

REVIEW OF RESEARCH

VIRTUAL PODIUM: FACEBOOK'S ROLE AS MOBILIZATION POLICY TOOL IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2014



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Abstract:

In the context of cyberculture, the use of social media during election periods is becoming increasingly essential in the process of political mobilization by the candidate, considering that this is an interactive mechanism with the public in real time, enabling the exchange of information, exposure of opinions, feelings, facts, and be financially viable. Against this background, this article presents a reflection on the presidential campaign of 2014 on Facebook, being currently the most popular channel on the web for the dissemination of proposals and votes of storage. The aim is to highlight the relationship between Internet and politics and the possibilities that this social network can offer candidates, since the spread of interaction of the same, both can be combined as a candidate of the opponent.

Keywords: Social network; Facebook; Presidential Election; Virtual campaign, voters.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In Brazil, the election of 2014 is already the largest in the history of Facebook worldwide. According to data released by the social network, 320 million interactions on the race to the polls were made until Saturday, June 4th, exceeding the election of India in 2014, which had 227 million interactions. The statistic is even more impressive by the Asian country advantage in relation to Brazil on Facebook: here are 89 million unique monthly users, while in India is 100 million.

The main drivers of this growth were the high use of short videos (up to 1 minute) in the political campaign; the Face to Face tool, allowing direct talks between voters and candidates; and the Facebook presence as a second screen during the five presidential debates, which generated alone 20 million interactions. The time that the Brazilian goes on the Internet and Facebook for information is also a relevant factor in this growth.

The present article was conducted a qualitative survey applied to posts in the official profiles of candidates Dilma Rousseff, Workers Party (PT), Aécio Neves, Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB) and Marina Silva, Brazilian Socialists Party (PSB) between days September 4th to October 4th, 2014. The collected posts passed through the following categories: candidate's history, proposals, content, schedule disclosure, attacks on opponents, interactivity with the netizens, mobilization and amount of posts. Using these categories, hypothetically, would help to solid building a good range of "likes" in the social network, contributing also in the acquisition of new voters.

To illustrate the research and how it achieved the results, the work shows the main tactics of the candidates in virtual election race, beyond the thermometer of unexpected turn of Aécio Neves on candidate Marina Silva through charts released by Datafolha Research Institute, Vox Populi and Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics (IBOPE).

In the context of the New Technologies of Information and Communication, social media are an important tool in mediation candidate / voter. It is undeniable that the virtual campaign has acquired a prominent role for both teams as candidates to voters. Thus, we intend to highlight the relationship between Internet and politics and the possibilities that the virtual environment can offer. The focus of this article will be given to social interactions and content exchanges and spontaneous ideas among people online who share an interest in political discussions in the virtual environment, whether for or against candidates. The question is to understand what extent the use of Facebook as a tool for political mobilization is advantageous.

1 Internet and Social interactions

The man is constituted as a social being, as it communicates and relates with similar, forming communities, networks, societies. It is clear thinking as social individuals are organized and are represented in contemporary, forward to the emergence of Information and Communication Technologies - ICTs. Was the individual abandoning face to face interactions and family life or are living just a new form of sociability? For Castells (2003), the "fascination" with the potential of the medium, the majority of Internet users started to use the network to contact people with whom they live outside. And even when they create roles and interact with strangers, individuals tend to reproduce faithful traits to his personality in "real life".

Palacios (1996) explains that in virtual communities, people are grouped by common interests, and only then, perhaps they are personally. This situation is, as a rule, contrary to "real life", in which people identify gradual way affinities.

Other authors such as Nova and Alves (2005) says that today we are practically experienced by new technologies, because the presence of technological elements in society is transforming the way individuals communicate, relate and build knowledge. The possibility of the individual to access and produce information at any time and in real time reflects the encouragement of individual freedom and social equality to accessing the network. Importantly, the need to know to filter relevant information and use them as best as possible is essential. According to Gomes and Maia (2008), the public opinion is a will expressed as position obtained in a rationally conducted reasoning. It is the will that is legitimized as a reason. Public opinion does not necessarily mean it is the opinion of the majority, but the result of rational, coherent and public debates.

In an analysis of Habermas' work, we note that the Gomes and Maia (2008) has as reference the concept of public opinion resulting from the public debate. However, the authors punctuate the last two types of public expression will have more chances to influence political decisions, which results in the finding that the visibility and specialized systems in their production and management, starting with the mass media, play a central role in contemporary democracy.

2. Facebook

What are you thinking? It is this question that is the main purpose of Facebook. This social network was founded by Mark Zuckerberg and other students at Harvard University, USA, in 2004. Facebook works through profiles and groups. Add application modules such as games and various tools are also possible in each profile. It is

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within the wall that each individual post their experiences through short texts, long texts by creating notes, in addition to hosting photos, videos and exchange messages. Facebook has a limitation of 5,000 contacts and posts, the individual may receive feedback via the button "like" button "comment" and even "share" publications on your wall.

Lemos and Lévy (2010) will say that these experiences in Social Communities and Networks online is a new way to make society, and a virtual community is a group of people who are in relationship through cyberspace. This is demonstrated in the communities of the old Orkut and Facebook groups, however, we will focus in the latter to be part of the study object.

According to Carmo (2013), the groups of Facebook add people, objectives and interests in common. Within their issues are discussed whose interest is tapered, fleeing the high degree of dispersion caused by the continuous update of the homepage and the wall. In addition to the characteristic inherent to Facebook which is the publication of multimedia content in the wall, the groups allow simultaneous conversation between its members, the inclusion of documents on its side page, which is considerable practical utility tool, since, due to its dynamism, the content published on the group's wall are being replaced new publications and documents have fixed links and may be modified and reconstructed by the group members, which Lévy (1998) calls the Collective Intelligence.

3. Social Network and Virtual Community

There is no exact explanation for what all the success of social networks as a communication tool. Afonso (2009) says that social networks are a topic to be analyzed due to their high development and dissemination among people: with the development of technological tools, especially those promoted by the advent of the Internet, emerge in our society new forms of relationship, communication and organization of human activities, among them worth mentioning the study of virtual social networks.

Recuero (2009), highlights that social network sites per se are those which understand the category of systems focused on exposing and publish the social networks of actors. They are sites whose main focus is on public display of networks connected to the actors, that is, the purpose of which is related to the publication of networks. The above definition refers to people who expose themselves on social networks, showing your personal or professional profile, their preferences and their tastes in order to "connect" with other people.

Regarding the virtual community that is created from the social networks, Koo (2006) writes that it consists of the people clustered around a group of themes, issues or features, the link isn't established in person. Due to the facilities offered by the Internet and digital communicability, it has been the main way in which relationships are created, cultivated and maintained.

Social networks can be used for different functions, including fun, looking for friends with similar characteristics, looking for jobs, campaigns of different types and subjects, finally, in general, the main functions of a social network, according to Kaufman (2010) are: 1) Connect the individuals all the time and everywhere; 2) To provide multiplatform content; 3) Share information, decisions, content; 4) Customize everything you want. In short, are characteristics responsible for attracting users, even if they provide easy access through the various mobile devices available on the market today.

4. Dissemination of Information on Social Networks

The emergence of the Internet has provided people could disseminate information faster and more interactive way. This change enabled the creation of new channels, and at the same time, a variety of new information circulating in social groups. Thus, the appearance of personal publishing tools has expanded even further the spread of social networks. Barabási (2003) points out that the epidemic dissemination of information found on the Web is the consequence of the existence of connectors, i.e., individuals extremely well connected in one or more social networks.

Recuero (2009) citing Hubertus Buchstein (1997) focuses that change from day to day political network will increase the government agencies control capability and capitalist companies. Given the fact that virtually every single movement on the network leaves fingerprints that can follow, the New Technologies of Information and Communication allow a small number of people, government and corporate agencies, for example, monitor and control a virtually huge number of people.

The author also adds that the phenomenon of communication mediated by computers is changing the forms of organization, identity, conversation and social mobilization due to its ability to allow individuals to communicate, to their potential for wide connection and your ability to create social networks mediated by computers. These networks do not connect computers, but people (HURBERTUS BUCHSTEIN, 1997, apud in RECUERO, 2009).

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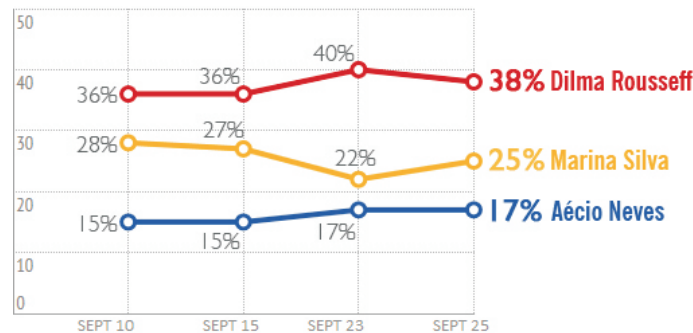
"We will not give in Brazil." With this striking phrase spoken by the then candidate, Eduardo Campos, who died tragically in a plane crash on 10th August, when fulfilled campaign schedule, Marina Silva takes the position with

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the candidate of PSB. This fact caused the sentimentality of the people speak louder and Marina fired in the research of intention vote and getting match the match into the second round with the candidate Dilma Rousseff (PT), that aims the reelection.

In the research for president in 2014 conducted by Vox Populi commissioned by the magazine "Carta Capital", released September 25th, Dilma follows the lead with 13 percentage points difference to Marina Silva. It was also tested a possible second round between the two candidates best placed that despite the technical tie, Dilma win numerically with 42% of the vote, while Marina Silva was chosen by 41%, according to the graphic 1.

Graphic 1: Intention Vote Research for President of Brazil



Source: Vox Populi (2014)

In her Facebook profile, Marina Silva, who recorded until the end of the campaign more than 2 million and 200 likes, is a cause that has no opponents, which is the discourse on sustainable development. But in a country with more urgent problems such as health, education, security and transport, its cause can be seen as secondary and not draw much attention from virtual voters. Profile is also observed the support to the population of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT), subject to the Internet is highly discussed.

It should be noted that the current campaigns focus on the image of the candidate and the parties appear less and less. The appeal by supporters of exposure is one of the exciting tools to collect likes. Marina’s profile is supported through videos with positive messages of artists such as Arnaldo Antunes, Moraes Moreira, Marco Nanini and Fernando Meireles. This strategy makes fans influence due to the ability to manipulate their idols have on them and the choice by the vote ends up being made due to affinities of individuals. On this aspect the authors Teles, Lourenço and Storni (2009) explain that the current of thought known as "electoral sociology" attaches to the social context in which they operate individuals a greater influence on the decision of the vote than election campaigns. Factors such as education, social status, religion and gender are therefore elements that help the voter to "filter" their interests and political choices.

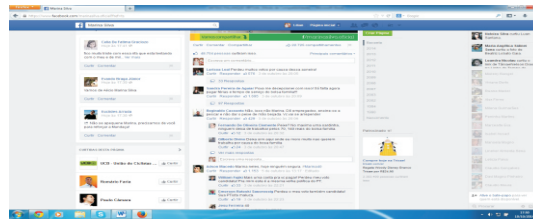
When it comes to attacking opponents, Marina Silva raises the flag that only she is able to take the power of PT. The theme is emphasized in several posts the profile of the candidate, which also attacks Aécio Neves noting that three times the PSDB was unable to perform this action.

One of the biggest Marina attacks the candidate Dilma was the Petrobrás scandal. She speaks about the involvement of deputies, senators, governors and ministers as beneficiaries of a kickback scheme involving contracts with the state. Marina says that the “Petista” (Dilma) lies in the election campaign saying that fired the former director of Petrobras and at the same time publishes minutes of image confirming that it resigned.

Marina used her space on Facebook to mobilize the netizens in times of debates on TV. Already the “Face to Face” event, scheduled for September 17th at 6:00 pm, where netizens could talk to the candidate in real time, did not take off. There is no evidence of netizens questions and answers of the candidate and to October 4th there wasn’t a new attempt this interaction tool.

Its clear to note that posts in the profile of the candidate walked filtered and positive until the publication of the "promise" of the 13th salary of “Bolsa Familia” program, which assists the needy and criticized by most as the indulgence of those who do not want to wake up early for work. The posting received 48,700 likes and 22,741 shares, but the comments weren’t mostly satisfactory, according is showed in Picture 1, then transcribed in English.

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Picture 1: Marina's Profile

[...]

Larissa Leal Lost many votes because of this nonsense! (Oct 33th, 8:05 pm).

Sandra Pereira de Aguiar Damn I was wrong about that! The only thing missing now pay holiday and length of service of "Bolsa Familia"! (Oct 33th, 8:06 pm).

Reginaldo Cassante No, not Marina. Give employees, teach them to fish and not give the spoon-fed fish. You're gonna regret (Oct 33th, 8:09 pm).

Fernando De Oliveira Clemente Fish? At most a sardine, no one stops working for 70, 140 actual "bolsa familia" (Oct 33th, 8:32 pm)

Gilberto Divino Yes, They Let. Here where I live many people do not work because of "Bolsa Familia" (Oct 33th, 8:47 pm)

Adson Macedo Marina them. Today no one safe. #Marina40 (Oct 53th, 1:17 pm, edited).

William Fujiki More an account to pay! Lost my vote, candidate! For me this is the same old policy of PT (Oct 33th, 10:21 pm)

Emerson Ruteski Saueressig lost my vote also, candidate! crazy "PTista" Oct 33th, 10:23 pm) [...]. (Translator by the authors)

The virtual strategy of PT began with trying to contain the damage caused to the image of President Dilma Rousseff with the manifestations of June last year. As the protests were mobilized on the Internet, the Party and Dilma communication identified the need to strengthen the advertising network.

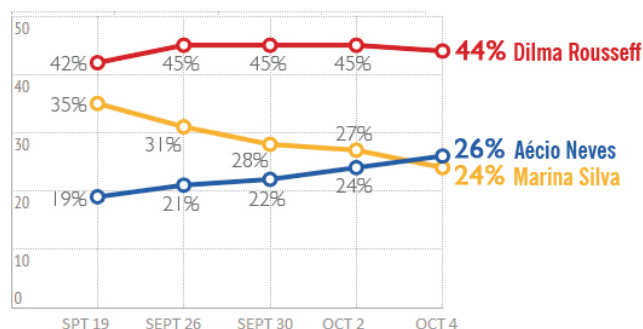
It is visible the use of photos and videos supporters also in the Dilma's page, but high appearance of his greatest godfather, former President Lula, is highlighted. In the social network, Dilma was the candidate that most interacted with the netizens through the "Face to Face". It was used also the talking strategy with only bloggers. The Schedule disclosure and selfies postings with the population contributed to the collection of more likes. Dilma could not fail to highlight on her Page the programs like "Mais Médicos", "ProUni", "Pronatec", "Sisu", "Bolsa Familia" and "Minha Casa, Minha Vida" besides highlighting the fight against racism.

You can see that the discussions made on the network match those that appear in traditional media coverage and her official website: <http://www.dilma.com.br>. The concern in filtering by her staff of the positive comments made by netizens is also relevant.

In the attack on Aécio, Dilma chose to put the finger in the wound of former President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC) with several criticisms, including when the toucan compared Brazilians with rednecks to compare with other countries, and at another time, when called FHC of "floaters", people who retire with 50 years. Regarding the candidate Marina Silva, Dilma understood that she needed not waste her time on keeping offensive attacks, especially after the surprising rise in the candidate's research Aécio about Marina, one day after election.

In the survey released by Datafolha on October 4th, that was commissioned by TV Globo and the newspaper "Folha de S. Paulo", Dilma remains in front, but still with chances of facing Aécio or Marina in a second round, according the graphic 2:

Graphic 2: Intention Vote Research for President of Brazil

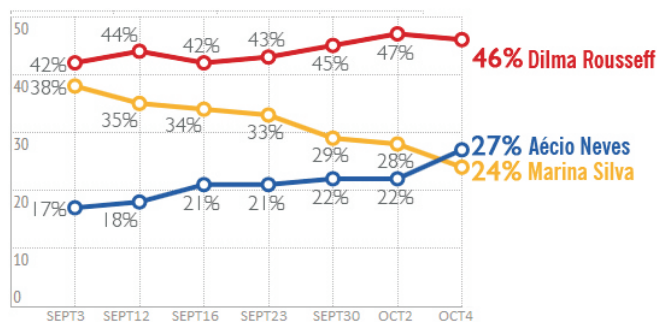


Source: Datafolha (2014)

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On the same date, IBOPE the request of TV Globo and the newspaper "Estado de S. Paulo", discloses that Rousseff continues in front and Aécio shown 3% more than Marina. The turn surprised the netizens and influenced the vote of some undecided that already felt discouraged about having Dilma or Marina in the second round.

Graphic 3: Intention Vote Research for President of Brazil



Source: IBOPE (2014)

The toucan Aécio, in turn, kept his campaign strategy on the social network based on the importance of the family environment structured displaying pictures of your family, and have raised the flag in supporting the organization Mothers of Sé (São Paulo) struggling to find missing persons. The fight against child labor was another area exposed by the candidate on his Facebook page, which also featured the positive vote of supporters Ronaldo (soccer player), Gullar (poet), Tom Cavalcante and Márcio Garcia (authors), Fagner and Fernanda Abreu (singers). It's present also on your page, the massive appearance of FHC in videos and photos as his main supporter.

Aécio did not use much space to interact directly with the netizens. With the motto "Change Brazil," the candidate shot criticism of the candidate Dilma with issues of corruption, Petrobras scandal, inflation and external deficit. To arise rumors on the Internet that the candidate of PSDB would end the "Bolsa Família", Aécio and his staff don't wasted time and intensified in the disclosure which confirmed the continuity of the program, as well as its improvement.

The rise of Aécio in the polls and the massive use of the Internet for candidate Dilma, did not prevent Marina Silva reached more likes on her Facebook profile until October 4th, according to the table 1:

Table 1: Total of Likes on the Facebook

CANDIDATE	LIKES
Marina Silva	2,218,647
Aécio Neves	1,695,614
Dilma Rousseff	1,260,672
TOTAL LIKES	5,174,933

Source: Facebook

Final Considerations

As seen in the weights made throughout this article, Facebook can be considered, from 2014 election, a unique tool with the potential vote of the dispute to support the production of content and influence public participation. On the radio, newspaper or television, the open space to the plurality of ideas is limited. Unlike social networks, where it is permissible to present views, and more than that, seek content to justify the previous opinions. While that aims to mobilize people with common interests, the cyberspace can also be used to disseminate information of all kinds and coming from any source, without the guarantee if they are true or false. It's unfortunate as there are other ways to use the networks to make a clean political Campaign such as: to gather, discuss, promote ideas, debate

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with opponents and involve groups for the campaign.

But unfortunately, metaphorically speaking "fell on the network is news". This is where teams of candidates must be ready and up efforts to promote positive actions in the virtual environment, as in a few minutes and just one click, the information spreads and the smear campaign continues to happen.

One point that stands out among the three candidates in question is the position of Marina Silva (PSB) who even betting on a vision of society that is organized in networks, did not believed in the power of cyberspace. She was raised as head of the plate with the death of Eduardo Campos. The popular commotion before the tragedy and her ability to comfortably move between the PSDB economic policy and social PT was an advantage over other candidates. But Marina began to be attacked in debates and the short time available to it on TV, she did not use the possibility of defense through the Internet. Aécio (PSDB), however, made a conventional campaign, but no doubt, who used social networks to mobilize effectively in this election was Dilma (PT).

Aécio Neves bet on JPSDB, the young membership of the Party to disseminate their ideas and proposals on the network, but could have stepped up its image, mainly to change the political bad label that was to Minas Gerais, his home state ,where he had more rejection.

On the Internet it is necessary to draw attention, "make noise", and arouse the curiosity of netizens. This strategy would be more effective to promote campaign events and to counter attacks. In this case, the protection of virtual militants would prevent the applicant's reputation was tarnished by opponents.

It is important to emphasize that the growing use of social networks as a political tool dissemination contributed to the vast amount of information available on the Internet to generate "virtual voters" taking more grounded arguments in future elections. Most important of all is that we live in a democratic country and we can choose the candidate who consider best for the collective. After all, information is not what we need.

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