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From hybrid-media system to hybrid-media politicians

Danish politicians and their cross-media presence in the 2015 national elections campaign

Mark Blach-Ørsten (Corresponding), Mads Kæmsgaard Eberholst & Rasmus Burkal

Abstract

An increasingly complex hybrid system of social- and traditional-news media surrounds Nordic election campaigns as politically experienced incumbents favour traditional news media, and younger, lesser-known candidates' social media. Despite little evidence for hybrid-media politicians, politicians' media use is changing rapidly; 15%–16% of Danish candidates used Twitter in 2011 but 68% in 2015. In this large-sample content analysis, party leaders have high traditional-news-media and low Twitter presence, and younger candidates visa-versa, but some politicians have high presence in both. Hybrid-media politicians are younger than the average Danish Parliament member, represent various parties, and likely come from the greater Copenhagen area.

Keywords

Campaigning, hybrid-media system, Denmark, politicians, Twitter, content analysis, national elections

Introduction

Studies on politicians' social-media campaigning are becoming as numerous as the politicians with social-media profiles. In a recent review of 127 studies focusing on Twitter, Jungherr (2016) finds a number of interesting similarities among the many studies. First, Twitter users are not representative of countries' general population but, rather, make up an elite consisting of politicians, journalists and the politically interested. Second, members of the opposition are more likely to use

Twitter during an election than members of the incumbent government. Third, so far, Twitter appears to have no clear direct effects on electoral success.

Jungherr (2016) also shows that most Twitter studies have focused on the United States and United Kingdom. Considering the Nordic perspective, the review found only two studies that included Denmark, four Sweden and six Twitter and Norway. Specifically regarding Danish research, a few more studies can be added to the mix, including Skovsgaard and Van Dalen (2013) and Hansen and Kosiara-Pedersen (2014), but this field of research is clearly only emerging in the Nordic countries. The few studies focused on Nordic politicians' use of Twitter in election campaigns indicate that those most active on Twitter are younger and lesser-known politicians, whereas the more established and well-known politicians are less active (Strandberg, 2009; Enli & Skogerbø, 2013; Skovsgaard & Van Dalen, 2013). A possible reason is that well-known politicians have high newsworthiness and, consequently, easy, generous access to traditional news-media outlets (Skovsgaard & Van Dalen, 2013; Blach-Ørsten, 2014). Thus, well-known politicians have less need to use social media to grab attention for their campaigns, whereas for lesser-known politicians, Twitter offers a low-cost way to try to gain both public and media attention.

In a survey study of cyber-campaigning in the 2011 Danish national election, Hansen and Kosiara-Pedersen (2014, p. 216) found no significant effects of any kind from cyber-campaigning when controlling for other campaign activities. Likewise, international and Nordic studies suggest that Twitter should not be singled out as the only social-media tool or platform used by politicians in online campaigning. Hansen and Kosiara-Pedersen (2014) argue that Twitter should be analysed together with other cyber-campaigning platforms, such as Facebook, websites, and blogs. Jungherr (2016) contend that Twitter should not be seen as a separate communication tool but as part of an increasingly complex media environment in which both traditional news media and (other) social media shape political coverage and thus political communication. Indeed, one future direction of

Twitter studies, Jungherr (2016) suggests, is to analyse both social media and traditional news media.

This article adds to this growing body of Twitter studies by examining candidates' presence on Twitter and in traditional news media in Denmark, a country on which so far few studies have focused. Treating Denmark as a case study adds important news aspects to the research on modern day campaigning. From a media systems perspective, Denmark, which is part of the democratic-corporatist media system, represents a different media system than the liberal media system, seen in, for example, the United States and United Kingdom (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). The Danish media system is characterized by an overall focus on the news media's role in democracy (Blach-Ørsten & Willig, 2016b), and Denmark has a long, strong history of public service television and radio and tradition of providing economic subsidies for newspapers, both traditional and online. Although economic and technological changes have affected the Danish news media, it remains a robust media system (Blach-Ørsten, 2014; Reuters, 2016), in which the traditional news media still dominates, and changes in media use and reach are occurring at different rates than in the UK and US.

From a political system perspective, the Danish political system is also very different from the UK and US political systems. Denmark's multiparty system featured ten parties running in the 2015 elections, and while Danish campaigns have become increasingly professionalised and mediated in the past 10–15 years, campaign budgets remain comparatively low (Hansen & Kosiara-Pedersen, 2014). Finally, in Denmark's proportional election system, candidates from different parties compete against not only each other but also their colleagues within the same party (Skovsgaard & Van Dalen, 2013; Esmark & Ørsten, 2008).

Finally, all the previous Danish studies have been based on surveys of candidates. In this study, a large-sample content analysis investigates the cross-media presence of all 799 candidates for the Folketing (Danish Parliament) in the 2015 general election. Theoretically, the study adopts a hybrid-media perspective focusing on both Twitter and traditional news media. Following the findings of Danish scholars Skovsgaard and Van Dalen (2013) and Hansen and Kosiara-Pedersen (2014), the use of Twitter as a campaign platform is understood in relation to the Twitter users' newsworthiness in the traditional news media. Thus, party leaders and other well-known politicians with high newsworthiness in traditional news media give lower priority to social media (Twitter), whereas lesser-known politicians with low newsworthiness in traditional news media give high priority to social media (Twitter), which can offer a low-cost way to gain both public and media attention.

Based on this reasoning, this article is structured as follows. The next section presents the theoretical argument merging media-systems theory (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Strömbäck, Ørsten & Aalberg, 2008) and hybrid-media theory (Chadwick, 2013; Moe & Larsson, 2013; Nuernbergk & Conrad, 2016). The discussion then moves to the particulars of the Danish electoral system and the study methodology of large-scale content analysis of both traditional news-media outlets and Twitter. Next, the research questions are proposed, and finally, the results are presented and discussed.

Political campaigning in a hybrid-media system

In the media-system theory developed by Hallin and Mancini (2004), Denmark, along with the other Nordic countries, follows the northern European/democratic corporatist model. The countries in this model are all characterized by: 1) the early development of a large newspaper industry; 2) high newspaper circulation; 3) strong professionalization of journalism; and 4) a high level of public intervention in the media sector, in both state subsidies for legacy news-media organizations

and in a strong public-service media, including both radio and television public-news services (Hallin & Mancini 2004, p. 74). A study on political communication in the Nordic countries (Strömbäck, Ørsten & Aalberg, 2008) concludes that little if any characteristics of the Nordic countries challenge the fundamentals of Hallin and Mancini's (2004) model.

However, more recent studies (Benson, Blach-Ørsten, Powers, Willig & Zambrano, 2012; Hjarvard & Kammer, 2014; Syvertsen, Enli, Mjøs & Moe, 2015; Blach-Ørsten & Willig, 2016b) argue that global trends, such as digitalisation and commercialisation, are causing profound changes in all media systems, including the democratic-corporatist system. Since the 1990's, print circulation, readership and advertising revenues have dropped in Denmark (Lund, Willig & Blach-Ørsten, 2009; Hjarvard & Kammer, 2014, Blach-Ørsten & Willig, 2016b). Traditional public-service television and radio still reach large audiences, as do online newspapers, but newspapers have yet to find a business model that makes up for losses in print advertisement (Hjarvard & Kammer, 2014; Blach-Ørsten & Willig, 2016b; Reuters 2016). New online news media are also emerging, and online audiences, especially by younger generations, are increasingly using Facebook and Twitter as platforms on which to find and consume news (Reuters, 2016). These changes within the democratic-corporatist media system resemble Chadwick's (2013) description of a hybrid-media system in which old and new forms of communication and news-making co-exist and interact in an increasingly complex media ecology (Moe & Larsson, 2013).

Changes are not taking place only within media. As Hallin and Mancini (2004) stress, the relationship between media and politics determines how media systems are shaped and develop over time, and the political side of this equation is also changing (Esmark & Ørsten, 2008; Blach-Ørsten, 2014). During much of the twentieth century, the Danish political system could be characterised as a mostly consensual, multi-party parliamentary democracy with a strong corporatist tradition of interest mediation (as implied in the notion of a democratic-corporatist system), making

Denmark a strong example of the Nordic welfare state. Since the 1980s, however, the political system has undergone significant changes. Although turnout in national elections remains high (85,9% in 2015) (Statistics Denmark, 2015), fewer voters retain a strong sense of party identification, class-based voting has given way to issue voting, and most parties have seen declining membership (Esmark & Ørsten, 2008), along with, more recently, trust in politicians. During the same time, a broad majority in the Folketing has passed legislation to substantially increase public funding of political parties professional secretariats (Blach-Ørsten, 2016). This money has largely been invested in professionalising communication by both party organisations and individual politicians, as well campaign efforts during and between elections (Esmark & Ørsten, 2008; Blach-Ørsten, 2016).

Amid these changes, social media has attracted increased focus from both party organisations and individual politicians. Denmark has high Internet penetration, at 96% in 2016 (Reuters, 2016), and high adoption of social media in general. Facebook, in particular, is popular among Danes (Nielsen & Schrøder, 2014), with 62% of the Danish population active on Facebook on daily basis in 2016. In contrast, only 4% of the Danish population is actively daily on Twitter (Danielsen, 2016). A survey of Danish politicians in the 2011 election finds that 78% of members of Parliament (MPs) were on Facebook but only 16% on Twitter (Skovsgaard & Van Dalen, 2013). A more recent survey during the 2015 election reports that 68% of candidates had Twitter profiles, an immense jump up from 2011 (Jensen, Hoff & Klastруп, 2016). A survey investigating Danish politicians' reasons for using Facebook and Twitter finds that they used social media to attract a) the attention of journalists and news media organisation and b) sometimes to aim a specific aim a message at their constituents while avoiding the critical filter of the press (Blach-Ørsten, 2016).

Thus, the Danish democratic-corporatist political system has changed at least as much as the democratic-corporatist media system has in recent decades (Blach-Ørsten, 2014). Despite these

structural changes in both news media and politics in Denmark, studies on political communication in Denmark suggest that the traditional news media continues to play the most important role in the emerging hybrid news-media system. Studies on media use from quantitative (Nielsen & Schröder, 2014) and qualitative (Schröder, 2014) perspectives find that most Danes use several news platforms on a daily basis (Reuters, 2016). Thus, public-service television and radio, online newspapers and social media all play roles in daily use, with younger generations preferring social media, and older generations still favouring television news (Schröder, 2015; Reuters, 2016). Studies on agenda setting in Denmark show that the front-page stories of the daily print versions of traditional newspapers paper editions basis are quoted by public-service radio and television and online by other major news outlets (Lund, Willig & Blach-Ørsten, 2009; Blach-Ørsten, Willig & Burkal 2013; Blach-Ørsten & Willig, 2016a). Studies on journalism quality indicate that politicians and journalists themselves consider the three Danish morning newspapers to have the highest journalistic quality, while the Danish public perceives the most quality in public-services television news (Willig, Ørsten, Hartley, & Flensburg, 2015). Finally, according to studies on news use and social media, most Danes do not follow breaking news on social media (Nielsen & Schröder, 2014), and while many do find news on social media, only 12% of the population names social media as their preferred news source (Reuters, 2016).

From the perspective of political campaigning, these changes in the news media and political system have made Danish politics increasingly mediatised in recent decades (Ørsten, 2005; Hjarvard, 2008; Esmark & Blach-Ørsten, 2011; Skovsgaard & Van Dalen, 2013; Blach-Ørsten, 2016). Mediatised politics are largely driven by the media logic of the news media (Ørsten, 2005; Strömbäck 2008) and its adoption by politicians (Strömbäck & Van Alest, 2013; Esmark & Blach-Ørsten, 2011; Nuernbergk & Conrad, 2016). In the Danish context, news values such as conflict, identification and power figure prominently in the media logic (Skovsgaard & Van Dalen, 2013;

Blach-Ørsten, 2016). This logic, however, often skews the news media's attention towards well-known politicians with powerful positions and/or good communications skills and resources, making it harder for the lesser-known politicians with fewer resources to gain media attention (Skovsgaard & Van Dalen, 2013).

In a recent report Jensen, Hoff & Klasttrup (2016) track the role of the Internet, online news media and social media in Danish election campaigns from the late 1990s to the election in 2015. Jensen, Hoff & Klasttrup (2016) trace the first attempts to use new technology in a general election campaign place to 1998, which saw the first significant number of politicians use webpages as part of their campaign activities. In the 2005 election, candidates added blogs to their campaign tool box, and in the 2007 general election, Facebook first became a reference point for candidates' campaign. In the 2011 and 2015 elections, Facebook emerged as the dominant social media used by candidates, as the importance of the blogs and webpages of individual candidates declined, and YouTube remained a marginal media in Denmark. Twitter entered the campaign toolbox in 2011, with Instagram making its first appearance in the 2015 election.

Despite the focus on social media, Jensen, Hoff & Klasttrup (2016) conclude, based on surveys that traditional news media remain the most important media for voters, with television being especially important, and newspapers and radio still playing crucial roles. Data from the most recent elections, however, indicate that use of traditional news media is in declining in favour of social media. Jensen, Hoff & Klasttrup (2016) also finds that the respondents (voters) believe that social media could influence election outcomes, but the authors argue that other factors, such as party performance, have greater value in changing votes. This argument is in line with Hansen and Kosiara-Perdersen's (2014, p. 115–116) study of the 2011 election. Hansen and Kosiara-Perdersen (2014) find that, when controlling for other variables (e.g. campaign resources, incumbency, appearance on national television, advertisements in nationwide newspapers, participation in

election meetings and number of volunteers), cyber-camping has an effect only on interparty competition for personal votes, and this effect is not significant when controlling for the other mentioned variables.

In conclusion, the hybridisation and increasing complexities of the Danish media system have resulted in increasingly mediatised political campaigning, with the media logic guiding most forms of political communication. Still more communication platforms are coming into play, sometimes interacting with each other, sometimes in competition with each other. Thus, politicians may turn to social media to attract the attention of both journalists and voters, and journalists, in turn, may use social networks to look for both scoops and new sources. However, agenda setting and reaching voters in the Danish media system still largely entail getting a story in traditional news media, such as public-service television and radio and morning newspapers.

The Danish electoral system and 2015 national election

Elections to the Danish Parliament are based on proportional representation (Norregaard, 2014).

The Parliament has 179 members, including four elected from Greenland and the Faeroe Islands, which belong to the commonwealth. Denmark is divided into three electoral regions (Metropolitan Copenhagen, Sealand-Southern Denmark and Northern and Central Jutland) and 10 multi-member constituencies subdivided into 92 nomination districts. The distribution of seats takes place at two levels, a multi-member constituency level and a national level. The first 135 seats of the Parliament are allocated among the 10 multi-member constituencies, while the 40 remaining seats are distributed in a compensatory fashion at the higher tier of the national level (Esmark & Ørsten, 2008).

The distribution of mandates among the candidates on the different party lists can follow three principles: 1) distribution of candidates in local constituencies within a regional constituency, with

both party votes and preferential (personal) votes determining the outcome; 2) hierarchical running order within a regional constituency, which requires an exceedingly high number of preferential votes for a particular candidate to cause deviations from the running order determined by party; and 3) an equal chance for all candidates on a particular party list within a regional constituency, making the number of preferential votes the most important (Esmark & Ørsten, 2008).

Denmark practices what is known as ‘negative parliamentarianism’, in which the government need not have a majority in the Parliament, but it must not have a majority against it. If there is a majority against the government, it must resign. The system of negative parliamentarianism allows Denmark to be run by a minority government. Indeed, many Danish governments have been minority governments holding less than 90 of the 179 seats in Parliament.

In the 2015 national election, 10 parties making up two blocks (the red and blue blocks) (Korsgaard-Pedersen, 2012) fought for votes. On the left, the red block included the Social Democrats (A), Social Liberals (B), Socialist People’s Party (F), Red/Green Alliance (Ø) and newly-formed Alternative Party (Å). On the right, the blue block included the Liberals (V), Conservatives (C), Danish People’s Party (O), Liberal Alliance (I), and Christian Democrats (K), which have no parliamentary representation today. At the time of the election, the incumbent government consisted of the Social Democrats (A) and Social Liberals (B), but the Socialist People’s Party (F) had been part of the government until 2014. The prime minister was Helle Thorning-Schmidt from the Social Democrats (S), and the opposition was led by the Liberals (V), headed by former Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen and the leader of the Danish People’s Party (O), Kristian Thulesen Dahl.

Method and data

The guiding principle of data collection in this study is to focus on the news and social media with the most activity, readers and users. For the legacy media, this means focusing on the national news

media with the most readers. The newspapers (and their websites) included are *Politiken*, *Berlingske*, *Jyllands-Posten* (morning newspapers), *BT*, *Ekstra Bladet* (tabloids), *Information*, *Kristeligt Dagblad* (niche newspapers) and *MetroXpress* (free newspaper). The radio news studied are the 8 a.m. broadcasts on public-service broadcaster DR's P1, P3 and P4 stations and the corresponding newscast on a second public-service broadcaster 'Radio 24syv'. The television news broadcasts included are the most-watched TV news on the two major national television channels, DR1 and TV 2. Thus, candidates might have been quoted in less-read, -listened or -watched news media, such as local news media, without being captured in the sample. This is especially likely to have had an effect on the media presence of younger, lesser-known politicians outside the capital city in our study.

The content analysis covers news for each day of the entire campaign from 27 May 2015 through 18 June 2015. The content analysis was conducted in collaboration with the research agency Info-media, which collects all the material published by the Danish news media. The analysis includes all the articles and features in the mentioned news media considered to deal with the general election (n=9338) as determined through a manual review of articles and features. All the items are then coded for either quotes from or mentions of the 799 candidates. The preliminary results show very little differences as the leaders of the two biggest parties, the Social Democrats and Liberal Party, had both the most quotes and the most mentions. According to the results, most of the other candidates were quoted more than they were mentioned. This article focuses only on quotes from candidates, understood as the opinion or written statement of a named candidate put in quotation marks or similar punctuation. These statements are counted and coded (n=7378 quotes). Quotes are selected for analysis as they are more comparable to the Twitter sample, which can also be seen as a type of 'quotes' from the candidates.

In the study of Twitter, the sample is collected by harvesting hashtags, similar to earlier research (Moe, 2012; Larsson & Moe 2013) explaining that ‘the presence of relevant hashtags in tweets can be regarded as a suitable delimitory rationale for data collection’ (Larsson & Moe, 2013, p. 76). This delimited scope is further supported in the Danish context by the findings of Jungherr (2016) describing Twitter as an elite community of politicians and the politically interested. In Denmark, the general Danish Twitter-sphere is composed mostly of journalists, politicians and politically interested citizens. Although the top 25 most-followed Twitter users are celebrities and athletes, the by far the most-used hashtag is #dkpol, which refers to Danish politics. A 2014 analysis by a Danish media agency, Overskrift.dk, finds that the #dkpol hashtag has been used a total of 370.000 times in 2014. The closest competitor is #sldk, a hashtag referring to Danish soccer while trails #dkpol by a mere 81.000 tweets. Expanding on these figures, communication agency Bysted maps the content of Danish tweets and argues that 25% of the Danish content on Twitter falls in the category of politics, media and journalism. Based on these numbers, it is safe to say that Danish political debate is highly popular on Twitter and, by a large margin, accounts of many the tweets in Danish Twitter sphere. Politicians generally are very aware of this and are keen to position their tweets with the correct hashtags, such as #dkpol.

For the Twitter analysis, all the tweets relevant to the national election were harvested using the open source tool ‘Your Twapper Keeper’, which was modified to harvest all relevant electoral hashtags from the announcement of the election until the election it-self. This method captured 262.000 tweets, their senders, the time and date of posting and other meta-information related to the tweet or tweeter. YourTwapperKeeper is freely available at <https://github.com/540co/yourTwapperKeeper>. The program has been known to sometimes miss large portions chunks of tweets (Moe, 2012), so to avoid this issue during data collection, tweets were harvested from the mentioned hashtags but only after performing a UNION command in SQL.

This command ensured there final data contained no duplicate tweets, although a tweet could have been placed in several of the harvested hashtags. Still, candidates could have been active on Twitter without being captured in the data collection, but if so, they used social media in a way that did not reach large audiences through the use of hashtags.

Opting for a user-based harvest was also an option for this research. Given the characteristics of the Danish Twitter-sphere described earlier, though, this was not done as, in the Danish context, this method would not necessarily have produced more accurate data but simply more data. It is very possible that politicians made tweets without using a hashtag, but these tweets might not pertain to politics. Jungherr (2016) suggests that using hashtags find results only from Twitter-savvy users, which might create a bias in the data-set. However, Jungherr (2016, p. 83) also states that different sampling methods, such as keywords, in no way ensure better or more valid results: ‘As of now there is no systematic comparisons between the results provided by these two modes of data selection (hash-tag selecting or keyword-based selecting). This makes it difficult to assess whether the different criteria lead to significantly different data sets’. Jungherr (2016) adds that, for the hashtag-based selection method to work best, the researchers must find the best hashtags on which to focus on. As mentioned, the political discussion in the Danish Twitter-sphere is to a large extent hash-tag-based, so a hash-tag-based sample is a good technique to ensure a consistent data pool of tweets pertaining to politics in general or the particular election investigated.

Research questions

As the above mentioned studies on election campaign and media use in Nordic countries suggests candidates’ media use can be divided into clear groups based on the candidate’s newsworthiness and thus their access to the traditional news media. However, these studies are based on analysis of surveys inquiring about candidates’ election campaign and media preferences. In addition, far more candidates had a Twitter profile (68%) in 2015 than in 2011 (15%–16%). In the present study, a

large-sample media content analysis of both Twitter and the traditional news media is conducted. The candidates are divided into three groups, and each group's presence on Twitter and in traditional news media is analysed. Presence refers to the number of quotes from a candidate in the traditional news media and the number of hash-tagged election tweets by the candidate. The candidates are divided into three groups: 1) party leaders, who have high news value and are the natural focus of parties' election campaigns; 2) Well-known politicians, or experienced politicians with incumbency status, including top-five ranking candidates from each party and to politicians with otherwise prominent positions or status within their party; and 3) lesser-known politicians, who typically are younger and less experienced candidates, candidate not in the top five on their party lists or first-time candidates with little or no access to the traditional news media.

Based on this analysis, the following research questions are proposed:

RQ 1: On which media platforms do party leaders, well-known politicians and lesser-known politicians have the highest level of presence?

RQ 2: What is the relationship between candidates' communications activities and their election results?

Regarding RQ2, previous studies on both Danish and international election campaigns so far have shown no clear, positive relationship between Twitter use and electoral success. Hansen & Kosiara-Pedersen (2014, p. 213) write: 'It is difficult, if not impossible, to link all campaigning activities with individual voters and their voting choices and thus accurately estimate the effects of campaigning due to the plethora of actual campaigning conducted by candidates, parties, media and other political actors'. This research question, therefore, is only explorative. The aim here is simply to illustrate through visualisation of data the relationship of election results with candidates' media presence in legacy news media and on Twitter.

Results

Turning first to the analysis of legacy news media, the data show that, of the 799 candidates running for parliament in the 2015 election, only 301 have quotes captured in the content analysis. These 301 candidates are quoted 7378 times in legacy news media during the election campaign. In Table 1, it is clear that the legacy news media still favour party leaders. The top-five most-quoted politicians from both the red and blue blocks are all party leaders, with the incumbent Prime Minister Thorning-Schmidt (A) and the leader of the opposition (and former Prime Minister) Rasmussen (V) by far the most quoted. The two party leaders are the top candidates of the election and also the politicians getting the most quotes in legacy media.

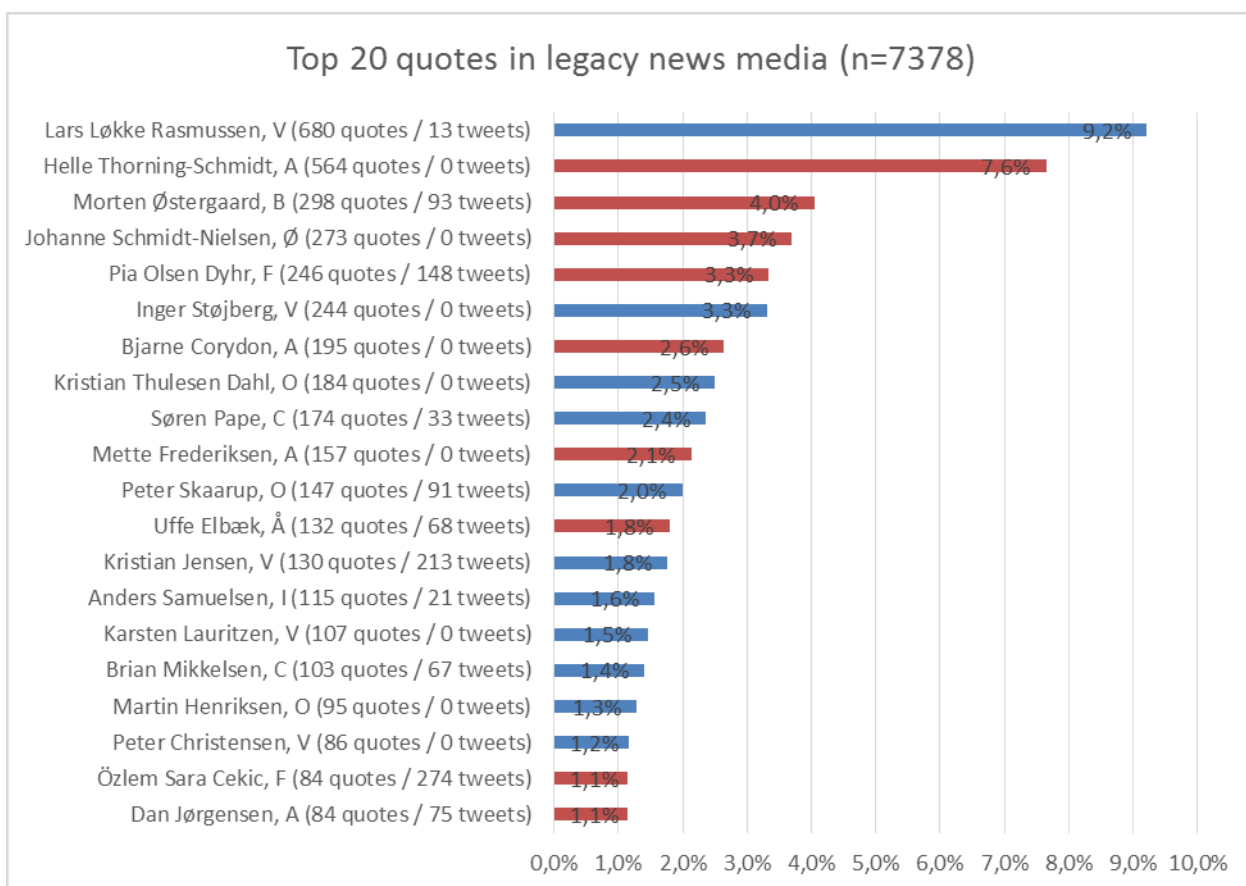


Table 1: Quotes in legacy news media

The news media's intense focus on the former prime minister and the opposition leader may be seen to flow from the media logic favouring the most well-known, powerful politicians. This tendency led to a presidentialisation (Webb, 2007) of the election in the media coverage, although 10 parties were in the running. Thus, the centre-right morning newspaper *Berlingske* launched its election coverage (180615) with a front page featuring large pictures of the incumbent prime minister and the opposition leader beneath a headline declaring: 'The dual'. Along with signs of presidentialisation, the analysis also shows that, of the top-five most-quoted politicians, four are party leaders from the red block, demonstrating the incumbency bonus (Hopmann, de Vreese & Albæk, 2011) found in most election studies regarding which parties gain the most media visibility. Thus, Morten Østergaard (B), who was part of the coalition government at the time of the election, ranks as the third most-quoted politician in the legacy news media. In fourth place comes Johanne Schmidt Nielsen (Ø), leader of a party that frequently supported the incumbent coalition government during its four-year term, and placed fifth is Pia Olsen Dyhr, leader of the Socialist People's Party which was part of the incumbent coalition government until 2014. The rest of the top twenty consist of party leaders and well-known politicians, supporting previous findings that the news media and media logic favour well-known, powerful politicians in election coverage.

Keeping the focus on party leaders but turning attention to Twitter, Table 2 shows a very different picture.

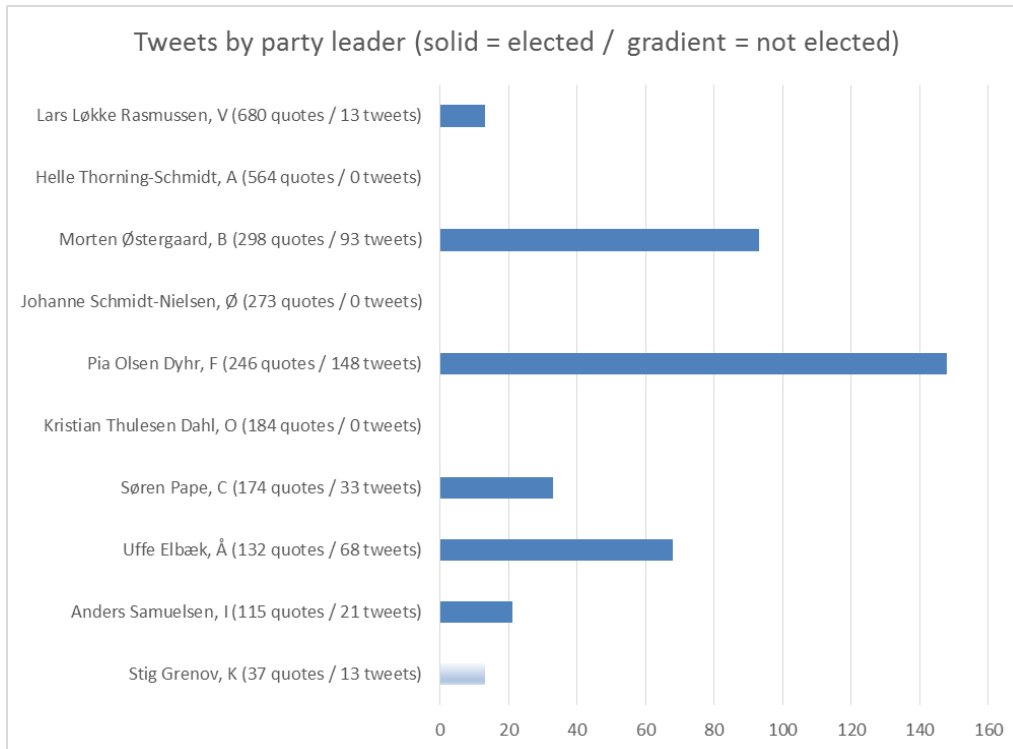


Table 2: Party Leaders on Twitter

Incumbent Prime Minister Thorning-Schmidt and opposition leader Rasmussen dominated the legacy news media, but neither candidate was very active on Twitter, with Rasmussen tweeting only 13 times and Schmidt not even once during the election campaign. The highest number of tweets is 148 from Dyhr (F), followed by 93 by Østergaard, party leader for Social Liberals (B). A study of tweets by party leaders during the 2013 national election campaign in Norway (Larsson & Ihlen, 2015) finds that seven party leaders sent higher numbers of tweets. In that study, the leaders of two smaller parties tweeted 669 and 453 times, whereas the incumbent prime minister tweeted 114 tweets. This sizeable deviation may be partly due to differences in data gathering and in election systems. Explaining the results, however, Larsson and Ihlen (2015, p. 8) argue that the leaders of smaller parties lack access to mainstream news outlets and employ social media as a remedy for this predicament. Looking at the Danish election, both Dyhr (F) and Østergaard (B) are leaders of smaller parties, whereas both Thorning-Schmidt (A) and Rasmussen (V) are leaders of larger

parties. Although Dyhr and Østergaard are both also quoted in the legacy news media, they are at a far lower rate than both Rasmussen and Thorning-Schmidt. The rest of the party leaders generate only small amounts of tweets, or no tweets at all in the cases of Schmidt and Dahl (O). These generally low levels of activity by party leaders clearly indicate that, despite the massive increase in politicians with Twitter profiles from 2011 to 2015, Twitter, as a campaign tool, remains far from the top of any party leader's list of communication tools. It, however, is important to remember that this study only counts the amounts of tweets made by party leaders and not, for instance, also the amount of retweets each tweet receives. It is likely that party leaders' tweets may be retweeted more often than those of other politicians, so tweets by party leaders, despite their low frequency, might have more effect and larger reach than tweets by other politicians.

Turning to the candidates most active on Twitter, Table 3 shows the top-30 most-active candidates on Twitter. The candidates are divided into three categories: party leaders, well-known politicians and a new category tentatively termed hybrid-media politicians. The first two categories are similar to the divisions in media use found in previous studies. The third category is a new division introduced based on the present empirical analysis showing that a small number of politicians have a presence both on Twitter and in traditional news media. Thus, the category of hybrid-media politicians consists of politicians who have an above-average (when excluding the highest scores) presence on Twitter and in traditional news media. For Twitter, this refers to politicians with more than 167 tweets, and for traditional news media, politicians with more than 25 quotes. In relation to the initial three categories of politicians presented in RQ 1, the category of hybrid media politician can best be described as well-known politicians who also have an above-average presence on Twitter. Table 3 also includes the election results, showing if candidates in any of the three categories were elected in the final vote tally.

By far the most active candidate on Twitter, with 700 tweets, is a young, lesser-known female politician from the Social Liberal Party (B). The rest of the top five tweeters sent relatively the same amount of tweets (274–244). The entire top 30 list has 16 female candidates and 14 male candidates. The average age of the top 30 tweeters is 36,8 years, much younger than the average ages of MPs, which in 2015 was 45 years (the average age of MPs since 1953 is 50,1 years). Also, 50% of the top 30 tweeters were running in the greater area of the capital Copenhagen, indicating that Twitter was a tool of lesser-known, young and more urban politicians.

Top 30 tweeters (solid = elected / gradient = not elected)

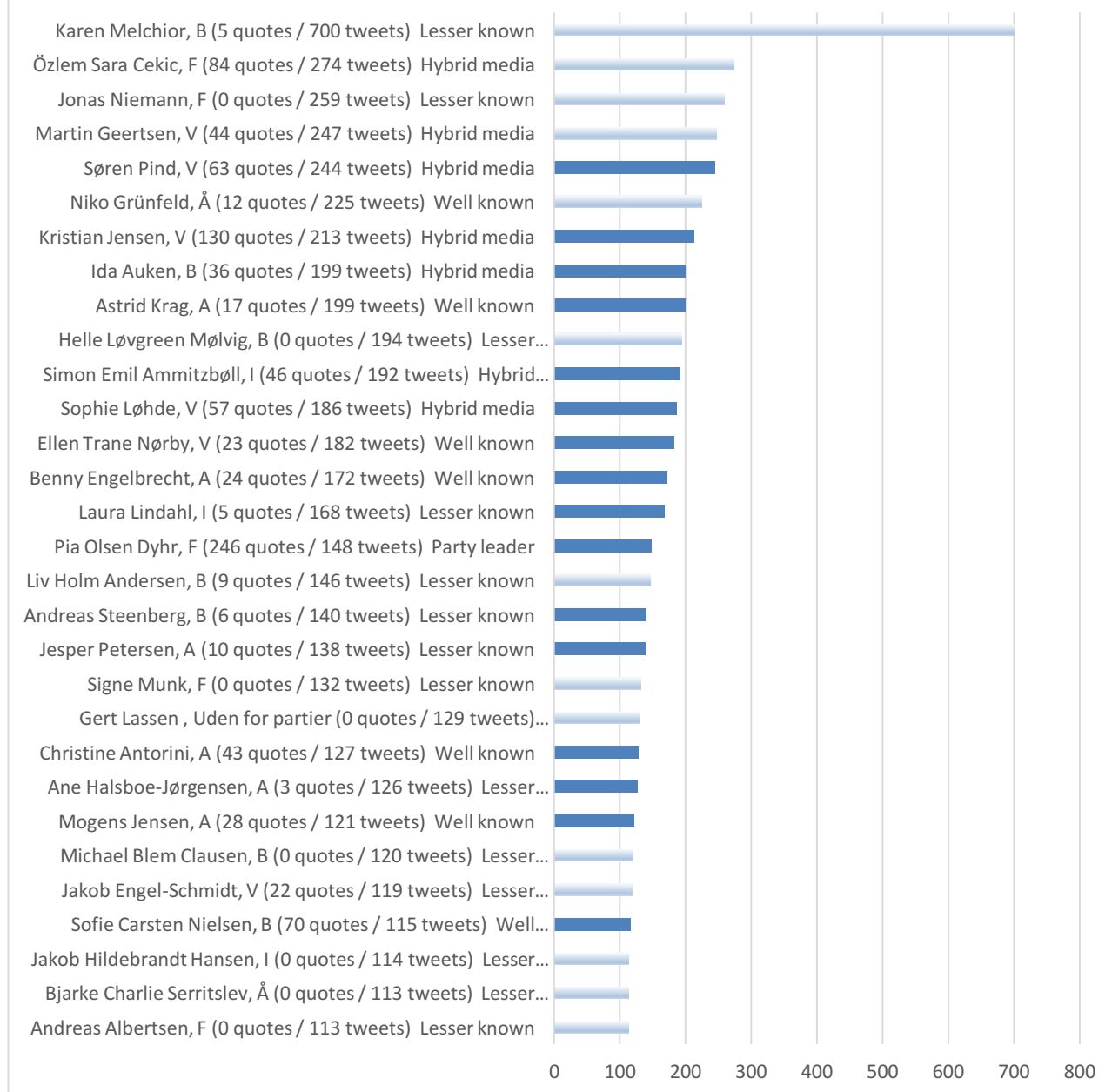


Table 3: Most active candidates on Twitter

Looking at Table 3 and the three categories of politicians shows that, as found in previous studies, lesser-known politicians can be very active on Twitter. The present study, however, also finds a small number of politicians (seven) who have an above-average presence on both Twitter and in traditional news media. These seven hybrid-media politicians come from four different parties, but

four come from the Liberals (V), the major opposition party, and the three other come from smaller parties on the left (F), right (I) and centre (B). Regarding gender, three are female, and four are male. Their average age is 39,7 years, slightly older than the average top 30 tweeter. All the hybrid-media politicians are also incumbent politicians with, in most cases, several years of political experience, and most, if not all, had high-ranking positions within their party at the time of the election. Geographically, all but one of the hybrid-media politicians was based in the greater Copenhagen area.

Turning attention to the relationship between communication activities and election results, Figure 1 presents a data visualisation of the results. It depicts amount of tweets sent (Y axis), quotes recorded (X axis), personal votes (size) and elections result (colour). The chart is based on data excluding the highest scores (>300 quotes and >274 tweets) to make the chart easier to read.

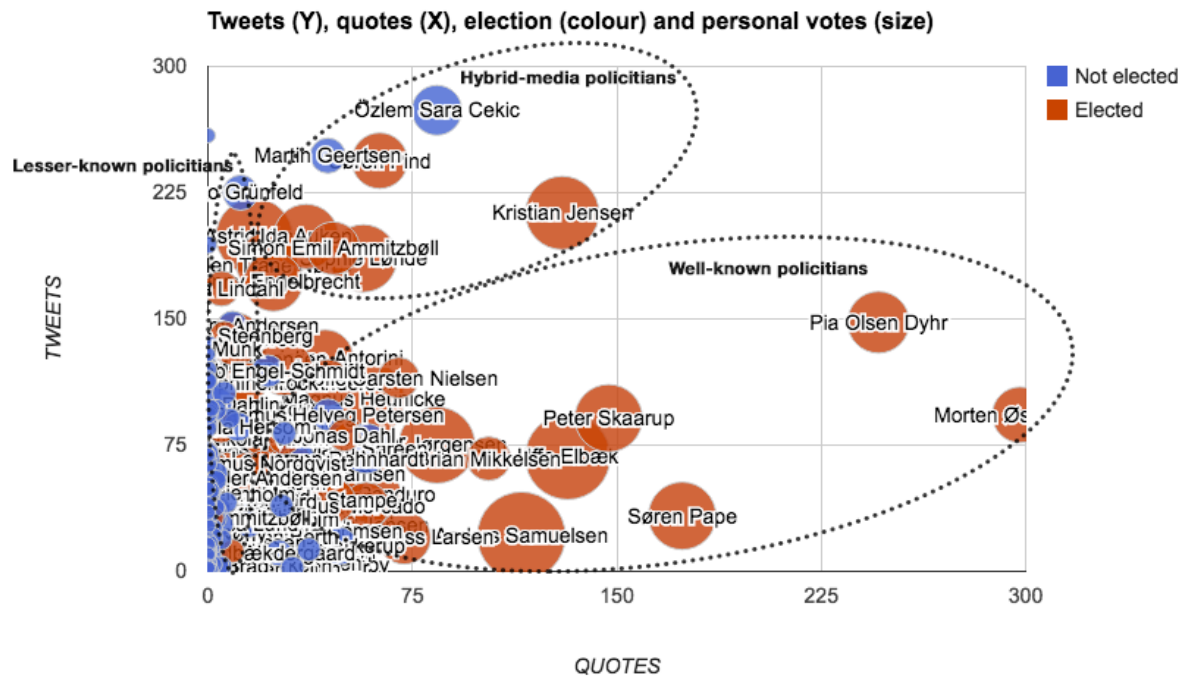


Figure 1: Who tweets, who is quoted and who is elected

Previous research has found no clear relation between Twitter activity and electoral success (Jungherr, 2016; Hansen & Kosiara-Pedersen, 2014). Thus, this study is not intended to investigate the correlation of tweets and quotes and electoral success in form of votes. However, Figure 1 does indicate (in blue) that tweeting as an activity in itself does not equal to votes. However, this result might have as much to do with the Danish electoral system, the media logic of traditional news media, the candidates' place on the party list or parties' popularity (or lack of) at the time of the election as anything else. Looking at one clear winner in the election, Dahl (O), the leader of the Danish Peoples Party, was not active on Twitter at all and only the eighth-most-quoted politicians in the traditional news media. However, he also received the highest amount of personal votes,

close to 60.000. Rasmussen, the leader of the opposition who won the election and was the most quoted politician in traditional news media, received only the fourth-highest amount of personal votes, a little more than 30.000. These results, of course, only indicate that elections and election campaigns are the result of a great number of variables, with communication, even across platforms, only one.

Figure 1 does improve understanding of how candidates' media presence in election campaigns can be divided into groups. Previous studies mostly make such classifications using cluster analysis based on survey data; in this study, the division is done using a large-sample content analysis. The present analysis also shows a clear division in the media presence of party leaders, well-known politicians and younger politicians. This study also unsurprisingly indicates that most winning election candidates are party leaders and well-known candidates. The study, though, also points to a small group of politicians not identified in previous studies, who have an above-average presence on both Twitter and in traditional news media. Five of seven politicians in this new group were re-elected. However, for the moment, the number of hybrid-media politicians is so small that it is impossible to say whether a hybrid-media presence is a new, important stepping-stone on the way to electoral success in Denmark.

Discussion

In this study of candidates and their cross-media presence in the 2015 Danish election campaign, party leaders, by far, have the highest presence in traditional news media, with a low presence on Twitter. On Twitter, this study finds a high presence among candidates who are younger and lesser known to the public and have a very low presence in traditional news media. Thus, this study supports previous research showing that candidates' media use in election campaigns can be divided into clear categories, especially between incumbent, experienced politicians and younger, lesser-known politicians. The strong presence of the top two candidates representing the two blocks

found in traditional news media may result from the media logic guiding political coverage in traditional news media and does support other studies on political communication in Denmark and other countries indicating the presidentialisation of election campaigns, at least in traditional news media coverage. Turning to Twitter, neither of the top two candidates has a strong presence on this platform; the incumbent prime minister had a Twitter profile but never actively used it in the campaign. Although studies indicate that the opposition may be more inclined to use Twitter in election campaigns, this was not the case in this election, with the leader of the opposition tweeting only 13 times. Other candidates, however, had a higher presence on Twitter, especially lesser-known, younger, urban candidates running in the greater Copenhagen area. Leaders of smaller parties also had a Twitter presence. Considering the election results, the data visualisation shows that many of the most active tweeters were not elected, and many were quoted in the legacy news media rarely, if at all.

A small number of politicians, though, do have an above-average presence on both Twitter and in traditional news media. The seven hybrid-media politicians come from four different parties, three are female, four are male, and their average age is 39,7 years, slightly older than the average top 30 tweeter. All the hybrid-media politicians are also incumbent politicians with, in most cases, several years of political experience, and most, if not all, had high-ranking party positions at the time of the election. Geographically, all but one of the hybrid-media politicians is based in the greater Copenhagen area. In research on future election campaigns in Denmark and other countries, it would be interesting to further focus on this emerging category of hybrid-media politician. Will the number of hybrid-media politicians increase in the coming years, and in the future, will a high presence in both traditional news media and social media become more decisive in electoral success in Denmark?

In sum, the present study shows that, despite candidates' increased Twitter use between the 2011 and 2015 elections, few candidates had a high presence on Twitter. A possible reason is the hybrid-media context in which modern day political campaigning takes place. In this complex media system, social media and traditional news media co-exist and interact with one another, and the govern media logic gives the most well-known candidates easy access to television, radio and newspapers, leaving Twitter open to the segment of lesser-known, younger and more urban-based politicians. However, the present study also indicates that this clear division in the media presence of well-known and lesser-known politicians might be changing—at least on Twitter.

Considering the elections results, being active on Twitter is not enough to secure election. Then again, the candidate with the highest number of personal votes, the leader of the Danish People's Party (O), did not have a Twitter account and was only the eighth-most-quoted politician in traditional news media. The present study, therefore, emphasizes how important is to remember that election outcomes are influenced by much more than campaign communication—whether on social media or in traditional news media.

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