
Digital social networks: A new scenario for political communication?

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From the early days of civilization, political communication has been part of human societies. It has been developed through different channels, based on the technological possibilities of each historical period. What is the impact of digital social networks in this type of communication today?

It cannot be ignored that due to the rapid development of information and communication technologies, especially with digital social networks, the political communication has found a way by which political messages can be spread without having to recourse to traditional mass media.

In this regard, a Latin American research on the usage of these technologies in political communication argues that digital social networks *“have become a fast, prompt way to reach people and maintain a permanent dialogue with citizens.”*

This is related to the present consumption patterns of digital social

networks on a global scale: such is its popularity that at least 61% of the world's population uses them, according to a study from late 2023. Consequently, the political communication has adapted to the digital environment, given that the potential audiences are found now there.

However, despite all the advantages digital social networks offer to political communication, there are also huge challenges. For instance, politicians must adapt their discourse—with traditional features including formality—to a more informal and conversational language. It certainly affects the creation of content that politicians usually share in their personal digital profiles, as they must find now a balance in-between.

On the audience side, there are also challenges in times of political communication on digital social networks. Although social networks have the advantage of being more deregulated compared to traditional media, they do not necessarily contribute to the transparent, truthful and ethical exercise of politics. They have the power to form distorted opinions of reality, which has impacted—often damagingly—the reputation of politicians, the results of government actions, or the victories of electoral candidates.

That is, on the one hand, skills and ethical management are required and, on the other hand, culture, training and knowledge. This is key for society to develop in a scenario in which digital social networks may provide more benefits than harms to political communication.

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