

From being a “government on Facebook” to the parliament: The impact of strategic communication on the emergence of new political agendas

Authors

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Abstract

This article analyzes and discusses the strategic communication choices made by the Portuguese political party PAN (People – Animals – Nature) during the initial years of its emergence on the national political spectrum. This party elected its first MP to the Portuguese Parliament in 2015. In 2019, it elected its first MP to the European Parliament and strengthened its national representation, electing four MPs for the Portuguese Parliament. This exponential growth is particularly relevant as Portugal had a closed parliamentary system for almost 20 years (since 1999 no new political forces had entered the Portuguese Parliament). Thus, the aim of this article is to discuss the strategies underlying the party’s communication actions that were set up to allow the new political party to gain visibility in the public arena.

During this period (2015-2019), statements were made by PAN members and journalists about "If Facebook likes were taken into account PAN would be Government". So, this case also makes it possible to problematize the difficulties that certain groups of “non-media elites” face in setting the agenda in mainstream media (Carpentier, 2011; Hackett, 2000; Hanania, 2016). Studying PAN’s choices regarding its communication strategies may provide an opportunity for debate on the attainment of legitimacy and a voice in the public space by certain groups with considered “niche agendas” (Pfetsch; Miltner & Maier, 2016, p. 52), without significant financial resources or established networks of influence, in their creative efforts to alter the balance of power and challenge dominant groups. It can also enhance the debate about political and civic participation in more active ways, at a time of growing concerns about the distancing of citizens from politics and politicians (Carreira, 2019, p. 206). The, online and offline, dynamics of constructing and deconstructing meanings related to strategic communication, impact the increase or decrease of stereotype activation influencing judgments and social perception in various ways (Rivers, Sherman, Rees, Reichardt, & Klauer, 2019) and for this they become relevant to explore in concrete contexts.

Using semi-structured interviews with policymakers most directly involved in defining the strategies that marked the rise of the party between 2015 and 2019 and analyzing the communicative performance in the media (quantitative and qualitative analysis of editorial information in the press, television, radio and online media in 2017), the paper illustrate that when leaders support strategic communications and integrate them into the culture of the organization, results are visible.

In 2017, a total of 17. 653 news about PAN were published, reaching approximately 1.900 million impressions (cumulative total audience). The qualitative analysis of the news indicates a positive favorability of 3.9 points (on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very negative and 5 very positive). The issue that generated the majority of the news is related to the party's campaign for local elections in September, however, throughout the year is the party's parliamentary activity that gathers most of the information, which made the subject “animals”, considered a niche political agenda, be the most expressive.

Submission ID

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The Effects of the Sharing Economy on Participation in the Digital Future

Authors

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Abstract

As collaborative consumption via new technologies increases, traditional economic models are evolving into trendy models that fall under the sharing economy. As models change, the roles of producer and consumer become blurred. Communication models allowing for feedback become more applicable in a connected world providing platforms that not only allow for consumers to provide feedback but also to be conversation starters. The connected world proposes many opportunities for interactions between users and producers and some of these interactions have led to collaboration between participants. Additionally, this new economic model is not simply a two-way or even circular communication, it includes a third party that does not necessarily act as a message sender or receiver, but rather as a messenger and this messenger is often voice-less, face-less and interacts using a computer interface. As these interfaces are accessible beyond international borders, local participation expands internationally. As with all forms of cross-cultural communication, in order to build participatory international audiences, relationships need to go beyond virtual foundations by adopting inclusiveness and mutual respect.

The proposed study takes on a Grounded Theory and Participatory Action approach by consulting with concerned societies on their positive and challenging experiences using shared platforms that allow for service exchange. Using a quantitative and qualitative questionnaire, we ask consumers and service providers using collaborative platforms to share their views based on positive, negative or neutral encounters and experiences. A questionnaire was designed in response to the call for proposals for the IAMCR conference to be held in Beijing on June 2020. To date, 100 respondents have participated in the research, 3 quarters of which are millennials from various countries such as the US, the UK, France, Belgium, India, China, Palestine, Canada and Ivory Coast. Most of the respondents are based in cities and have a Bachelor or postgraduate degree. This project, currently in its early phase, has the potential to give us an understanding on (1) who are the actors of the

sharing economy (2) what are the roles of these actors (3) why and how do they participate in the sharing economy (4) what are the benefits and challenges of current sharing platforms and most importantly for this conference (5) is participation in the sharing economy inclusive and respectful? If not, what recommendations can be made? Problems and recommendations will be sourced from users directly. It is hoped that at least a few hundred results are gathered by June so that some of these results be analysed and presented at the conference.

Furthermore, the dominant actors in this evolving economic model, the solution providers, will be studied using an analysis grid. Based on the questionnaire results, 4 sharing platforms will be selected so as to understand their solution proposal and how they ensure participants interact respectfully. I propose to present part of my findings on these dominant actors in the conference.

12min video format+Visuals including PowerPoint slides

1-3 mins intro, study objectives, definitions

4-8 mins methods

8-12 mins results and discussion questions

Submission ID

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(Re)positioning Participatory Communication as a facilitator of Institutionalised Public Participation in South Africa's Municipal IDP Processes

Authors

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Abstract

Integrated Development Planning (IDP) is a legislated and compulsory process that requires municipal governments in South Africa to guarantee the participation of local citizens in all decision-making processes related to local development planning. If it is found that there was no community participation as prescribed in section 4 of the Municipal Systems Act, then the municipality can be dissolved (See South Africa, 2000). However, as Williams (2006) and Molale (2019) have found, citizens do not always enjoy active participation in decision-making as they are treated as mere ratifiers of pre-planned ideas held by development managers and officials. The problem arguably lies in the theoretical misconception behind how participation is understood in practice, given its buzzword status (Cornwall, 2007; Leal, 2007), utopian nature (Eversole, 2003; Williams, 2004) and sociological interpretation (see Carpentier *et al.* 2019). Thus the kind of institutionalised participation that is prescribed (and practised) is inconsistent with what meaningful