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Using sentiment analysis to monitor electoral campaigns: method matters. Evidence from the United States and Italy / Andrea Ceron, Luigi Curini, & Stefano M. Iacus

Abstract: In recent years there has been an increasing attention in the literature on the possibility of analyzing social media as a useful complement to traditional off-line polls to monitor an electoral campaign. Some scholars claim that by doing that we can also produce a forecast of the result. Relying on a proper methodology for sentiment analysis remains a crucial issue in this respect. In this work, we apply the supervised method proposed by Hopkins and King (2010) to analyze the voting intention of Twitter-users in the United States (for the 2012 Presidential election) and Italy (for the two-rounds of the centre-left 2012 primaries). This methodology presents two crucial advantages compared to traditionally employed alternatives: a better interpretation of the texts and more reliable aggregate results. Our analysis shows a remarkable ability of Twitter to “nowcast” as well as to forecast electoral results.

Digital media and political participation: The moderating role of political interest across acts and over time / Bruce Bimber, Marta Cantijoch Cunill, Lauren Copeland, & Rachel Gibson

Abstract: Political interest is a potentially important moderator of the relationship between digital media use and traditional forms of political participation. We theorize that the interaction between interest and digital media can be either positive or negative, depending on whether the action is voting, an elite-directed act, or a self-directed act. To test our expectation, we use British Election Studies data from 2001, 2005, and 2010. We find that digital media use is positively and consistently associated with political talk for those lower in political interest. For voting we find a similar relationship that appears to be strengthening over time. For the elite-directed acts of donating money and working for a party, we find a highly variable moderating effect of political interest that can be positive, negative, or non-existent.

Examining the relationship between e-social networks and the communication behaviors of Generation 2000 (millennials) in Turkey / Hasan Latif, C.Gazi Uçkun, Bar1_ Demir

Abstract: The information revolution has shaped a new generation. Our study focused on the relation between the social networks that benefit from the opportunities arising from information technologies and the communication behaviors of Generation 2000 university students. According to the findings of this research, in Turkey, university students' use of mobile internet and social networks is increasing and becoming widespread, when compared with that observed in the previous years. For both Generation 2000 and others in Turkey, Facebook is the preferred network. In contrast to the expectations, our study showed that members of Generation 2000 in Turkey do not exhibit difficulty in using electronic communication. These technologies prevent face-to-

face communication, determine social networks to a certain degree, and remove the above-mentioned contradiction. We found that Generation 2000 in Turkey is aware of information technology and the possible negative effects of electronic social networks. Finally, we noted that Generation 2000 in Turkey is neither addicted to the Internet nor to electronic social networks.

Linking Loneliness, Shyness, Smartphone Addiction Symptoms and Patterns of Smartphone Use to Social Capital / Mengwei Bian & Louis Leung

Abstract: The purpose of this study is to explore the roles of psychological attributes (such as shyness and loneliness) and smartphone usage patterns in predicting smartphone addiction symptoms and social capital. Data were gathered from a sample of 414 university students using online survey in mainland China. Results from exploratory factor analysis identified five smartphone addiction symptoms: disregard of harmful consequences, preoccupation, inability to control craving, productivity loss, and feeling anxious and lost, which formed the smartphone addiction scale (SPAS). Results show that the higher one scored in loneliness and shyness, the higher the likelihood one would be addicted to smartphone. Furthermore, this study shows the most powerful predictor inversely affecting both bonding and bridging social capital was loneliness. Moreover, this study presents clear evidence that the use of smartphones for different purposes (especially for information seeking, sociability and utility) and the exhibition of different addiction symptoms (such as preoccupation and feeling anxious and lost) significantly impacted social capital building. The significant links between smartphone addiction and smartphone usage, loneliness, and shyness have clear implications for treatment and intervention for parents, educators, and policymakers. Suggestions for future research are discussed.

Data Richness Tradeoffs between Face-To-Face, Online Audio-Visual, and Online Text-Only Focus Groups / Katie M. Abrams, Zongyuan Wang, Yoo Jin Song, & Sebastian Galindo-Gonzalez

Abstract: This study offers an examination of data richness (i.e., topic-related data, topic-unrelated data, researcher ratings of data richness, word count, and linguistic characteristics of data richness) tradeoffs between face-to-face, online text-only and online audio-visual focus group mediums. Two focus group sessions were held for each type of medium. Data were analyzed using systematic content analysis and Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count. Findings showed that although online audio-visual focus groups show potential for producing data similar in richness to face-to-face focus groups, researchers should carefully consider the potential distractions that manifested in this study as a result of the medium itself, likely due to its novelty as a group communication medium. Online text-only groups did not facilitate rich data, as operationalized in this study, and also had a lower amount of data related to the topic of the groups due to more socializing and off-topic discussion. As the first study to empirically examine the potential of data from focus groups facilitated via webcam (online audio-visual), it concludes the technology offers similar data richness to face-to-face focus groups.

What are the links in a web survey among response time, quality, and auto-evaluation of the efforts done? / Melanie Revilla & Carlos Ochoa

Abstract: Evaluating the quality of the data is a key preoccupation for researchers to be confident in their results. When web surveys are used, it seems even more crucial since the researchers have less control on the data collection process. However, they also have the possibility to collect some paradata that may help evaluating the quality. Using this paradata, it was noticed that some respondents of web panels are spending much less time than expected to complete the surveys. This creates worries about the quality of the data obtained. Nevertheless, not much is known about the link between response times (RT) and quality. Therefore, the goal of this study is to look at the link between the RT of respondents in an online survey and other more usual indicators of quality used in the literature: properly following an Instructional Manipulation Check (IMC), coherence and precision of answers, absence of straight-lining, etc. Besides, we are also interested in the link of RT and the quality indicators with respondents' auto-evaluation of the efforts they did to answer the survey. Using a Structural Equation Modeling approach which allows separating the structural and the measurement models and controlling for potential spurious effects, we find a significant relationship between RT and quality in the three countries studied. We also find a significant, but lower, relationship between RT and autoevaluation. However, we do not find a significant link between autoevaluation and quality.

Reports and Communications

The influence of the answer box size on item nonresponse to open-ended questions in a web survey / Cornelia Zuell, Natalja Menold, & Sabine Körber

Abstract: This article investigates item nonresponse in open-ended questions because such item nonresponse in surveys is much higher than on closed questions. The difference is a result of the higher cognitive burden placed on the respondent. To study item nonresponse, we manipulate different questionnaire design characteristics, such as the size of the answer box and the inclusion of motivation texts, as well as respondent-specific characteristics, in a randomized web-experiment using a student sample. The results show that a motivation text increases the frequency of responses to open-ended questions for both small and large answer boxes. However, large answer boxes earn higher item nonresponse than small answer boxes regardless of the usage of a motivation text. In addition, gender and the respondent's field of study affected the answering of open-ended questions; being a woman or studying social sciences increased the frequency of a response. As the major finding and in contrast to previous findings, our results indicate that particularly large answer boxes should be avoided, because they reduce respondents' willingness to respond.