



Engagement of politicians and citizens in the cyber campaign on Facebook: a comparative analysis between Mexico and Spain

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the use of Facebook by political actors in election campaigns, establishing the extent to which candidates, parties and citizens engaged in online participation through different online tools provided by this social networking site. A comparative content analysis of the Facebook pages of the main candidacies in the election campaigns in Spain (Castilla y León) and Mexico (Nuevo León) in 2015 was carried out. The results reveal a positive relationship between types of engagement, especially in the Mexican campaign, where politicians and users score systematically higher in all variables measuring engagement. However, results also indicate that the citizen engagement was of higher quality/intensity in the Spanish campaign.

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1. Introduction and context

The new scenario propitiated by digital communication logically entails profound consequences in the field of political communication, as well as in the structuring of the democratic political debate itself. This article focuses on the study of Facebook, as a digital participation and information tool, in the context of the election cyber campaign. In this way, it is possible to observe how the candidates and the parties use this social networking sites (SNS) to get politically engaged with their followers (Muñiz, Dader, Téllez, & Salazar, 2016). Using their Facebook profiles allows them to inform users about different issues related to the election campaign and discuss about them, which, eventually, is expected to contribute to the civic engagement of their followers by means of the tools that the SNS, and in this particular case, Facebook, place at their fingertips: options of clicking on likes, commenting on the posts and sharing them (Brandtzaeg & Haugstveit, 2014).

The present study starts, as context, from the changes that have been occurring in the process of political cyber-communication in the last few years and it focuses on two analogous electoral campaign processes in 2015: one in Mexico and the other one in Spain. We assume that in these election campaigns ‘communication of communities’ plays a