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Citation: Delli Paoli, A., Addeo, F. & Bottoni, G. (2021). The operational definition of communication styles. A content analysis of Italian political leaders e-campaigning. *Current Politics and Economics of Europe*, 32(1), pp. 1-45.

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THE OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF COMMUNICATION STYLES. A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF ITALIAN POLITICAL LEADERS E-CAMPAIGNING*

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ABSTRACT

Communication is the core of election campaigns. Over the last decade, the growing use of ICTs have forced politicians to integrate in their campaign sophisticated digital communication practices embracing social networking sites like Facebook and microblogs like Twitter as part of their campaign communication. Social media are catalyst of transforming content and form of communication between politicians and their public. They represent tools for both interacting with a more demanding citizenship and to offer more personalized and direct messages and images to the public using creative strategies. Although some studies have alternative highlighted the specificity of the form and the content of Twitter messages, comprehensive empirical studies on Twitter political communication styles are missing. The study proposes an operational definition of communication styles exploring e-campaigning of Italian political

* The whole research is a result of intense collaboration among the authors. In the final draft, Angela Delli Paoli wrote Sects. 2, 3, 7 and 8; Felice Addeo wrote Sects. 1 and 4, and Gianmaria Bottoni wrote Sects. 5 and 6.

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leaders during the 2018 electoral campaign. It carries out a content analysis of 3792 tweets of official accounts of Italian political leaders. We first defined and operationalized the communication style concept. Based on this, we carried out a content analysis. Through a multiple correspondence analysis, we identify two constitutive factors of the communication styles: 1. The content of the message (informational vs political), 2. The type of communication (negative personalized communication vs positive impression management). With the aid of cluster analysis 4 groups of tweets - located at the intersection of these factors - were identified: instrumentalist, intimist, institutionalist and populist.

Keywords: social media, Twitter, big data, content analysis, communication style, election campaign.

INTRODUCTION

According to political, sociological and media studies on digital communication, social media communication flows assume distinctive features when compared to unidirectional and diffusive models of mass media communication and the static virtual environments of the first web generation. Social media and web 2.0 technologies are responsible for new possibilities based on innovative forms of communication and relationships with civil society and other actors populating the public space, bottom-up forms of participatory communication and forms of appropriation of the communication process by users.

Social media refers to online communication platforms classified as Web 2.0. They include a collection of web-based technologies and services such as blogs, microblogs (i.e. Twitter), collaborative editing tools (e.g. wikis), text messaging, discussion forums, social sharing services (e.g. YouTube, Flickr, StumbleUpon, Last.fm), social networking platforms (Facebook, Myspace, etc.). The peer-to-peer model of web 2.0 revolutionizes the traditional communication process, makes the distinction between user and author more blurred opening to the assumption of multiple roles and the continuous exchange of roles (Bryer, Zavattaro, 2011), to the possibility of users who become producers of user-generated content, to what Castells (2009) defines "mass self-communication" within a disintermediated media ecosystem. Peer-to-peer model of communication acts on the production of content

but at the same time also on its diffusion, multiplying the dissemination power of political communication.

From an institutional point of view, the study of the communicative phenomena developed with the advent of digital networks finds theoretical foundations in the managerial bases proposed by the post-bureaucratic orientations outlined by Anglo-Saxon literature since the 1980s and translated into the Italian institutional and economic framework from the following decade to the present (New public Management and Public Governance). These approaches undermine and progressively transform hierarchical relational models (government) into new, less structured and more complex forms, oriented towards plural relations and participatory and cooperative models in political-institutional decision-making processes (governance and policy networks; Mayntz, 1999; Rhodes, 1997; 2006) and in social construction (Innerarity, 2008).

The communicative dimension of networking is reflected in the digital space in the perspective of e-governance as a model of public governance based on ICT resulting from a participatory and multi-stakeholder approach (Dawes, 2008; Dadashzadeh, 2010; in similar expressions: social government, Khan et al., 2014; we-government, Linders, 2012; open government, Lee and Kwak, 2012; wiki government, Noveck 2009).

With the increase in intensity, accessibility and participation in these flows, social media contribute to unprecedented forms of disintermediation of the themes that assert themselves in the public sphere, acting as filters of reliability and relevance and redefining the terms of gatekeeping and the classical theories of the agenda setting (Ardivissov, Delfanti, 2013, pp. 78-82; Meraz, 2011).

Therefore, social media are able to influence the audience's agenda by conferring status upon actors, assigning political relevance and importance to social problems by emphasizing certain issues and neglecting others (Mazzoleni, Schulz, 1999). Theories formulated when traditional media owned the tools of content creation and distribution, remain largely untested in the new, interactive media age. Social media question gatekeeping and agenda setting as tenable theory in the decentralized, new media environment where media abundance negates the role of a central news gatekeeper (Ardivissov, Delfanti, 2013, 78-82).

Within this perspective, a leading role in the media ecosystem is played by Twitter. For its informative vocation and technical configuration suitable for the diffusion of breaking news and soundbites, some previous research have shown that in Italy Twitter assumes the role of a new public space (Di Fraia, Missaglia, 2015). It is able to influence the media debate and the agenda of traditional media, especially press and television (Bentivegna, Marchetti 2015; Bracciale, Rega, 2016; Marchetti, Ceccobelli, 2016). On a more political level, Twitter is an accredited communication channel, effectively entering the toolbox of political actors (Bentivegna, Marchetti, 2015), contributing to redefine the traditional cycle of political information (Chadwick, 2013; Jungherr, 2014; 2015), providing the politicians with the freedom to uncontestably articulate their ideology and spread their message (Engesser et al., 2016).

This study is focused on the plan of communication styles, content and type of flows conveyed by political leaders through their respective Twitter profiles.

In this scenario, the present contribution starts from the double objective of reflecting on frameworks, analytical and empirical categories useful for the study of communication on Twitter and, at the same time, empirically detect the use of these tools by observing the communication flows through the Twitter channel of political leaders. The political context of the study is the Italian 2018 election campaign.

The paper is structured as follows. After a literature review of communication on Twitter, we operationally define the concept of communication style. The following section discusses the research design specifying aims, research questions, unit of analysis, data collection and analysis techniques. The subsequent two sections present the findings deriving from descriptive statistics and multivariate analysis (Multiple Correspondence Analysis and Cluster Analysis). Finally, some main implications, limitations and directions for future research are discussed and conclusions are drawn.

THE TWITTERSPHERE

In recent years social media have become areas of public and political communication. The potential for using social media lies in

their capacity of promoting information and democracy. According to the literature, they are agents to:

- Promote democracy by fostering citizens' engagement in public discourse and activism (Linders, 2012; Chun, Luna Reyes, 2012; Sandoval-Almazan, Gil-Garcia, 2012).
- Achieving citizen-government collaborative governance transformation (Noveck, 2009; Picazo-Vela, Gutierrez-Martinez, Luna-Reyes, 2012).
- Foster collaboration and information sharing among government agencies (Osimo, 2008) and create collective intelligence (Chun et al., 2010).
- Allow research and information gathering (Krzmarzick, 2012).

Among these reasons, what appears fundamental to the legitimization of the use of social media for political purposes is the possibility of disintermediation, which allows to free oneself from the intermediation of traditional gatekeepers, bypassing the editorial control of traditional news media organizations (Zittel, 2004), permitting a direct relationship with citizens free from the norms, values, and prescriptions of the mass media outlets (Engesser et al., 2016).

In reviewing the literature on the use of Twitter by parties and candidates, three different research areas emerged. The first one focuses on the factors affecting the propensity for a party or a candidate to adopt Twitter. The second one analyses how parties and candidates use Twitter. The third one concentrates on the effects of Twitter use on the public. Our study collocates within the second research topic.

Despite the widespread turn toward web 2.0 campaigning, political parties have not abandoned the older tools and campaigning. From the media point of view, the co-presence of traditional and social media configures a *hybrid media system* (Chadwick, 2013; Chadwick et al., 2016.) typical of the *fourth age of political communication* (Blumler, 2016) and a hypermedia campaigning (Howard, 2006; Lilleker et al., 2015) in which the old media mass logics and the new social media logics compete and cooperate, becoming each other complementary, interconnected and mutually dependent. A new media ecosystem is configured, characterized by a high fragmentation of the public sphere, dispersed among different media platforms and agendas.

The hybridization of logics is pervasive both in traditional and new media: they both provide their own codes, but they both open to reciprocal incursions. Thus, the distinction between old and new media is more and more blurred, making the dichotomy old/new media ineffective.

Concrete examples of hybridization are the exportation of specific modes of communication from one context to another: social media and microblogging modes of communication in mass media contexts and vice versa. It is the case of hashtags, the #-character used in conjunction with a word or phrase, which is a tool for connecting the tweet to a particular theme allowing users to search the Twittersphere for specific topics of interest or to follow certain thread of discussion. They are currently launched also by television and radio broadcast. On the other hand, also social networks use mass media modes for example by posting excerpts of videos from television talk shows and so on.

The potential of hybridization extends to the possibility of influencing mass media agenda and the opportunity to select themes and public issues through social media: media operators and journalists use social media (especially Twitter) as antennas on political discussion making them selectors of the traditional media agenda (Graham et al., 2013), sources of political news coverage and data sources. In this way, tweets become public records and are incorporated into traditional political events, for example by including Twitter sentiment and social opinion in the coverage of political themes (Anstead, O'Loughlin, 2011) or by using them as basis for quantitative and qualitative analysis of public opinions (Jungherr, 2014). Although hybridization has blurred the differences between old and new media by providing for integrations between the two logics, it is possible to identify distinctive stylistic characteristics of traditional and digital media. In this regard, Klinger and Svensson (2015; 2016) distinguished between the mass media logic characterized by professionalism and the network logic of social media. The key elements of the mass media logic of "professional" news outlet are the centrality of gatekeepers, a unidirectional message that follows the canons of news making, the timing, forms and language of the mass media, addressed to a passive audience.

On the contrary, the logic of social media, based on the peer-to-peer information model and the continuous interaction between authors and users, is oriented towards the ideal of maximizing attention (Klinger, Svensson, 2016, p. 29) with a greater prevalence of personal and sensationalistic messages. From this point of view, a theoretical connection between populism and social media emerges: the disintermediation of communication, the opportunity for direct and unmediated communication between politicians and citizens, the spectacularization of political language would restructure political power in a populist direction (Bartlett, 2014; Engesser et al., 2016; Bracciale, Martella, 2017). Moreover, a greater fragmentation of communication styles is attributed to political communication on social media due to an adaptation of the political message to social media logic and codes.

Even the elaboration of political messages that are not univocal but inclusive and malleable, open to multiple interpretations, adaptable to appropriation by citizens of different political orientations, is perfectly suited to the peer-to-peer model (Engesser et al., 2016). From the point of view of the communicative form, social media drive toward a spectacularization of political communication formats and political discourse that derives from the adaptation of political language to the social media's logic, rules, patterns and codes (*mediatization of politics*). Such spectacularization is expressed in the communicative form of political actors, in the communication techniques and in the content of political discourse (Mazzoleni, Schulz, 1999).

The literature is divided between the advocates of the differentiation of political messages between traditional and online campaigns (Strandberg, 2013) and the promoters of the "thesis of normalization" who instead assume a substantial equality in the use of traditional and digital media (Schweitzer, 2008; Vergeer, Hermans, 2013; Vergeer et al., 2013). In short, the debate about the substantial equality between online and offline campaigns or, on the contrary, about the change of online campaigns in the direction of a democratization of political discourse, is still open (Vergeer et al., 2011). However, many empirical studies seem to go in the direction of normalization or substantial equality between traditional and digital campaigns, so as to define social media campaigning as "web 1.0 campaigns", given the

unidirectionality of messages, the static nature of content, often duplicated by traditional media and websites, and the lack of interactivity and dialogue exchanges leading to more direct forms of representation (Bentivegna, Marchetti, 2015). Diverse studies confirm the adoption of a broadcasting style in Twitter use (Adams, McCorkindale, 2013; Aharony, 2012; Ahmed, Skoric, 2014; Aragón et al., 2013; Baxter, Marcella, 2012, 2013; Enli, Skogerbø, 2013; Evans et al., 2014; Golbeck et al., 2010; Graham et al., 2013, 2014; Grant et al., 2010; Grussel, Nord, 2012; Hemphill et al., 2013; İkiz et al., 2014; Jackson, Lilleker, 2011; Jaidka, Ahmed, 2015; Suiter, 2015). There seems to be very limited evidence of the interactive potential of Twitter for strengthening citizen-politician relationships. Studies analyzing the interactions of candidates on Twitter found that such interaction were directed mostly towards other politicians (especially candidates of the same party) and media (D'heer, Verdegem, 2014; Verweij, 2012; Hsu, Park, 2012; Plotkowiak, Stanoevska-Slabeva, 2013). Some studies, while finding equality between the traditional and social media campaigning, emphasize greater control over the content of messages and their distribution in space and time and less dependence on the processes of selection and interpretation imposed by the mass media in online campaigns (Graham et al., 2013).

Others identify a difference in storytelling and in the way messages and events are reported on Twitter. In this regard, Zizi Papacharissi and Maria de Fatima Oliveira (2012) used the concept of *affective news* to connote a narrative style based on subjective experiences, opinions and emotions. Other studies distinguish between an old style of campaigning characterized by an institutional style and a new style of campaigning characterized by a personal style. Vergeer et al (2013) suggest that social network sites have allowed for more personalization in politics, something which is also called “pop politics” (Mazzoleni, Sfardini, 2009) or “environmental familiarity” (O’Reilly, Milstein 2009). Medina and Muñoz (2014) attribute to Twitter communication a more personal and emotional campaigning style based on an informal and everyday style of speech instead of an institutionalized one.

Through social media candidates share personal and emphatic messages, also unrelated to politics, they provide some insight into

their private life and interests. All these studies recognize the specificity of Twitter use in political campaigns, but they are isolate case studies which alternatively focus on specific aspects, type of content, narrative style, interactionism. The strategic use of Twitter during political campaigns, in its comprehensive aspects of what is being said and how it is being said which define the communication style, is less understood. Although recognized as important, the issue of how political actors communicate on social media in formal and substantive terms during political campaigns is under-researched. This legitimizes an exploration of the communication style adopted by political actors in the context of the election campaign.

From this point of view, this study aims at exploring the expressive modalities and the contents of the communication activities on Twitter of the main exponents of the political parties during the last Italian election campaign in order to define, starting from the form and the contents of the posts published on Twitter, the communication styles of the political candidates.

THE CONCEPTUAL SPECIFICATION AND OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF COMMUNICATION STYLE

As seen in the previous paragraphs, the study concentrates on the communication style adopted by political leaders on Twitter during the 2018 election campaign. The concept of communication style is so broad and multidimensional that it requires a conceptual specification prior to its operationalisation. Communication style is here meant as communicative performance and patterns including argumentations (what is being said) and ways of speaking (how is being said) (Pels, 2003, p. 45; Charteris-Black, 2014).

As highlighted in some recent empirical contributions on political communication on Twitter (Bracciale, Martella, 2017), the first macro dimensions that make up the concept of communication style are the *form* and *content* of the messages. These dimensions are highly correlated and interdependent (Moffitt, Tormey 2014; Pels, 2012; Wodak, 2015): what is said and how it is said interact with each other in political performances on Twitter.

In defining the concept implemented here, the *content* of the communication includes the *topic*, the *function* of the message, the *policy position* supported and the *type of policy proposal*.

The *topic* identifies the theme of the tweet, including (Bentivegna, Marchetti, 2015; 2017):

- *political issues* concerning ideological positions, the role of parties and the relationship among parties and institutions;
- specific *policy issues*, often locally defined, with proposals for solutions and policy programmes;
- *campaign issues* relating to the management, performance and progress of the election campaign;
- *personal issues* relating to candidates' private lives or personal opinions on specific issues;
- *current affairs* not necessarily referring to the political sphere that are still current events (sport, events, news and TV programmes).

The *function* refers to the purpose of the message articulated in (Graham et al., 2013; Jungherr, 2015):

- *campaign updates* on the candidate's activity during the election campaign;
- *self-promotion*: promoting candidate's activities (relaying of interviews, statements or communications);
- *position taking* on political and campaign issues that are the subject of one's own or others' election programme;
- *call to action*: requests for mobilization by voters;
- Non-political issues (*pointless bubble*): sharing gossip, comments, general chit-chat etc.

The *policy position* is based on the *Comparative Manifesto Project* (Volkens et al., 2015) which were adapted, through aggregations and recoding, to the Italian political context and the limited number of characters available to the Twitter user. The coding includes the positive or negative positions regarding the policy topics such as internationalism, European Union, economy, environment, welfare and so on (see tab. 1).

The type of *policy proposal* refers to the concreteness of the proposals and ranges from general statements of principle to precise and detailed policy proposals.

The *form* refers to *style*, *register* and *strategy*.

The *style* refers to the positive or negative orientation of the message (Ceron, Dadda, 2016). The positive orientation focuses on candidate's own values by emphasizing the personal capabilities of the leader, the party's political proposals and their respective competences or by proposing identification with idealized third parties with particular values. The negative orientation is expressed in the tight criticism of rivals, in the attack on elites identified in changing categories (media, economic powers, Europe, etc.) or stigmatized enemies.

With some adaptations to the classifications present in the literature (Bentivegna, Marchetti, 2015; 2017; Bracciale, Martella, 2017), the register is codified at a referential/neutral, aggressive/provocative, humorous/ironic, vulgar level.

The strategy refers to the communication technique and is divided into:

- *emotional strategies* that leverage common feelings and emotions or apodictic registers to reveal insights; appeal to fear or arouse interest, alarm and mobilize people on negative feelings (Bos et al., 2011; 2013; Mazzoleni et al., 2003; Van Santen, Van Zoonen, 2010);

- *instrumental strategies* that exploit specific events, generally current events, to support political positions through incorrect inductive reasoning (cherry-picking fallacy) (Krämer, 2014);

- *intimist strategies* that are based on personification by recalling episodes from one's own private sphere (Stanyer, 2012);

- *simplification strategies* that address complex problems by offering simple and easy solutions (Alvares, Dahlgren 2016; Caiani, Graziano 2016);

- *taboo breaker strategies* that break taboos and the canons of political correctness (Caiani, Graziano 2016; Krämer, 2014; Moffitt, Tormey, 2014).

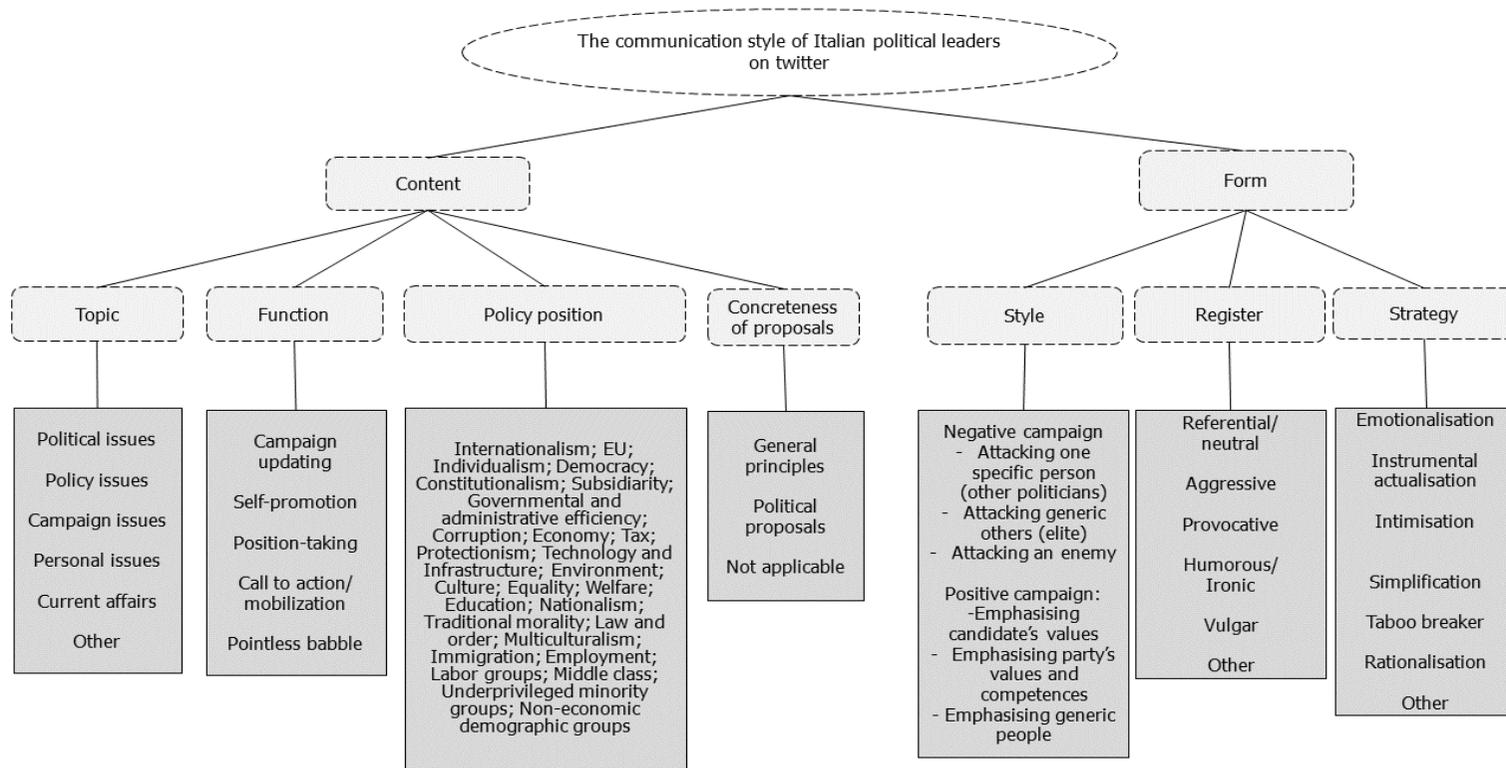


Figure 1. The concept map.

Table 1. Coding scheme

Topic	
Political issues	Talking about politics, ideologies, and questions regarding the relationship among parties and institutions
Policy issues	Referring to specific issues (often local) to be examined or resolved; explaining programme and proposal to resolve problems
Campaign issues	Referring to the management or performance of the campaign
Personal issues	Personal reflections or issues regarding his/her private life
Current affairs	Referring to non-political issues that are still current events (sport, events, news and TV programmes)
Function	
Self-promotion	Promoting leader's activities (relaying of interviews, statements or communications)
Position-taking	Intervening in political and campaign issues and problems
Call to action/mobilization	Urging commitment by supporters
Pointless babble	Sharing gossip, comments and general chit-chat
Style	
Negative campaign	Attacking rival parties/candidates and criticizing their policy platforms or personality traits
Positive campaign	Self-promotion messages that emphasize the values, virtues and own qualities and proposals
If positive campaign	
Emphasising candidate's values	Emphasizing candidates' own values, capabilities and competences
Emphasising party's values and competences	Emphasizing party's values, capabilities and competences
Emphasising generic people	Emphasizing a segment of people as idealised or 'imagined' community in concrete and/or referring to a direct political representation without intermediaries
If negative campaign	
Attacking one specific person (other politicians)	Political anti-establishment: targeting political elite, parties, government, ministers, etc.
Attacking generic others (elite)	Stressing the distance between people and the elite and attacking the common enemy established by the dominant elite, which may be identified under different categories: media tycoons, journalists, intellectuals such as universities, writers, professors, institutions such as state, administration, civil services, economic powers such as multinationals, trade unions, capitalists, etc.)
Attacking an enemy	Emphasizing the distance and contraposition between the people as a homogeneous category and the enemy as a stigmatised and excluded from the people category. Attacking a dangerous other, a common and stigmatised enemy through a strong leader and severe political measures

(Table 1 continued on next page)

Policy position	
Peace positive	Declarations proposing peace as a general goal or means of solving crises, joining negotiations with hostile countries, ending wars
Peace negative	Reference to war as the solution
Internationalism positive	Reference to international cooperation, aid to developing countries, support for global governance and international organizations
Internationalism negative	Reference to national independence and sovereignty, unilateralism
European Union positive	Reference to support the expansion of the European Community/Union, European citizenship, desirability of remaining a member
European Union negative	Opposition to specific European policies, to EU budget, to European Community/Union
Constitutionalism positive	Support for maintain the status quo of the constitution
Constitutionalism negative	Calls for constitutional amendment or changes
Decentralization	Support for federalism or decentralization of political and/or economic power
Centralization	Support for unitary government and for more centralization in political and administrative procedures
Freedom and Human Rights	Favorable mentions of importance of personal freedom (freedom of speech, press and assembly) and civil rights Freedom from state coercion and bureaucratic control)
Democracy	Favorable mentions of democracy as the “only game in town”. General support for the involvement of all citizens in political decision-making through either direct or representative democracy
Governmental and Administrative Efficiency	Need for efficiency and economy in government and administration: restructuring the civil service, improving bureaucratic procedures
Political Corruption	Need for eliminating political corruption and associated abuses of political and/or bureaucratic power, abolish clientelist structures and practices, cut political wages, respect mandate constraint
Free Market Economy	Free market capitalism as an economic model: Laissez-faire economy; Superiority of individual enterprise over state and control systems; Private property rights; Personal enterprise and initiative; Need for unhampered individual enterprises
Market Regulation	Support for policies designed to create a fair and open economic market: consumer protection; preventing monopolies; Defense of small businesses against disruptive powers of big businesses; Financial and other incentives such as subsidies, tax breaks
Flat tax	Support for a system of taxation with a constant marginal rate which is applied to all personal income with no or limited deductions
Fair tax	Support for a system of taxation with a marginal rate proportional to the amount subject to taxation, progressing as income changes
Protectionism Positive	Favorable mentions of extending or maintaining the protection of internal markets: Tariffs; Quota restrictions; Export subsidies
Protectionism Negative	Support for the concept of free trade and open markets. Call for abolishing all means of market protection
Economic growth	General need to encourage or facilitate greater production

Anti-Growth	Rejection of the idea that all growth is good growth. Opposition to growth that causes environmental or societal harm. Call for sustainable economic development
ICT Positive	Support for science and technological developments, for public spending on technological infrastructures and modernization of industry, transport and communication
Negative	
Environment	General policies in favor of protecting the environment, fighting climate change, and other “green” policies
Culture	Need for state funding of cultural and leisure facilities including arts and sport: museums, art galleries, libraries, cultural mass media, tourism and worthwhile leisure activities, such as public sport clubs
Equality	social justice and the need for fair treatment of all people: Special protection for underprivileged social groups; Removal of class barriers; Need for fair distribution of resources; The end of discrimination (e.g. racial or sexual discrimination)
Welfare State expansion	Favourable mentions of need to introduce, maintain or expand any public social service or social security scheme. This includes, for example, government funding of Health care, Child care, Elder care and pensions, Social housing
Welfare State limitation	Limiting state expenditures on social services or social security. Favourable mentions of the social subsidiary principle (i.e. private care before state care);
Education expansion	Need to expand and/or improve educational provision at all levels and research investments
Education limitation	Limiting state expenditure on education: the introduction or expansion of study fees at all educational levels; Increasing the number of private schools
Nationalism Positive	Favorable mentions of the country’s nation, history, and general appeals: Support for established national ideas; General appeals to pride of citizenship; Appeals to patriotism; Appeals to nationalism
Nationalism Negative	Unfavorable mentions of the country’s nation and history: Opposition to patriotism; Opposition to nationalism; Opposition to the existing national state, national pride, and national ideas
Traditional Morality Positive	Favorable mentions of traditional and/or religious moral values: Prohibition, censorship and suppression of immorality and unseemly behavior; Maintenance and stability of the traditional family as a value; Support for the role of religious institutions in state and society
Traditional Morality Negative	Opposition to traditional and/or religious moral values. May include: Support for divorce, abortion etc.; General support for modern family composition; Calls for the separation of church and state
Law and Order: Positive	Favourable mentions of strict law enforcement and internal security (resources for the police, efficiency of justice), actions against domestic crime
Multiculturalism: Positive	Favourable mentions of cultural diversity and cultural plurality within domestic societies. Support for preserving the autonomy of religious and linguistic heritages
Multiculturalism: Negative	The enforcement or encouragement of cultural integration. Appeals for cultural homogeneity in society

(Table 1 continued on next page)

Immigration Positive	Positive attitudes to immigration, need for accepting migrants, references to keep immigration levels at the present level or to increase rather than to decrease
Immigration negative	Opposition to migration, references to the side-effects of immigration (symbolic threat, criminality, unemployment, overcrowding, etc.)
Employment	Calls for the good treatment of all employees, including: More jobs; Good working conditions; Fair wages; Pension provisions, etc.
Labour groups: Positive	Favourable references to all labour groups, the working class, and unemployed workers in general. Support for trade unions
Labour Groups: Negative	Negative references to labour groups and trade unions. May focus specifically on the danger of unions 'abusing power'
Middle Class and Professional Groups	General favorable references to the middle class: Professional groups, (e.g.: doctors or lawyers); White collar groups, (e.g.: bankers or office employees), Service sector groups (e.g.: IT industry employees); Old and/or new middle class
Underprivileged Minority Groups	General favourable references to underprivileged minorities who are defined neither in economic nor in demographic terms (e.g. the handicapped, homosexuals, immigrants, indigenus)
Non-economic Demographic Groups	General favourable mentions of demographically defined special interest groups of all kinds: Women; University students; Old, young, or middle-aged people
Concreteness of proposals	
General principles	General statements of principle on future actions and policy, reference to ideals and values instead that specific proposals
Political Proposals	Precise and detailed policy proposals
No proposal	Neither general principles nor proposal are included in the tweet
Register	
Referential/neutral	The language is used to refer to concrete things or ideas
Aggressive/ provocative	Communication is verbally abusive
Humorous/ironic	The message is reversed: you say the opposite of what you actually meant to criticize someone or something or as humorous emphasis
Vulgar	Colloquial and non-standard register
Other	
Strategy	
Emotionalization	Sharing emotions or revealing insights; appealing to emotions of fear or using apodictic registers to arouse interest, alarm and mobilise people on negative feelings
Instrumentalism	Exploiting specific events in order to support political bias and applying a sort of incorrect inductive reasoning (cherry-picking fallacy) based on current events
Intimidation	Recounting his/her own life
Taboo breaker	Breaking taboos and fighting against political correctness; being the first to do or say something that is commonly considered politically incorrect or even impolite to distinguish oneself from the elite
Simplification/Rationalisation	Oversimplifying issues and solutions, offering easy solutions to complex problems
Other	
Not applicable	

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In order to analyze candidates' tweets we carried out a content analysis. Content analysis is "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use" (Krippendorff, 2013, p. 24). This technique allows compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding and categorizing (Weber, 1990; Losito, 1996). Content analysis is essentially based on the interpretation and classification of texts with the help of the most disparate, sometimes competing and contradictory procedures (Rositi, 1988) to make inferences from texts to their meanings and contexts of use (Krippendorff, 2013, p. 24). Through this method, texts are brought back to a limited number of categories by means of explicit procedures of analytical breakdown, classification and coding (Weber, 1990).

The unit of analysis consists of tweets produced by the leaders of the main political parties and movements involved in the election campaign. The tweets were collected between December 28, 2018, the day after the dissolution of the Chambers, and March 4, 2018, the election day. The information was collected through the Twitonomy platform that allowed to download all the tweets produced by political leaders in that time frame: the tweets collected were 6377 then refined to 3792 by dropping all the retweets and replies (only new posts were analyzed). This procedure allowed a complete enumeration of the reference population for the survey.

For the coding of tweets, a hybrid content analysis procedure was adopted based on the sequential use of deductive and inductive coding approaches. In other words, tweets were firstly coded deductively, on the basis of pre-defined categories and a priori classification created by the researchers (Swain, 2018). Subsequently, the coding scheme was inductively adapted *in itinere* and emergent codes were added when during coding unforeseen results (factors, topics and codes not previously considered and included into the pre-defined categories) emerged from the analysis. The contents of the various tweets have been interpreted following

the principles and techniques of the hermeneutical approach to social research (Montesperelli, 1998).

Coding took place in three phases.

The first phase, based on a deductive approach, involved the construction and use of a detailed coding scheme, developed on the basis of the concept map and literature review of previous research in the field of online political communication analysis.

In the second phase, a pre-testing of the coding scheme was carried out on 300 tweets in order to verify the reliability of the codebook. In particular, through an inductive approach, the exhaustiveness of the classifications and the presence of missing information were evaluated.

In the third phase after adaptation of the codebook to pre-testing results, it was applied to the analysis of the tweets collected. The coding and interpretation procedure, both in the pre-testing phase and in the actual analysis phase, involved three analysts, in order to effectively evaluate the quality of the coding ensuring adequate intercoder reliability.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis was performed through univariate, bivariate and multivariate analysis (Multiple Correspondence Analysis in conjunction with Cluster Analysis). Multiple Correspondence Analysis is a multivariate method of data reduction used to measure the association within one set of variables, where we are interested in how strongly and in which way these variables are interrelated. In order to detect and interpret relationships among variables, multidimensional scaling, discriminant analysis, factor analysis and principal component analysis all can be used. However, these methods have little applicability to the categorical data, such as those that arise in our research. Instead, correspondence analysis is designed to analyze categorical variables rather than metric ones. There are several different ways of defining and thinking of correspondence analysis. Considering its geometric definition – rather than its statistical one – the method allows to synthesize data through a lower-dimensional description of the data.

Practically, it points the rows and columns of a data matrix in a high-dimensional Euclidean space and redefines the space identifying the dimensions (factors) which capture the most variance possible. Obviously, this representation can be used to reveal the structures and patterns inherent in the data. In this sense, correspondence analysis can be considered inside that class of methods known as “explanatory data analysis” (Hoffman, Franke, 1986, p. 213; Di Franco, 2006, p. 91).

Our second step was the implementation of a Cluster Analysis. By Cluster Analysis is meant a family of methods for organizing data into meaningful subgroups. Put specifically, its goal is to divide the data into clusters, so that the differences between items in the same cluster are as small as possible, and the differences between items in different clusters as large as possible (Di Franco, 2006, p. 90).

We adopt a particular type of cluster analysis – available in Spad 5.0 – which could be defined a mixed procedure of cluster analysis, since it complements hierarchical and partitioning methods¹. Such a procedure is articulated into 4 stages presented hereafter (Di Franco, 2006, pp. 93-94).

1. Cases are divided using a partitioning method and defining a partition with a high number of temporary groups.
2. At this stage, the groups previously identified are considered new cases to be aggregated. Now, these groups are undergone through a hierarchical procedure which will produce a dendogram.
3. Here, the number of groups has to be specified.

¹ The general clustering methods can be divided into two large families: hierarchical and partitioning methods. Hierarchical methods (also called agglomerative or joining) proceed by stages producing a sequence of partitions, each corresponding to a different number of clusters, until a maximum of $n-1$ iterations (with n that equals the number of cases). In hierarchical clustering the result is a tree of cluster associations: first items are joined to each other, and the groups to each other. The sequence of mergers of the clusters can be represented visually by a tree diagram, often called dendogram. In this tree, the different branches are the clusters, and one can choose the appropriate level of detail by deciding which branches are viewed as separate clusters (Aldenderfer, Blanshfield, 1984, pp. 35-36). Partitioning methods (also called divisive), divide the data into a previously specified number of clusters. In other words, starting from an initial partition, partitioning techniques move observations iteratively from one group to another. The number of groups has to be specified in advance. Here, the typical difficulty is that one has to know or guess the number of clusters in advance.

4. The groups defined in stage 3 are undergone to a partitioning procedure which – starting from the partition specified at stage 3 – activates a process of progressive consolidation of the clusters, moving cases iteratively from one group to another.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Descriptive statistics confirm a generalized use of the platform by different political exponents, reinforcing the centrality of Twitter in the Italian public sphere. Although generalized, the use of Twitter is quite differentiated both in terms of frequency of use and in terms of capacity of use.

In terms of frequency of use, the participation of political leaders on Twitter is not equally distributed: some political leaders seem to monopolize the Twittersphere with an over production of tweets. The equalization hypothesis often adopted to emphasize the potential of social media compared to traditional media does not seem to be confirmed in our results. It attributes to traditional media the tendency to emphasize the differences between major and minor parties by reproducing the disparities in the allocation of more space and media resonance to the former. Social media, on the other hand, would give word back to the smaller parties by reducing the communication and popularity gap with the larger parties (Gibson, McAllister 2015). Differently from what is expected following the dictates of this hypothesis, Twitter seems to reproduce in the Twittersphere the same differences of the mass media sphere according to the dictates of what is called the normalization hypothesis that instead hypothesizes the reproduction on social media of the logic of mass media production in terms of representation and popularity of the exponents (Margolis, Resnick, 2000). Many minor parties have not taken the opportunity to expand their audience, recognition, and electoral basis, trying to overturn the starting disadvantage of mass media representation. Thus, huge differences emerge regarding leaders' productivity and popularity. The most productive leaders are those representative of the major parties such as Silvio Berlusconi and Matteo

Salvini. Minor parties' leaders such as Andrea Dusi, Pietro Grasso and others does not have tried to take more Twitter space producing a very low number of posts. However also some major parties' leaders such as Luigi Di Maio and Matteo Renzi cannot be considered very productive with a huge difference in the number of tweets produced when compared with those of Berlusconi and Salvini.

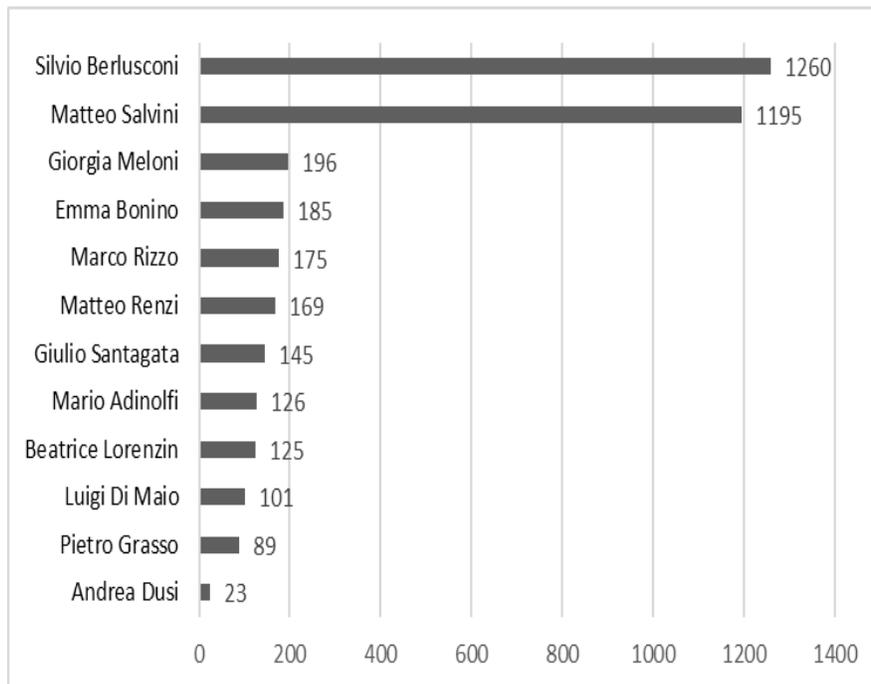


Figure 2. Leaders' productivity.

Productivity seems not to be linked to popularity: the leaders with the higher average number of retweets and favourites are not the most productive one. Thus, there seems to be no direct relationship between tweet production and feedback in terms of public attention, message delivery and consensus mobilisation, as evidenced by the fact that the most productive leaders are not also those who receive the most likes and retweets.

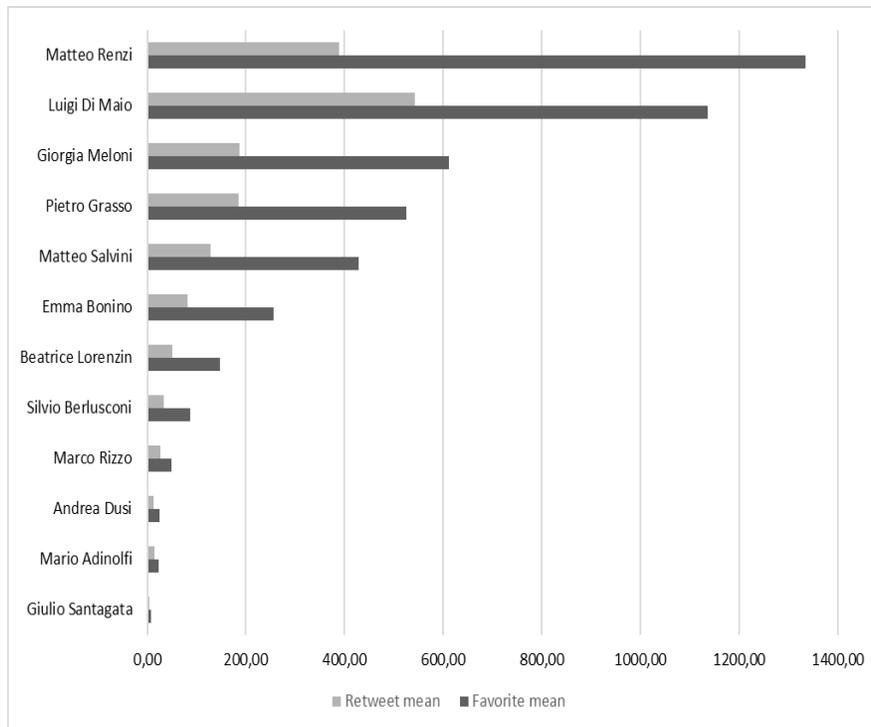


Figure 3. Leaders' popularity.

There seem to be, therefore, other factors that allow you to cross the boundaries of the Twittersphere: more than how much you publish is important what and how you publish. This legitimates an attention to the dimension of communicative style.

MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS

In a Multiple Correspondence Analysis, variables can be divided into two groups: active and supplementary (also referred to as illustrative or passive) variables. The former has a distinctive role in setting up the factors or axis, whereas the latter does not contribute to the formation of factors, even if they might be useful to interpret them. We decided to run as active

the following variables: topic, function, style, positions (aggregated). As supplementary variables we used the leader, the register and strategy. We applied a particular type of multiple correspondence analysis available in SPAD 5.0 called COREM. This module allows to choose for each variable the specific categories to be inserted in the analysis².

From the combination of the categories inserted in the analysis, factors are obtained. They are each other orthogonal, that is each other independent and they reproduce – in a descending order – the maximum inertia which is present in the matrix. In order to give a semantic interpretation to these factors – which in our case explain almost 40% of the inertia - we have run a particular module – called DEFAC – able to describe factors through a selection – among active and supplementary categories – of those most representative of each factor, on the basis of their test value³. In tables 1 and 2 of the appendix we present the results of this procedure for the first 2 factors, respectively.

The first factor seems to recall for a distinction in the *content of the message*. Specifically, the negative semi-axis, by grouping together the absence of political proposals and position taking and a focus on merely campaign issues and service information seems to be routed within an *informational perspective*. On the contrary, the positive semi-axis, prevalently represented by messages with a clear position taking

² Differently from traditional multiple correspondence analysis where all modalities of active variable are considered in the analysis, the COREM module allows to eliminate from the analysis the modalities considered not discriminating. The particular modalities eliminated are treated as supplementary categories (Di Franco, 2006, p. 79). In our case, we have eliminated the missing data of each variable.

³ In order to interpret factors, it can be essential to refer to some statistical coefficients which offer complementary information (Di Franco, 2006, pp. 39-41). For our research we will prevalently use the following four coefficients:

- Absolute contribution. It quantifies the importance of each categories in determining the direction of the axis and acts as a guide to the interpretation of each axis. It is interpreted as the percentage of inertia “explained” by each categories in relation to each axis.
- Relative contribution. It indicates how well each variables is fitted by the representation. Thus, its high values indicate that the axis explains the variable’s inertia very well.
- Coordinates. They can have a positive or a negative sign and they determine the category’s position on the axis.
- Test value. It signals the significance level of the association between a specific category and the factor. The association is considered significant when its value is higher than 2 in absolute value.

and both general and concrete proposals focusing on policy and political issues, is probably concerned with a *political orientation* of the tweets. In other words, the informational mode is related to information disseminating through posts where a candidate provided news (for example by dropping links), other factual information (e.g. government reports, etc.) or personal information whereas the political mode concerns a style where candidates posted his/her opinion, argument or the party position on a political issue.

The second factor can be interpreted as the *type of communication*. Particularly, the negative semi-axis is related to a *positive* style of communication oriented toward emphasizing candidates' or parties' values in order to control the impression leaders' give to voters (impression management). Instead, the positive semi-axis is concerned with a *negative* style of communication based on instrumentally attacking specific or generic others.

The interpretation of the two factors provides our classificatory principles, also known under their Latin label of *fundamenta divisionis* (Marradi, 1990, p. 131). Based on these two factors, we can identify four different communication styles:

1. *Informal style* defined by the intersection between the negative personalized communication and the informational mode.
2. *Demagogic style* deriving from the intersection between the negative personalized communication and the political mode.
3. *Promotional style* defined by the positive impression management and the political mode.
4. *Informational style* identified at the intersection of a positive impression management and an informational mode.

These styles represent ideal types of communication but in order to classify the tweets according to these dimensions we implemented a cluster analysis. The groups have been created through a procedure of progressive consolidation of the ratio between within groups and between groups variance. After 3 iterations the solution into 4 groups explained more than 45% of the overall inertia.

Cluster 1 – named *instrumentalist* - includes those tweets which adopt a neutral register and denote an instrumental use of e-campaigning since they do not deal with any proposals and political issues and do not express any policy position. Here the use of Twitter is merely passive and instrumental due to static nature of content, often duplicated by traditional media and websites. Here Twitter is used to merely broadcast information and activities in order to be merely present (but not actively present) in this new political arena. Campaign promotion is a traditional broadcasting behavior used during election time and Twitter provides candidates with another communicative platform to disseminate information directly (unmediated) to citizens. The most representative categories for this cluster are a neutral style, together with neither political nor general proposals but only campaign updating, self-promotion and call to action/mobilization.

Cluster 2 – named *populist* - comprehends those tweets with a hostile nature and a clear position-taking, which discredit or blame the elites (anti-elitism), or “dangerous others” dealing with stigmatized topics (such as migration) providing appeals to resentment and dissatisfaction with the political elites. The focus is on anger, fear and resentment caused by stigmatized threats and ordinary situations presented as crisis. This specific style involves adversarial and abrasive speech through which leaders connect with the discontented and the use of personal action frames (the inclusive “we”, the notion to put a certain country “first”, the concept of “the people”). The most representative categories for this cluster are a negative style of position-taking for attacking other politicians, a particular enemy, generic others (media, economic powers, Europe, etc.) or stigmatized enemies.

Cluster 3 – named *intimist* - includes those positive and promotional tweets which in order to capture public attention draw on common feelings, personal reflections on leaders’ private life, non-political issues such as current events. These tweets often connect current events with personal experiences, opinions and worldviews providing a more human dimension of candidates. Intimists often employ powerful figures of heroes as their key cultural, stylistic, and ideological tool to connect and bond. The most representative categories for this cluster are a positive style oriented toward self-promotion (promoting leader’s activities) through personal issues

regarding his/her private life, candidates' own values, capabilities and competences or referring to general principles also emphasizing particular segment of people as idealized or 'imagined' community.

Cluster 4 – named *institutionalist* - involves positive and relaxed in tone tweets avoiding direct confrontation with rivals and dealing with mass topics such as work, welfare and economy issues and proposing simplistic and simplified solutions to complex problems. These leaders present themselves as those with a solution to existing and continuing problems without exacerbating them. The world is presented in black and white (without any shades of gray): problems have single causes and can be solved with simple treatments. They adopt an old style of campaigning focusing on party ideological alignments through an official type of discourse. The most representative categories for this cluster are a positive style in taking position in general problems such as economy, welfare and work through a simplification strategy.

Figure 4 provides a typology which synthesizes our results.

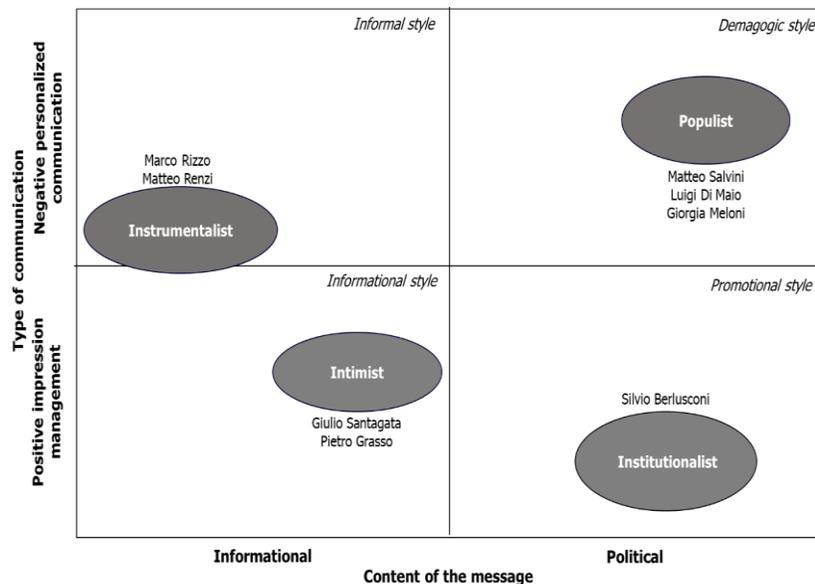


Figure 4. A typology of communication styles.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study contributes to the operational definition of the multi-dimensional concept of communication style often used in a broad sense and with different meanings, as recognized by some studies which call for more clarity on the concept of style (Weyland 2001, p.12): "political style is a broad, not clearly delineated concept".

Through multivariate analysis the paper contributes also to identify different strategies and styles of communication. Overall, we can identify two macro-dimensions in the communication styles identified:

1. an emotional mode typical of *intimist* and *populist* mode which although leveraging on opposite sentiments – positive feelings in the case of intimists and negative feelings in the case of populist – contribute to a stream that did not engage the reader cognitively, but primarily emotionally.
2. A rational mode typical of *instrumentalist* and *institutionalist* which instead leverages neutrality as a dominant value as in traditional reporting of events or issues that had already attained recognition through mainstream media.

Our results demonstrate that social media during electoral campaign are not exclusively used for political discussions. Giving updates from the campaign trail, promoting themselves or party members and critiquing opponents are central elements of election campaigns. This pattern is reflected in the topics that were discussed. The candidates Twittered mostly about campaign and party affairs and seldom about political issues. This may also be linked to the use of Twitter. Those who use it instrumentally only during election campaigns tend to use it in a traditional broadcasting manner (such as in the case of *instrumentalist* tweets); those who have been active for a while (oldcomers) have also developed a network of discussion and tend to use it as a discussion arena (*populist* and *institutionalist* mainly).

Together with the fragmentation of styles, even when Twitter is used as a public arena of discussion (such as in the case of *populist* and *institutionalist*) the messages is extremely simplified reducing the complexity of the

ideological drives. This may be the result of both the adaptation of the message to the medium and of a dissemination strategy that, instead of articulated and substantive ideologies, prefers fragments of ideology that can easily travel from one person to another without finding political opponents who can block the massive spread of the political message. Instead of substantive ideologies, social media logic opts for flexible political identifications coherent with a thin ideology (Kriesi, 2014, p. 369; Mudde, 2004, p. 544).

More longitudinal and internationally comparative research of the content of politicians' tweets is thus necessary.

With reference to the position of political leaders on the factorial plane, we need to specify that their location on one quadrant and cluster represents primarily a tendency and it does not imply that leaders adopt always only one specific style. Instead, they change different styles on convenience. There are overlaps especially among the populist and intimist styles.

The study is not without limitations: Twitter is not just about talking but includes listening, responding, discussing and debating as well. In terms of capacity of use, not all leaders show an adequate knowledge of the platform and grammar of the medium, as attested by the high number of leaders with a low capacity of interaction (low number of replies and retweets) that places this type of communication on the unidirectional side of broadcasting rather than on the conversational one. This seems to support the consideration that the emancipatory potential inherent in information and communication technologies has not been fully understood by politicians and has not been channelled towards the construction of a new expanded public space in which the distance between administrators and administrators is reduced. However, the study does not consider the interactive capacity of leaders and their willingness to participate in the dialogue with citizens or to establish real conversations with followers.

While our approach was applied to the single case of Italian elections, the approach is general enough to be applied to other contexts and other social media platforms. Thus, the study can be extended to more general applications not limiting the investigation only to political events such as elections. These can be all directions for further research.

APPENDIX

Table 1. Description of the first factor

Variable	Category	Test Value	Absolute contribution	Relative contribution	Coordinate
<i>Active categories - negative semiaxis</i>					
Concreteness of proposals	No Proposal	-52,12	13,1	0,72	-1,81
Style	Neutral	-50,22	13,1	0,67	-2,28
Style specified	Neutral	-49,99	13	0,66	-2,26
Position-taking	No position-taking	-49,92	11,3	0,66	-1,5
Policy issues	No policy issue	-35,11	2,6	0,33	-0,43
Campaign updating	Yes campaing update	-31,15	5,1	0,26	-0,79
Call to action/mobilization	Yes call to action	-30,49	4,3	0,25	-0,93
Political issues	No political issue	-25,99	3	0,18	-0,76
Campaign issues	Yes campaign issue	-21,19	2,2	0,12	-0,79
Welfare	No welfare	-21,17	0,4	0,12	-0,15
Economy	No economy	-18,94	0,3	0,09	-0,12
Work	No work	-18,60	0,2	0,09	-0,11
<i>Active categories - positive semiaxis</i>					
Migration	Yes migration	18,08	1,7	0,09	0,79
Work	Yes work	18,60	1,8	0,09	0,86
Economy	Yes economy	18,95	1,8	0,09	0,8

(Appendix Table 1 continued on next page)

Variable	Category	Test Value	Absolute contribution	Relative contribution	Coordinate
Welfare	Yes welfare	21,17	2,2	0,12	0,77
Campaign issues	No campaign issue	21,19	0,4	0,12	0,15
Style	Negative	22,12	2	0,13	0,53
Political issues	Yes political issue	25,98	3	0,18	0,23
Call to action/mobilization	No call to action	30,44	1,2	0,24	0,26
Campaign updating	No campaign updating	31,11	0,6	0,26	0,18
Concreteness of proposals	Political proposal	31,21	4,1	0,26	0,82
Policy issues	Yes policy issue	35,11	4,6	0,33	0,76
Position-taking	Yes position-taking	49,97	3,3	0,66	0,44
<i>Supplementary variables – negative semiaxis</i>					
Register	Neutral	-51,76			-51,8
Strategy	Information	-50,23			-50,2
Name	Marco Rizzo	-7,09			-7,1
Name	Matteo Renzi	-3,28			-3,3
Name	Giulio Santagata	-2,70			-2,7
Name	Luigi Di Maio	-2,18			-2,2
<i>Supplementary variables – positive semiaxis</i>					
Strategy	Instrumentalism	8,33			8,3
Strategy	Rationalisation	10,42			10,4
Strategy	Simplification	12,46			12,5
Register	Referential	17,96			18
Strategy	Emotionalisation	20,91			20,9
Register	Provocative	21,56			21,6

Table 2. Description of the second factor

Variable	Category	Test value	Absolute contribution	Relative contribution	Coordinate
<i>Active categorie - negative semiaxis</i>					
Style specified	Emphasising partyâ€™™	-39,97	10,1	0,42	-0,81
Style	Positive	-36,44	6	0,35	-0,53
Concreteness of proposals	Political proposal	-33,19	8,3	0,29	-0,87
Economy	Yes economy	-30,98	8,7	0,25	-1,32
Policy issues	Yes policy issue	-30,19	6,1	0,24	-0,65
Welfare	Yes welfare	-23,37	4,7	0,14	-0,84
Work	Yes work	-22,23	4,6	0,13	-1,03
Current affairs	No current affair	-18,95	0,5	0,11	-0,12
Political issues	No political issue	-18,61	2,8	0,09	-0,54
Migration	No migration	-11,90	0,2	0,04	-0,07
Concreteness of proposals	No Proposal	-7,41	0,5	0,01	-0,26
Style	Neutral	-7,11	0,5	0,01	-0,32
<i>Active categories - positive semiaxis</i>					
Migration	Yes migration	11,90	1,3	0,04	0,52
Style specified	Attacking one specif	16,14	2,4	0,07	0,74
Political issues	Yes political issue	18,61	0,9	0,09	0,17
Current affairs	Yes current affair	18,96	3,3	0,09	0,81
Work	No work	22,23	0,6	0,13	0,13

(Appendix Table 2 continued on next page)

Variable	Category	Test value	Absolute contribution	Relative contribution	Coordinate
Welfare	No welfare	23,37	1	0,14	0,17
Style specified	Attacking generic ot	24,16	5,5	0,15	1,17
Style specified	Attacking an enemy	25,64	6,1	0,17	1,21
Policy issues	No policy issue	30,19	3,4	0,24	0,37
Economy	No economy	30,97	1,3	0,25	0,19
Concreteness of proposals	General proposal	35,56	6	0,33	0,53
Style	Negative	43,57	13,5	0,5	1,03
<i>Supplementary variables – negative semiaxis</i>					
Register	Referential	-23,17			-0,44
Strategy	Simplification	-15,19			-0,8
Name	Silvio Berlusconi	-9,19			-0,21
Strategy	Rationalisation	-8,67			-0,38
Register	Neutral	-7,44			-0,26
Strategy	Information	-7,08			-0,24
<i>Supplementary variables – positive semiaxis</i>					
Register	Ironic	3,87			0,67
Register	Aggressive	7,31			1,02
Name	Matteo Salvini	9,60			0,23
Strategy	Instrumentalism	10,71			0,49
Strategy	Emotionalisation	12,63			0,22
Register	Provocative	27,16			0,61

Table 3. Description of the cluster *intimist*

Variable	Category	Mod/Cla	Global	Cla/Mod	Test value
Style	Positive	95,25	56,82	51,16	34,56
Policy issues	No	94,30	63,97	44,99	28,20
Concreteness of proposals	General proposal	82,63	54,21	46,52	24,07
Style specified	Emphasising candidate	27,31	10,39	80,20	21,63
Style specified	Emphasising generic others	18,58	7,12	79,63	17,30
Economy	No	99,14	87,23	34,68	17,16
Migration	No	97,93	87,79	34,04	14,30
Work	No	97,58	89,00	33,46	12,48
Register	Referential	56,78	42,21	41,06	11,97
Welfare	No	93,26	83,20	34,21	11,70
Campaign issues	Yes	25,32	16,01	48,27	10,01
Self-promotion	Yes	76,06	65,23	35,58	9,41
Personal issues	Yes	6,66	2,74	74,04	9,17
Style specified	Emphasising party	49,09	39,15	38,27	8,24
Strategy	Emotionalisation	57,39	47,56	36,83	8,00
Position-taking	No	28,44	22,63	38,35	5,54
Register	Evocative	5,36	3,17	51,67	4,81
Political issues	Yes	81,24	76,37	32,47	4,71
Governance	No	93,52	90,69	31,47	4,03
Conservatorism	No	96,63	94,46	31,22	3,95
Name	Giulio Santagata	5,62	3,82	44,83	3,62
Name	Pietro Grasso	3,63	2,35	47,19	3,23
Call to action/mobilization	Yes	24,72	22,03	34,25	2,59
Name	Silvio Berlusconi	36,13	33,29	33,12	2,41

Table 4. Description of the cluster *populist*

Variable	Category	Mod/Cla	Global	Cla/Mod	Test value
Style	Negative	95,52	31,86	84,69	54,73
Register	Provocative	74,51	34,56	60,92	32,22
Style specified	Attacking an enemy	35,48	10,60	94,53	30,18
Style specified	Attacking generic others	33,52	10,13	93,49	28,84
Concreteness of proposals	General proposal	81,42	54,21	42,43	21,77
Position-taking	Yes	97,11	77,34	35,47	20,75
Style specified	Attacking one person	26,42	11,13	67,06	17,66
Political issues	Yes	93,56	76,37	34,61	17,05
Migration	Yes	26,98	12,21	62,42	16,43
Current affairs	Yes	24,65	12,71	54,77	13,12
Call to action/mobilization	No	90,10	77,95	32,66	11,96
Campaign updating	No	97,48	88,89	30,98	11,81
Economy	No	96,36	87,23	31,21	11,62
Strategy	Emotionalisation	62,37	47,56	37,05	11,45
Strategy	Instrumentalism	20,26	11,34	50,47	10,33
Self-promotion	No	45,94	34,74	37,36	8,95
Work	No	95,70	89,00	30,38	8,90
Campaign issues	No	91,97	83,99	30,94	8,84
Welfare	No	91,32	83,20	31,01	8,79
Name	Matteo Salvini	39,96	31,52	35,82	6,90
Conservatorism	Yes	9,34	5,54	47,62	6,06
Governance	Yes	13,73	9,31	41,64	5,62
Personal issues	No	99,25	97,26	28,83	5,14
Policy issues	No	68,44	63,97	30,23	3,58
Name	Luigi Di Maio	3,92	2,66	41,58	2,82
Name	Giorgia Meloni	6,63	5,17	36,22	2,42

Table 5. Description of the cluster *institutionalist*

Variable	Category	Mod/Cla	Global	Cla/Mod	Test value
Policy issues	Yes	91,57	36,03	69,99	45,08
Concreteness of proposals	Political proposal	79,21	27,80	78,46	42,94
Style specified	Emphasising party	81,13	39,15	57,08	32,96
Economy	Yes	41,67	12,77	89,88	31,34
Welfare	Yes	44,44	16,80	72,84	26,54
Work	Yes	32,76	11,00	82,01	24,82
Style	Positive	87,36	56,82	42,34	24,64
Position-taking	Yes	99,04	77,34	35,27	23,31
Register	Referential	71,36	42,21	46,56	22,45
Strategy	Simplification	22,32	8,70	70,61	17,09
Campaign issues	No	96,17	83,99	31,53	14,01
Current affairs	No	96,65	87,26	30,50	11,84
Call to action/mobilization	No	90,13	77,95	31,84	11,80
Strategy	Rationalisation	22,13	11,84	51,45	11,44
Campaign updating	No	97,32	88,89	30,15	11,35
Name	Silvio Berlusconi	45,02	33,29	37,24	9,29
Personal issues	No	99,71	97,26	28,23	6,61
Internationalism	Yes	13,03	8,55	41,98	5,80
Governance	Yes	12,45	9,31	36,83	3,94
Self-promotion	No	39,08	34,74	30,98	3,41
Migration	Yes	14,37	12,21	32,40	2,41
Political issues	No	26,34	23,63	30,69	2,36

Table 6. Description of the cluster *instrumentalist*

Variable	Category	Mod/Cla	Global	Cla/Mod	Test value
Style	Neutral	82,08	11,32	99,30	46,17
Concreteness of proposals	No Proposal	97,88	17,99	74,49	45,82
Style specified	Neutral	82,08	11,47	97,93	45,62
Register	Neutral	96,72	17,86	74,15	45,12
Strategy	Information	96,92	19,18	69,19	43,85
Position-taking	No	94,03	22,63	56,88	38,80
Call to action/mobilization	Yes	65,70	22,03	40,84	23,46
Campaign updating	Yes	46,44	11,08	57,38	23,07
Political issues	No	64,55	23,63	37,39	21,70
Policy issues	No	98,84	63,97	21,15	21,06
Welfare	No	99,61	83,20	16,39	13,49
Campaign issues	Yes	36,22	16,01	30,97	12,25
Economy	No	100,00	87,23	15,69	12,11
Migration	No	100,00	87,79	15,60	11,81
Work	No	99,81	89,00	15,35	10,75
Governance	No	99,81	90,69	15,07	9,74
Internationalism	No	100,00	91,45	14,97	9,69
Conservatorism	No	100,00	94,46	14,49	7,61
Name	Marco Rizzo	10,79	4,62	32,00	6,32
Current affairs	No	94,80	87,26	14,87	6,00
Self-promotion	Yes	73,03	65,23	15,33	4,03
Name	Matteo Renzi	8,09	4,46	24,85	3,89
Name	Giorgia Meloni	8,86	5,17	23,47	3,72
Name	Matteo Salvini	36,22	31,52	15,73	2,41

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