

The Use of Twitter by US Politicians

An Exemplary Analysis of Personalization Following Lindsey Meeks

Leonie Kratzer, Johannes Off, Luisa Ritter, Celine Weber

University of Augsburg

Over the past 15 years, it has become customary for US senators to have official social media profiles. On these platforms, politicians employ so-called personalization techniques to appeal to different groups of society or to seem approachable, i.e. they reveal “information about their identity, life, or experiences” (Meeks 2016: 300).

In this talk, we will discuss different approaches to personalization employed by US senators on Twitter. We distinguish between the following types of personalization derived from Meeks (2016): gender (emphasizing one’s gender or gender-specific struggles), uniqueness (mentioning unique achievements), family, hobbies/sports, religion, personal photos and other. Additionally, we decided to further divide the category of ‘other’ into race (mentioning race of oneself or others), negative and positive opinions, work achievements and personal achievements. We contrast the personalization strategies used by female and male senators as well as by senators from the Democratic and the Republican parties in 2020. Additionally, we compare the personalization strategies used by senators in 2020 to existing data from the election cycle in 2012 to deduce changes in personalization over time.

Meeks, Lindsey. 2016. “Gendered Styles, Gendered Differences: Candidates’ Use of Personalization and Interactivity on Twitter.” *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 13/4. 295–310.