement of the party grassroots and other sympathizers with the party.

The effect of web 2.0 in online campaigning appears already in a number of studies (Gibson and McAllister, 2009; Jackson and Lilleker 2009; Jaeger et.al. 2010; Kalnes 2009; Lilleker et. al 2010), offering interesting findings on the use of web 2.0 in the political arena. Gibson and McAllister (2009) studied web 2.0 campaign in the Australian Federal Elections demonstrating that online campaigning did attract votes. Jaeger et.al. (2010) compared the use of social networks in the 2008 campaigns for US President and Prime Minister of Canada respectively. The effects of web 2.0 on parties has been investigated by Kalnes (2009) in the case of Norwegian parties. According to Kalnes, Web 2.0 enhanced participatory democracy and party visibility in Web 2.0 roughly reflecting party vote share. Jackson and Lilleker (2009) study of UK parties on Web 2.0 focused on the participatory architecture of political communication, introducing the term “web 1.5” to better fit existing party use of Web 2.0 tools as promotional and marketing devices in campaigns. Lilleker et. al (2010) study of Web 2.0 by the Liberal Democrat party in UK found the party’s performance of interactivity to be “weak”.

This paper contributes to the literature of social media electoral campaigning by posing the following research questions in reference to the 2010 Greek municipal elections:

RQ1: What was the usage level of online tools by political candidates during the pre-election period of the 2010 local elections in Greece?

RQ2: What was the level of cross online political campaigning by candidates during the pre-election period of the 2010 local elections in Greece?

RQ3: Did urbanization influence the usage of web tools by political candidates during the pre-election period of the 2010 local elections in Greece?

RQ4: Did the web tools used by candidates impact the election outcome of November 2010 Greek local elections?

METHODOLOGY

The analysis presented in this paper is based on a sample of 1284 candidates who ran for the 2010 Greek local elections for municipal seats. The first round of the elections took place on the 7th of November and the second round on the 14th of November. The data for this study came from sources such as official state records and various online platforms. Firstly, researchers entered the official page of the Hellenic Republic Ministry of Interior (<http://ekloges.ypes.gr/>) and within the section “elections” identified all the candidates running for the municipal elections. For each candidate the periphery in which he/she was contested was also obtained. Secondly, each candidate’s name was entered in the search engines of Google, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter to identify if the candidate had a Website and/or a Facebook profile, and/or a YouTube channel, and/or a Twitter account. Researchers took special care in order to include in the data set only the official online presence of politicians. Use of Website, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter were coded as binary variables 0-1, equaling one if the candidate owned each one of the aforementioned online tools. Other variables used in the study were periphery (a categorical variable coded as 1-13, which corresponds to one out of the 13 peripheries of Greece) and the election success of the candidate which was coded on the dataset as 1: didn’t win, 2: won. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS 17.0) was utilized for the analysis of the data. Furthermore, in order to answer the research questions of the present study chi-square independency tests were used and binary logistic regression.

RESULTS

Use of Media Tools

For the first research question, simple frequencies were calculated. Almost twenty six percent (26.4%) of candidates had a presence on Facebook; eighteen percent of them owned a Website (18.1%); Nine percent of the candidates uploaded official campaign material on YouTube (9.4%), and only seven percent of candidates had a Twitter account in order to communicate with their supporters (7.4%). These findings suggest the Facebook dominated the online media landscape.

Cross Online Media Campaigning

Political candidates can use a mixture of online tools (i.e. Website, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) to reach effectively voters. Cross online media campaigning offers candidates the opportunity to communicate across multiple channels with citizens. For the second research question cross tabulation procedures and chi-square tests were conducted for each pair of web tools. Phi and Cramer’s V coefficient was also estimated. Results are presented separately for each online tool.

Facebook as a Primary Tool

Table 1 shows the level of combined use of Facebook with other online tools such as Website, Twitter, and YouTube. Chi-square tests indicate that there are significant differences between candidates regarding the cross usage of Facebook and Website ($\chi^2=93.44$, $p=0.000$); Facebook and YouTube channel ($\chi^2=48.245$, $p=0.000$) and Facebook and Twitter ($\chi^2=18.87$, $p=0.000$). Regarding the cross usage of Facebook and Website, almost thirty five percent of candidates with a Facebook profile owned a Website. Moreover, Phi and Cramer’s coefficient was 0.270 indicating that the level of association between Facebook and Website usage was weak. Similar findings were observed for the cross usage of Facebook and YouTube. Phi and Cramer’s V was 0.194. Thus, a weak association was found in the use of Facebook and YouTube. Almost nineteen percent of candidates who were active on Facebook had also a YouTube channel. Finally, Twitter and Facebook were used together by almost thirteen percent of candidates. Again, Phi and Cramer’s V coefficient was low (0.121). The above results indicate that the majority of candidates do not use Facebook together with other online platforms.

Table 1: Cross Usage of Facebook, Website, YouTube and Twitter.

		Website		YouTube		Twitter	
		No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Facebook	No	833	888	57	112	893	52
	Yes	219	274	64	120	296	43
Chi-square		93.44		18.87		48.52	
Sig.		p=0.000		p=000		p=000	
Phi and Cramer’s V		0.270		0.194		0.121	

Website as a Primary Tool

Table 2 shows the cross usage of Website, YouTube and Twitter by Greek candidates. Chi-square tests suggest that candidates differ significantly in the use of Website and YouTube ($\chi^2=222.65$, $p=0.000$) as well as Website and Twitter ($\chi^2=115.80$, $p=0.000$). Almost thirty five percent of candidates with a Website had also presence on YouTube. Phi and Cramer’s V was 0.417. Hence, a moderate association was found between the use of Website and YouTube by candidates. The strength of relationship between the use of Website and Twitter was again moderate as Phi and Cramer’s V coefficient

indicated (0.300). Twenty four percent of candidates had presence on both online platforms (Website and Twitter). It should be noted that almost fifty two percent of candidates with a Website had a Facebook profile also. Hence, Facebook compared to other online tools was combined more extensively with Websites.

Table 2: Cross Usage of Website, YouTube and Twitter

		YouTube		Twitter	
		No	No	Yes	Yes
Website	No	1012	1013	39	39
	Yes	150	176	56	82
Chi-Square Sig. Phi and Cramer's V		222.65 p=0.000 0.417		115.80 p=0.000 0.300	

YouTube as a Primary Tool

Tables 1 and 2 reveal that almost fifty three percent of candidates who uploaded videos on YouTube had a Facebook profile and sixty eight percent of them owned a Website. Chi-square test indicates that candidates differ significantly in the use of YouTube and Twitter. However, the reported significant relationship was weak (Phi and Cramer's V=0.245). Moreover, twenty seven percent of YouTube users had a Twitter account. Thus, YouTube is combined more with a Website, compared to other online tools when candidates communicate with their voters.

Table 3: Cross usage of YouTube and Twitter

		Twitter	
		No	Yes
YouTube	No	1100	62
	Yes	88	33
Chi-square Sig. Phi and Cramer's V		76.92 p=0.000 0.245	

Twitter as a Primary Tool

Results (Tables 1, 2, and 3) show that almost forty five percent of Twitter users had a Facebook profile; thirty five of them shared videos on YouTube and fifty nine percent owned a Website. Hence, candidates who made use of Twitter tended to promote themselves also on their Websites.

Use of Online Tools across Different Peripheries

Internet use depends among other factors on the degree of urbanization. The third research question suggests that the use of online tools (i.e. Website, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter) by candidates will be high in areas with high population density. To test if there are significant differences in the use of online tools by candidates from different peripheries chi-square independency tests were conducted. Table 4 shows the usage level of online tools across the 13 different peripheries and the results of chi-square tests.

Regarding Facebook, results suggest that significant differences exist regarding the use of Facebook between candidates of different peripheries ($\chi^2= 37.54$, p: 0.000). Coefficient Phi and Cramer's V was 0.171 (p: 0.000) indicating a weak strength of association between use of Facebook and candidates of different peripheries. As Table 1 shows, candidates with a Facebook profile came mainly from the peripheries of Attiki (31.3%), Central Macedonia (15%) and Eastern Macedonia & Thrace (8.8%). Candidates from different peripheries also differ significantly in the use of Websites ($\chi^2= 58.66$, p: 0.000). However, the relationship between the periphery and the use of Website was weak as Phi and Cramer's V coefficient showed. Candidates that promoted themselves via a Website contested mainly in the peripheries of Central Macedonia (39.7%), Attica (11.2%) and Eastern Macedonia and Thrace (8.6%). YouTube use also differed significantly across the peripheries of Greece ($\chi^2= 44.99$, p: 0.000). The reported significant relationship between YouTube use and periphery was weak (Phi and Cramer's V= 0.187). YouTube users came mainly from the peripheries of Central Macedonia (47.1%), Crete (12.4%) and Attica (9.1%). Finally, candidates from different peripheries showed significant differences in the use of Twitter as a campaign tool ($\chi^2= 28.86$, p: 0.004). Phi and Cramer's V was 0.150. Candidates who utilized more Twitter came from Central Macedonia (36.8%), Crete (12.6%) and Epirus (11.6%). The above findings clearly indicate that online

tools such as Websites, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter are widely spread mediums among candidates from peripheries with high population density. It can be concluded, that urbanization and web political campaigning are significantly related.

Table 4: Use of Online Tools by Candidates from Different Peripheries

Greek Peripheries	Use of Facebook		Use of Website		Use of YouTube		Use of Twitter	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Eastern Macedonia & Thrace	52	30	62	20	76	6	78	4
Attica	225	106	141	26	156	11	161	6
North Aegean	20	3	30	15	40	5	43	2
Western Greece	58	21	67	6	69	4	70	3
Western Macedonia	28	17	83	14	93	4	94	3
Epirus	60	13	69	10	73	6	68	11
Thessaly	82	15	19	8	26	1	23	4
Ionian Islands	22	5	90	8	92	6	93	5
Central Macedonia	116	51	239	92	274	57	296	35
Crete	54	19	84	17	86	15	89	12
South Aegean	78	10	22	1	23	0	22	1
Peloponnesus	73	28	80	8	84	4	80	8
Central Greece	77	21	66	7	71	2	72	1
Total	945	339	1052	232	1163	121	1189	95
Chi-Square	37.54,		58.66		44.99		28.86	
Sig.	p=0.000		p= 0.000		p= 0.000		p=0.004	
Phi and Cramer's V	0.171		0.214		0.187		0.150	

The Impact of Web Tools on the Election Outcome

Binary logistic regression was used to answer the fourth research question. This type of regression was used since the dependent variable of interest – election success - is a dichotomous categorical variable. The results of the regression analysis are shown in Table 5. The -2Log-likelihood value of the model is 1386.53. Moreover, the significance level of the chi-square statistic is small ($\chi^2 = 46.44$, $p = 0.000$), thus, it can be concluded that the model is significantly better than the intercept only model. Hence, the model explains well the variations in the election outcome. The regression model was also evaluated by using the goodness-of-fit test proposed by Hosmer and Lemeshow. The chi-square value of the Hosmer and Lemeshow test was insignificant ($\chi^2 = 0.13$, $p = 0.988$) indicating a good fit for the data.

As Table 5 shows only Facebook use coefficient is statistically significant. Exp (B) for Facebook use is 2.422 which means that the candidate is 2.422 times more likely to be elected, if he/she has a Facebook profile. Furthermore, the confidence interval for Facebook's Exp (B) is 1.824 to 3.217, indicating that candidates with a Facebook profile are between 1.824 and 3.217 times as likely to be elected than candidates that don't integrate Facebook in their promotional campaigns.

Table 5: Binary Logistic Regression Results for Election Outcome

Variable	Exp(B)	p-value
Constant	0.239	0.000
Use of Facebook	2.422	0.000
Use of Website	1.311	0.146
Use of YouTube	0.954	0.845
Use of Twitter	0.864	0.575
-2Log-likelihood		1386.53
Chi-square	46.44	0.000

Discussion and Suggestions for Future Research

The present study examined the use of web tools such as Websites, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter by Greek candidates running for the 2010 local elections. Moreover, the level of cross online media political campaigning was assessed and the relationship between urbanization and use of web tools by politicians was also examined. Finally, the impact of the different web tools on the election outcome was investigated.

Regarding the use of web tools by political candidates, Facebook was listed first (26.4%), followed by Websites (18.1%) and YouTube (9.4%). Twitter was the least used web tool by candidates (7.4%). Hence, it can be argued that Facebook was first in the preference list of Greek candidates compared to other web tools, for attracting and communicating with potential voters. In general, the level of cross usage of online tools was low, since only 17 candidates used a mixture of all four web tools (i.e. Website, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter). It can be argued that an official Website was the basis for the most

cross online media schemes. The most commonly used cross online media campaign scheme was Facebook together with a Website. Thus, candidates with a Facebook profile most of the times own a Website. Moreover, in other cross online media schemes in which YouTube or Twitter is used as a primary tool, most of the times an official Website is also used. Candidates with an official online presence contested mainly in urban areas. Results indicate a significant relationship between the use of political web tools such as Facebook, Website, YouTube, and Twitter and level of urbanization. As the density of population in a periphery increases usage of Web tools also increases.

There is ample evidence that underscores the power of Facebook in the 2010 Greek local elections. Hence, November 2010 local elections in Greece can be characterized as "Facebook elections". Facebook was not only the most used web tool by political candidates compared to other tools (Website, YouTube and Twitter) but it was also the most effective. Results indicate that candidates promoting themselves via Facebook have better odds winning the elections. Compared to candidates with no presence on Facebook, candidates with a Facebook profile are 1.8 to 3.2 times more likely to be elected. The above findings are consistent with the arguments of Williams and Gulati (2007; 2008a; 2008b), Effing et al. (2011), and Towner and Dulio (2011).

Facebook is a political marketing tool used by candidates to send messages to potential voters (Andersen and Medaglia, 2009), to interact with them, to influence their thoughts and attitudes and finally to win their votes (Utz, 2009). The present research revealed a significant relationship between Facebook use and election outcome. Hence, Facebook was identified by the present study as a powerful political marketing tool that can boost a candidate's vote share. Politicians can win votes if they are active users of Facebook. However, there are several other parameters regarding the use of Facebook by politicians that are yet to be explored in order to develop a clearer picture of the Facebook's potential on election outcome. For example, does the number of messages, comments and likes a candidate posts and receives have an impact on his/her election? Do winners continue to use their Facebook profiles to communicate with their supporters after the elections are over? We intend to address these questions in our future research endeavors.

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