

Elisa Kannasto

**“I am horrified
by all kinds of
persona worship!”**

Constructing Personal Brands of Politicians on Facebook



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Reviewers Professor Juha Herkman
 University of Helsinki
 Faculty of Social Sciences
 Media and Communication Studies
 P.O. Box 54
 FI-00014 UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI
 Finland

Associate Professor Iina Hellsten
University of Amsterdam
Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, Corporate
Communication
Postbus 15791
1001 NG AMSTERDAM
NETHERLANDS

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Tekijä(t) Elisa Kannasto	Julkaisun tyyppi Väitöskirja	
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Julkaisun nimike ”Minua kammoksuttaa kaikenlainen henkilöpalvonta!” – Poliitikkojen henkilöbrändien rakentuminen Facebookissa		
Tiivistelmä Vaalikampanjoiden aikana poliitikkojen henkilöbrändit ovat merkittävä osa kampanjaviestintää. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on selvittää, miten poliitikkojen henkilöbrändit rakentuvat ja manifestoituvat Facebookissa poliittisen kampanjan aikana Suomessa. Tutkimusaineisto koostuu 18 ehdokkaan julkisen Facebook-sivun sisällöistä vuoden 2019 eduskuntavaalikampanjassa. Henkilöbrändien rakentumista analysoidaan sisällönanalyysillä yhdistelemällä eri teorioita henkilöitymisestä ja itsensä esittämisestä. Poliitikkojen henkilöbrändit ovat kollektiivisesti tuotettuja prosesseja, joissa rakennetaan lisäarvoa ehdokkaiden tunnettuudelle ja julkiselle minäkuvalle. Analyysissa löydettiin kuusi poliittisen identiteetin esittämismuotoa, jotka edustavat erilaisia henkilöbrändityyppejä: kuunteleva poliitikko, asiapoliitikko, tiedottava poliitikko, humaani poliitikko, verkostoituva poliitikko ja ammattipoliitikko. Analyysi vahvistaa Facebookin merkityksen kampanjaviestinnässä ja yhteiskunnallisessa keskustelussa. Vuorovaikutuksen puute ja rajallinen henkilökohtainen sisältö poliitikkojen Facebook-aviestinnässä näkyy selvästi aineistossa ja osoittaa, että suomalaisessa kampanjaviestinnässä Facebookia käytetään yksisuuntaiseen informaation levittämiseen, jolloin alustan mahdollisuudet jäävät osittain hyödyntämättä.		
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Abstract During political campaigns personal brands of politicians have a significant role in campaign communication. The aim of this study is to investigate how personal brands of politicians are constructed, negotiated, and manifested on Facebook during an election campaign in Finland. The data consists of the public Facebook pages of 18 candidates from the 2019 parliamentary election. The construction of personal brands is analyzed by using a data-based content analysis combining earlier research on personalization and self-representation. Politicians' personal brands are collectively negotiated processes that produce added value for the candidates' recognition and persona. Six brand type representations are identified in the analysis: the listening politician, the topic politician, the informing politician, the humane politician, the networking politician, and the professional politician. The analysis demonstrates Facebook's relevance for campaign communication and societal discussion. The lack of interaction and limited personal content in the Facebook communication of the candidates is prominent in the data and shows that in Finnish campaign communication, Facebook is mainly used for one-way communication and distributing information. Thus, the affordances of the platform remain under-utilized.		
Keywords campaign communication, Facebook, online discussion, persona, political personal branding		

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When I was growing up, it seemed strange how US politicians would promote their families while promoting their own candidacy. With the emergence of social media and globalization, I wondered if this would one day take place in Finland as well. The questions of family and love life have been less visible in Finnish politics, but politicians have received their fair share of personal life exposés and attacks. However, how much their private personas matter and how much they should bring to the front stage for the public to see can be debated. As a professional politician, one opens their character to question, their persona to the media, and their values to the public. As a personal brand, a politician is constantly the subject of debate and always under suspicion. Professional, private and intimate overlap and intertwine, without the possibility to decide when the public role starts and where it ends. This fascinating mix of represented personas together with my love for social media and its phenomena inspired me to challenge myself to explore the personas of Finnish politicians on Facebook, a platform which has since its early beginnings helped me explore and understand communities, conversations and networking.

I truly appreciate the valuable comments of both of my supervisors, Professor Tanja Sihvonen and Professor Merja Koskela, who have helped me sharpen my ideas and research questions, polish my text production and structure, and also how I approach scientific writing and research. Thank you for including me in the community of the University of Vaasa, which has since my first study year been my academic home and the one place where the hallways always felt grand but inclusive. I am grateful for all the members of the academic research community of the School of Marketing and Communications who I have had the chance to meet and collaborate with during this process.

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This one is for all the politicians who take the scrutiny, and who continue to work hard presenting our society and trying to make it better.

This one is for the public who discuss things and make sure that voices, especially the critical ones, are heard.

This one is for the public sphere(s) and for hybrid media!

This one is for research and academia!

This one is for the personas!

In Vaasa, after the last finishing touches, October 2021

Elisa

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1 INTRODUCTION

In Western democracies, politicians are selected to represent the people and make decisions. But just as society consists of a heterogeneous group of individuals, so do politicians and elected representatives. They are parents, athletes, academics, employers, CEOs, and media celebrities. Once elected, they become public personas subject to continuous public scrutiny, and take on a job where someone will always be disappointed with compromises and decisions. This results from negotiations that often contradict the values of the individual politician as well, in which case owning the criticism can seem unjustified. This prompts the question as to whether individual voting decisions are made based on who the politician is, or what they represent? Political candidates need to be appealing enough to get enough votes to become elected. While campaigning is hard work, the real duty only begins after a successful campaign and voting results. However, politicians represent the people. They influence and make decisions affecting society and their own constituents. Also, they represent those who do not even recognize or agree with them. Their decisions should be based on their personal values and beliefs, but at the same time, they need to regard themselves as members of their parties and make decisions based on any information, influence and negotiations that have taken place with their fellow party members.

The Finnish political system is a parliamentary representative democracy. Democracy has been afforded the highest value in the Finnish political system ever since the country became independent in 1917, following centuries of being governed by Russia and Sweden. With democracy in a republic deeply devoted to equality and the freedom of speech, free elections guarantee the functions of the political system. The system and how it is constituted highlight an individual's importance, personality, capabilities, and experience (von Schoultz, Järvi & Mattila, 2020: 170). In Finland, the President is elected every six years, the Government and the Parliament are the highest levels in state administration, and their primary operative legislation is the Constitution act (Parliament of Finland, 2020). Parliamentary elections are held every four years on the third Sunday of April. A total of 200 members from 13 districts are elected according to proportional representation system, following the D'Hondt method, from 13 districts.

The Finnish multi-party system enables several parties to sit within the government. Party votes matter because the majority party usually earns the prime minister position and has more power in determining the government. According to von Schoultz (2016: 159, 173–174), this highlights the significance of the party

leader. They are often represented in the party communication, head the campaign communication, and give their all for the party and its candidates. Overall, the Finnish campaign context is considered to be person-centered compared to most European electoral systems. The open list election and relative election system give more focus and role to individual politicians, and turn the focus toward them instead of the party election agenda. In an open list system, individual politicians also compete with their own party candidates. A robust personal campaign is therefore the core of the Finnish election system, as every candidate must convince the constituents that they are the best option on their party's list (Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 296).

The Finnish multi-party system has been criticized for having parties and candidates too close to each other, with minimal diverging features. The key topic issues that parties communicate can position brand elements to distinguish between individual parties and candidates if the overall agenda-setting seems similar. According to Kestilä-Kekkonen and von Schoultz (2020: 18), in 2019, there were 2,468 candidates in the Finnish Parliamentary election, and 165 of the elected candidates acted at the time of elections as representatives. However, a remarkable change seen in the 2019 election was that none of the parties received over 20 % of the votes. Hence, the government needed to be formed from among five parties that had received a similar number of votes. Three parties eventually formed the government, and the opposition was left with an usually strong mandate from their voters.

In Finland, election campaign communication is conducted in the media through the national broadcasting company, commercial television and media offices, newspapers and tabloids, and through advertisements in public places put up by both parties and individual candidates. The municipalities must offer an equal opportunity regarding location and payment for all candidates for advertising in public places (Act on Candidate's Election Funding 24.4.2009/273), and campaign events are also central for meeting the public and visiting the electoral district. In addition to this, candidates and parties set up social media profiles and conduct targeted social media advertising, either managed by themselves, hired personnel, or an outside PR agency. The campaign communication is not strictly regulated except for an electoral peace on the voting day, and ballot secrecy which respects the individual's right to keep their vote a secret. However, paid advertising must also declare the party funding the commercial (Ibid.).

Transformations in society and publicity challenge candidates to manage divergent publics. Castell's (2007) network society has developed into what Chadwick (2013) describes as a hybrid media environment. This communicative

environment constantly transforms, and the idea of people and machines working collaboratively through artificial intelligence is no longer a movie script illusion. The idea of the public sphere introduced by Habermas (1989) setting a rational-critical debate, has started forming also online, transforming the arena for public discussion into a global, real-time and more public sphere than ever before. Lately, a debate on whether the public sphere has transformed, moved or expanded has been on-going, as researchers have been trying to contextualize social media as a particular kind of site for public discussion. As Cornfield (2004: 107) and van Dijk (2010) argue, the internet and social media have not necessarily become the new public sphere (see Habermas, 1989) where public opinions form, mainly because of still limited access and differences between societies. However, it has become an additional one, and the online world is now hosting outlets for social interaction that provide important and widely used public discussion forums.

The online world is a parallel environment to the physical one, and they both set the stage for cultures and societies to form and develop (Laaksonen, Matikainen & Tikka, 2013: 12, 14). Usually, these stages co-exist and are co-dependent. Therefore, a closer look at online discussions can reflect how public perceptions form, and also what their perceptions on different topics are (Laaksonen & Matikainen, 2013: 208), in order to plan more effective strategic approaches to online communication in political campaigns. As concluded by several researchers, media and politicians are significant users of power (Railo, 2011: 31). However, in regard to the public's role and significance in campaign communications, there are still gaps in the current research.

Citizen debates in social media become active during elections. Discussions that used to take place in public forums and coffee houses, or in emails and online bulletin boards are now moving on to media such as discussion threads under Facebook posts, Instagram comments under engaging pictures, and tweets communicating through hashtags and tagged individuals. Hakala and Vesa (2013: 201, 233) argue that the themes in online discussions do not follow mainstream media content. But even though social media allows a separation from large media companies, social media channels are not entirely separate from traditional media (Herkman, 2011: 21). For example, there has been an increase in news articles using an individual's Instagram or Facebook post as their source, and for political news, Twitter is reported to influence journalism (Jungherr, 2014; Parmelee, 2013). This manifests Chadwick's (2013) hybrid media environment in practice, where traditional and new media types supplement and feed on each other in a dynamic interaction (Neuman, 2014).

In social media, the political candidates who can create a synergy between traditional media and social media can become influential and show their personal side to the public (Karlsen & Enjolras, 2016). Political campaigns can gain momentum and exposure on social media, and the content may be used as topics for produced news. Accordingly, the more professional media and journalists are, the more strategic communication is needed from those communicating about politics (Herkman, 2011: 25). While there is an excessive number of messages online, exposure and visibility in this context need to be earned. Social media works as a functioning tool to enable this process by allowing faster and more temporary networking (Matheson, 2016: 195–196). However, its use is also resource-intensive. Benefiting from the affordances of different online platforms requires skill, and politicians use social media in managed ways for mobilizing and extending calls for participation, for example, by liking their page, and following or attending events. Like every aspect of marketing, politics, especially in campaigning, is becoming more personalized. The use of social media in campaigns has been suggested to add personalization (Enli & Skogerbø, 2013; Isotalus, 2017; Meeks, 2017; Small, 2017). Yet connections are not made just by clicking, and an authentic interaction is needed to influence the public. However, as Enli (2015a; 2015b) proposes, an illusion of authenticity may be sufficient for successful personal brands to emerge.

Finstad and Isotalus (2005) highlight a politician's role as a communicative actor whose success depends on communication competence. The online world, especially social media, has made everyone a public figure. Politicians are discussed widely because their decisions have an effect on everyone and everywhere. Social media has changed the way people speak to and about each other, and it has made everything both personal and public at the same time. The logic of Facebook guides everyone towards a more personal content, and while this allows connecting through authentic and open interaction, it is unclear how many can turn it to their advantage. But it is clear that users have become better at exploiting its functioning logic as self-branding tools (Enli, 2015a; Marwick & boyd, 2011; van Dijck, 2013), and because of this persona literacy, an understanding of the public self's formation and presentation online (Marshall, Moore & Barbour, 2020: 129) is required to interpret and filter these professionalized public representations.

Rising from the increased focus on individuals in social media and increased discussion on personal brands, the concept of branding has been suggested to also be applied to people in different roles (Enli, 2015a; van Dijck, 2013). This idea is not new though, and the act of 'selling' politicians to the public has been discussed in research before political marketing was referred as political branding (see

Sheinkopf, 1974). Importantly, a brand separates someone from other people, and makes them unique. But simultaneously, they separate the person from the idea of the humane, in that they provoke feelings, and those affected neglect the idea that these personal brands are in fact real individuals. This has had hard consequences, and with its added interest in people and public discussion, social media has also brought bullying and public shaming onto the platforms (Picard, 2015). Politicians are directly attacked for their persona and even their families, but are expected to manage this public scrutiny because of their career choice and its public nature. They are also expected to take responsibility for each decision the government and parliament make, regardless of their personal stance. Railo (2011) suggests in his dissertation on politics and journalism that 'personal is political'. In this dissertation, I also argue that politics is personal in the regard that constituents connect with politicians and political candidates on a more personal level and engage in the political discussion online, not only politically but with emotion and a deep interest in the individuals and their character. As a result, we can see that the personal branding of the politician is the result of this line of interaction, or their attempts to establish it.

Without understanding personal branding and its implications, it is easy to be left with the idea that people are now being treated materially, and that brands only revolve around money. However, with people, especially personas in politics, it is about influence and power, and a strong personal brand of a politician can give them leverage in negotiations, more influence on pressing matters, and credibility as experts within their field. When running as a candidate, a strong personal brand is a considerable resource for exposure, value, sharing information, and raising public interest. However, it is by no means easily defined as to what makes a personal brand successful, which type of politicians appeal to the people, and how politicians' personal brands can be managed, controlled and strategically communicated. Railo et al. (2016: 23) suggest that no one is as innovative as a Finn wanting to get into parliament, but how does that innovation manifest in the construction of their personal brand?

1.1 Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this study is to investigate how personal brands of politicians are constructed, negotiated and manifested on Facebook during an election campaign in Finland. The personal brands of politicians are the publicly marketed self-representations of politicians. While the context and focus of this study are elections and campaign communication, it needs to be remembered that the construction of politicians' personal brands is a continuous process that also takes

place outside the active campaign period. However, this study only analyzes the one-month period before the elections, during which communications are understandably more active. Additionally, brands do not result only from the acknowledged construction process, but are negotiated collectively, and there are also coincidental aspects as to what connects an individual and their brand. However, it is the acts of communication that are specifically analyzed in this study.

The focus of this study is on the Facebook communication of the Finnish political candidates and the public during the parliamentary election campaign of 2019. The research questions are as follows:

1. How are politicians' brands constructed in their Facebook posts?
2. How are politicians' brands constructed in the comments to these posts?

These research questions direct the research on politicians' brand construction to consider two perspectives: the politicians themselves, and the public participating in the communication activities on the politicians' pages. These two main questions are further elaborated in section 4.1.

The premise of this study is that as Herkman (2011: 22–29) concludes, Finnish political communication has become mediatized, following the general trend in Western democracies. Isotalus (2017: 22–24) argues that the United States has led the process where media's significance and its repercussions have increased in relation to political actors and activities. This has increased personalization and the focus on individual politicians or their private life in politics, thereby fostering both the construction and significance of political personal brands. Personas as representations of these brands have become more prominent than topic issues, and the importance of persona is highlighted through different media (Enli, 2015a; Isotalus & Almonkari, 2011; 2014; van Dijck, 2013; von Schoultz, 2016: 160–161), thus accentuating the need for persona literacy (Marshall, Moore & Barbour, 2020: 129).

Karvonen (2009: 98) states that the Finnish political system makes it interesting to study personalization because the voter always makes both a person and a party choice when casting their vote. Since 2007, the person's importance over the party has declined from 51% to 37% among the electorate (Isotalo et al., 2019: 16). In parliamentary elections, the prime minister's highlighted role is significant to voting (Karvonen, 2009: 103). Therefore, while attitudes to individual candidates are significant, parties also matter. Especially in the Finnish elections of 2011 and

2015, party leaders were used as leading figures for the campaign, and viewed as central for exposure, attention, and appeal of the party and other candidates (Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 232–233, 307).

In some cases, parties are only as strong as their leaders, and critique towards party leaders can decrease the overall popularity of the party. In 2019, this was suggested to be the case with the Social Democratic Party and their party leader. However, in 2020, Prime Minister Sanna Marin and her performance during the corona crisis were evaluated to raise the party's popularity. Also, von Schoultz, Järvi, and Mattila (2020: 164) argue that the example of Antti Rinne (who served as Leader of the Social Democratic Party between 2014 and 2020) shows that party popularity does not necessarily correlate with the party leader's popularity. Nevertheless, party leaders are central figures. Moreover, their personas affect voting decisions, even to the rise of new political parties (Kinnunen, 2020), and in Finland, one of the most popular presidents, Sauli Niinistö, chose to re-run for the presidency as an independent candidate, representing the people (Luukkonen, 2018).

Contrary to the suggestions of Reunanen and Kunelius (2021: 43), traditional media and social media are intertwined entities, and are not rivaling for attention. Chadwick (2013) gives a good explanation as to why traditional media and social media should not be entirely separated, and instead should be approached as a hybrid concept, where the platforms complement and fulfill each other. However, this research is focused on social media and specifically on Facebook. Inherently, this topic lineation understands that new and significant forms of political campaigning also take place in traditional media. But by focusing intensely on a less studied platform (i.e. Facebook in the Finnish campaign context), this study necessarily excludes broadcast media and other social media platforms from the analysis.

Through social media, the public can voice their opinions, organize into groups, and influence decision-making through advocacy campaigns and mobilization. Online political group participation has been found to correlate with offline political participation (Conroy, Freezell & Guerrero, 2012; Vissers & Stolle, 2014a). However, Facebook has been found to politically mobilize those who are not otherwise active, even though "Facebook participation might be apolitical in nature" (Vissers & Stolle, 2014b). In this research, the participation of political actors and the public is a unique consideration point in the process of the brand construction taking place in the public sphere, and being created and organized under the Facebook pages of political candidates during their campaigns.

The political personas in this study are party leaders who have significant exposure because of their position in the party. Notably, the vote-pullers who receive many votes because of their well-established status as politicians, recognition, or other status in the Finnish political field emerge as a second group. The national context of the study comes from the national parliamentary campaign, but the concept of campaigning also applies internationally. Furthermore, Facebook is widely used by political candidates globally, and the issue of parliamentary elections concerns several countries, even if there are some differences in their political systems. However, presenting and selling a political self is universal, as well as the idea of the electorate forming opinions and discussing them in online contexts.

While political communication online is carried out in multiple ways, in professional campaigning, a strong position is also taken by staffers who use social media in indirect ways to influence journalists (Kreiss, 2014). Here, the focus is on the communication carried out on the pages of individual politicians and the comments they receive. Kreiss and McGregor (2018a) suggest that online companies such as Facebook, Twitter and Google should also be regarded as active political communication agents, because at least in some countries, they collaborate with political communication professionals. However, in their study, Facebook is only considered a platform where political communication takes place and as a tool used for campaigning, even recognizing that its affordances and functioning logic affect the communicative actions and results. But when campaign communication is planned and performed strategically, the platform becomes a tool for the user. Thus, it is not Facebook as a company that is the actor; but rather the user who uses and benefits from its functions. However, the functioning logic defined by the algorithm of Facebook does act for the user specifically (Thorson et al., 2021), which therefore takes part of the control away from them.

Scolere, Pruchniewska, and Duffy (2018) introduce the idea of platform-specific self-branding, where the brand construction is considered through the affordances of the platform, the audience, and the producer's self concept. In this study, the affordances of Facebook, in other words, what functions and possibilities it affords the user (Treem & Leonardi, 2013) are applied with the analysis of the personas constructed in the posts and comments. However, my personal view on the audience differs from that of Scolere, Pruchniewska, and Duffy's (2018), and whereas they view the audience as limited to what the producer expects of their audience, I propose including all public as an actor in this personal brand construction, and that they are also negotiating the persona. Thus, while there is a target demography that the politicians consider, and some of them can be followers of the politician's page, but in reality there are more users that see a particular post

and its comments. Furthermore, Facebook also shows the posts to a broad public which has not explicitly chosen to be exposed to that specific content.

Understanding politicians' personal brands and how they are constructed online contributes to both constituents' and candidates' better understanding of campaign communication. Simultaneously, candidates' communication agencies and PR actors, as well as political communication professionals and teams, and different platforms' moderators will also benefit from this line of research. The presented study aligns with Green's (1993) suggestion of researchers connecting media users and producers, while also supporting media education sectors by gathering several actors from different corners of political communication. In Finland, this research has been previously discussed through personalization, focusing on individual politicians' increasing role, instead of that of parties (Alho, 2012; Isotalus & Almonkari, 2014; Isotalus, 2017; Karvonen, 2009). It has been argued that the personal figure has become more valued than the party in political communication (González Bengoechea, Fernández Muñoz & García Guardia, 2019; Isotalus & Almonkari, 2012; 2014; Rudd, 2016). Thus it is essential to research the negotiation of personas, and understand the representations of political characters. Political communication is also continuously developing, mainly as technological advancements and societal changes affect communication. As a consequence, new research is required to understand current developments, and to strategically plan for the future.

Nyboe and Drotner (2008: 161–176) have called for reframing and remodeling the existing theories on cultural identity and production to better serve and portray the digital world. Raising the critical aspect of social media in self-presentation, van Dijck (2013) argues that it is not a neutral arena for self-performance. Instead, it is a powerful tool for promoting and shaping identities, which is easily forgotten given the ease and natural-seeming affordances Facebook has for it. This underlines the need for an update on our understanding of identity and how it is constructed online through self-representations, by looking at it from the viewpoint of persona studies and the construction of persona (Marshall & Barbour, 2015). This shift to persona and personal brands can be viewed as an appropriate new way to look at identities at a time when individuals are actively and consciously managing their personas, and thus constructing personal brands with specific aims and intentions. With the increasing mediatization and multi-disciplinary contexts of self-representations, this approach is also needed in political communication, even though 'brands' are generally discussed in the context of business research. However, their construction still results from communicative acts (Petruică, 2016), which connects the concept well to marketing communications, and in the context of this research, campaign communication

and communications studies. Furthermore, Enli (2015a; 2015b) and van Dijck (2013) have also discussed self-branding as an act of “selling humans as products” in the context of communication studies (see also Preece & Kerrigan, 2015; Kumar, Dhamija & Dhamija, 2016).

Previous international research on communication on digital platforms has focused on network analysis (i.e. Maireder & Schlögl, 2014), constructing communities (Zappavigna, 2011), the construction of the politicians' audience relationship (Parmelee & Bichard, 2013), politicians' authenticity and the presentation of self (Enli, 2015a; 2015b), and strategic campaign communication in the hybrid media environment (Lilleker, Tenscher & Štětka, 2015). Political campaign communication research has focused on election forecasting (Burnap et al., 2015; McKelvey, DiGrazia & Rojas, 2014) and political mobilization (Carlisle & Patton, 2013; Vissers & Stolle, 2014a, 2014b). Regarding social media use in political communication, the focus has been given to populism and disinformation (Blassnig & Wirz, 2019; Bobba, 2019; Stier et al., 2017), the adoption and application of different social media platforms (Gulati & Williams, 2013; Macafee, McLaughlin & Rodriguez, 2019; Skovsgaard & Van Dalen, 2013), comparison between parties (Larsson, 2017), and the roles of journalism and social media in political communication (Larsson, 2018, 2019; Kalsnes & Larsson, 2019). Campaign communication has also been studied through individual cases in the context of elections, especially the election of Barack Obama in 2012 (Kreiss, 2014; Gerodimos & Justinussen, 2015). Also, the Arab Spring and the Internet Research Agency case on Twitter in the election of 2016 have inspired several political communication researchers (Badawy, Ferrara & Lerman, 2018; Linvill et al., 2019; Lukito, 2020).

In Finnish political communication research, voting behavior (Mattila et al., 2020), populism (Hatakka, Niemi & Välimäki 2017; Herkman, 2016; 2017; 2019; Niemi, 2012; 2013; 2014a; Palonen, 2020), personalization (Karvonen 2009; Isotalus & Almonkari, 2012; 2014), as well as mediatization and the presentation skills of politicians have been issues of interest for researchers. The politicians' use of social media in Finland has mainly been studied by quantitative analyses focusing on Twitter (Comet, 2014; Strandberg, 2013, 2016; Strandberg & Borg, 2020; Vainikka & Huhtamäki, 2015;). However, recently, there has been some qualitative research on this topic (Laaksonen et al., 2017; Nelimarkka et al., 2020). Larsson (2015a, 2015b) and Nelimarkka et al. (2020) have undertaken Facebook research in the Nordic context by assessing engagement and content in political communication on social media. There is a call for qualitative analysis into the field of self-branding in political campaign communication. There is also a gap in

research on Finnish political candidates, the public, and their online interaction during campaigning.

1.2 Methodology and Data

This study represents the hermeneutic research interest which is typical in social sciences, arts, and the humanities. Interpretation and the aim to better understand are the key principles guiding the analysis, instead of just describing the phenomenon in hand. In this study, the objective is to understand online campaign communication and interpret how the public and candidates negotiate political personal brands on Facebook during a campaign period. The way the study is conducted also includes an explanatory knowledge interest, with the aim of unveiling valuable characteristics for understanding and executing campaign communication. Generally, a triangulation approach to research that combines qualitative and quantitative research approaches in the research design, supports reaching a holistic view on campaign communication on Facebook. When treated as units of analysis, the extent and variety of the posts and comments in the candidate-citizen communications explored can only be understood through the manual data-based content analysis of a complete dataset.

The analysis uses two analysis operationalizations as an inspiration, together with an idea of political persona representation modified from the academic persona representation of Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020). The first operationalization is by Van Aelst, Sheaffer and Stanyer (2012) for analyzing personalization (see Figure 1.). The second one is used by Nelimarkka et al. (2020) in their content analysis of candidates and constituents in the 2015 election campaign. Recent developments in studying representations of self and identity are combined in the theoretical framework to create a model for studying politicians' brand constructions on Facebook. A significant contribution to this model comes from persona studies and the discussions by Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2015; 2020) studying the production, dissemination and the exchange of public identities. All three analysis operationalizations have been modified to suit the data analysis of this study. Together with a more extensive exploration of the theoretical framework, these modifications are explained in detail in section 4.2.

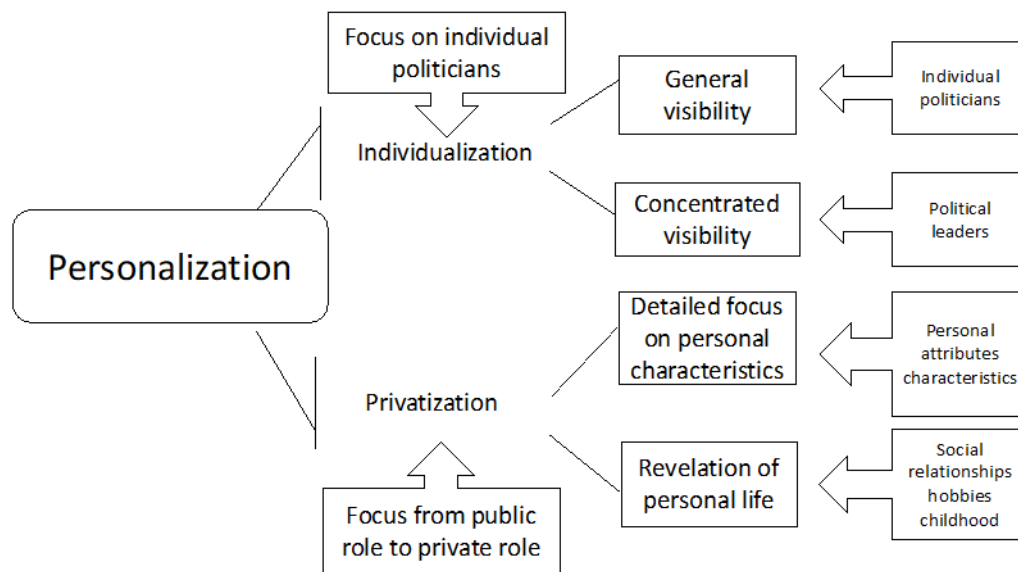


Figure 1. The concept of personalization (Van Aelst, Sheafer & Stanyer, 2012; Isotalus & Almonkari, 2014).

Social media data collection has advanced through several joint efforts where different open source code applications have been developed to fetch or scrape data online. One of these applications *Facepager* is used to collect data in this study, and has been developed to fetch data from, e.g. Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube by web scraping and the use of APIs (Application Programming Interface) (Jünger & Keyling, 2019; Puschmann, 2019; Rogers, 2019).

The data consists of a total of 16,175 posts and comments on the selected Finnish candidates' Facebook pages during one month before the main election day. The 18 candidates chosen for the study were the current parliament party leaders whose public Facebook pages were readily available (with the exception of one party leader without a public page), and the ten biggest vote-pullers in the election of 2019. The candidates are: Li Andersson, Sari Essayah, Pekka Haavisto, Harry "Hjallis" Harkimo, Anna-Maja Henriksson, Laura Huhtasaari, Antti Häkkänen, Elina Lepomäki, Antti Lindtman, Sanna Marin, Kai Mykkänen, Petteri Orpo, Mauri Peltokangas, Antti Rinne, Juha Sipilä, Ville Tavio, Sampo Terho, and Ben Zyskowicz (see Appendix 1.). These individuals were chosen because of their exposure and comparative status as well-known professional politicians who could be expected to attract public discussion and who also have a recognized personal brand on their Facebook page. The diversity of the selected politicians adds a multifaceted and holistic view of Finnish politicians' persona construction to the overall study.

The data and its collection process are further explained in section 4.3. Since the data consists of Finnish politicians' pages and the Finnish Parliamentary election context, there are context-specific details in the text used when analyzing posts and comments, and these are presented in Chapters 5 and 6. Finnish readers will understand the context differently from non-Finnish readers, however, this is recognized and has been addressed in the analysis. Some specific details and context-specific references are not explained in depth in the study because the study's focus is more on the functions and performances of Facebook posts, and not the particular details of the Finnish campaign discussions. Also, because of research ethics deliberation explained in section 4.5, the discussion comments are mostly shortened, and citations are presented in their minimal form addressing what is relevant for illustrating the analysis and results.

1.3 Central Concepts

Social media as a communication environment is challenging to define (Laaksonen, Matikainen & Tikka, 2013: 11–13). In this research, it is understood through Leonardi, Huysman, and Steinfield's (2013) definition of *enterprise social media*, as *a platform where social interaction takes place*, thus enabling the construction of brands through this interaction. Social media will be defined more precisely in section 2.3 through the platform in question, as the focus is on the functions Facebook provides for the individual user, the content producer, and the audience. Social media's strength as a campaign tool for politicians is that online, they are not restricted by journalists' gate-keeping and decision-making, and are able to self-govern their self-representations (Enli, 2015a). While social media is the combination of technology and networks, it is also a combination of platforms and their users, so forming a set of communication channels and tools that organizes work and leisure far differently from what used to be possible before continuous connectivity. But this also has negative connotations which are highlighted in the latest trending ideas on media, with people discussing digi-detox and purposely taking themselves "offline" for a break from social media, for a set amount of time.

Online discussion is a concept that is reformed and re-shaped as communication culture evolves. Layouts change, technology develops, new channels are introduced, and they offer new possibilities for how discussions and new contexts for communities form. Subsequently, this changes the type of users, content, and discussions on each platform. (Suominen, Saarikoski & Vaahensalo, 2019: 7). Online discussion allows for influencing and connecting for those who choose to enter the discussion, and the constituents who write comments, react to posts, and

engage in other ways (Robertson, Vatrapu & Medina, 2010). Papacharissi (2015) refers to this as affective publics.

Online discussion is also multimodal, so it can include text characters, emojis, links, hashtags, mentions and visual elements (Salonen, Kannasto & Paatelainen, *in review*). Visual elements, links and tags are also important in online messages, but these are excluded from the scope of this study to focus on what is being shown to the public directly in the text-based message. This focuses the research on content that the public see on their feed without clicking anything open. Consequently, *online discussion is here defined as the exchange of text-based messages on a social media platform*. Emojis and hashtags are used in the text to explain the tone and used similarly to text in Facebook communication. Accordingly, this limited interpretation of them in the analysis includes them only when they help to explain the text, and give precise cues to purposes such as support, and add meaning to the comments. Thus, if there was only an emoji in the comment, these were excluded from the analysis to avoid possible misinterpretations (see Weissman & Tanner, 2018).

A post can be considered as a call for discussion, and the comments as replies. However, on Facebook, the thread of comments and the post does not always form a delineated discussion chain. Therefore Farina's (2019) model of analyzing Facebook posts as comments in a continuous process of calls and replies as text analysis does not apply here, and rather, the approach is to analyze posts and comments as separate negotiations of meaning coming from separate actors in the process which does not necessarily constitute as continuous interaction between the actors. In addition to being individual pieces of text and voiced negotiations of the politician's persona, posts also reflect a premise that comments and reactions are replies to a particular post on Facebook, which then sets their overall context.

The candidates aim to reach the electorate with their posts, and the constituents are their target focus because they are the ones who vote. However, online, it is not possible to determine whether all of the discussion participants are eligible to vote. Thus, I will refer to them in this study as *the public*.

The *personalization of politics* is the increased focus on individual politicians at the expense of parties and topic issues (Van Aelst, Sheafer & Stanyer, 2012; Isotalus, 2017), and can happen in various forms. With the development of political institutions, individual politicians' roles have changed, and their importance enhanced. The media prefers to present issues and topics preferably through individual politicians, rather than with parties or other collectives, which also translates to the public speaking about the same politicians as representatives for particular topics. For example, the spring 2020 COVID-19 media exposure in

Finland was carried out through Prime Minister Marin and her persona, with coverage representing the Prime Minister in photos and statements. This type of increased focus on individuals can significantly influence the electorate's opinions and choices, and make personality and individual characteristics key considerations, first in voting decisions, and then in decision-making and political power structures (Karvonen, 2009: 95). Ultimately, people vote for politicians to represent the public. Therefore the role is also related to how they are seen as people in their *private life*, such as their *personal characteristics, family and leisure-time*, and not just their level of professional or political expertise. This also creates interest towards politicians and their representations, and part of their appeal and credibility comes from who they actually are and which values they represent. In this context, it is challenging to define what is 'private' to a person who needs to reveal aspects of their private life to show who they are and what they represent.

Traditional political communication research has focused on 'image' as the term used to refer to the public perception of individual politicians or parties (Isotalus, 2017: 122). Figure 2 presents how the concepts of image, identity, online identity, persona, and personal brand overlap and affect each other in a continuous process. In this study, image is understood as the interpretation that an individual makes of a representation of self, and what they hear from the outside. This interpretation affects how an individual negotiates the person forward, affecting a person's personal brand. The personal brand of a politician relates to the *idea of selling* values and attitudes, giving promises, and demarcating oneself from other representatives as a tool in political campaigns (Kaputa, 2012). A personal brand results from the production process where a personal brand is constructed through identity (Marshall, Moore & Barbour, 2015). Moreover, it is about the "sellable self" and generating value compared to others in the field (Marshall, Moore & Barbour, 2020: 225), and describes how the person distinguishes themselves from others and how they want to be seen. However, it is also affected by how others want the person to be seen. In this study (and reflecting previous work: Kannasto, 2020), the aspects of *the public as active actors* and the interaction between the actors in the process of personal brand construction has been addressed. In this way, personal brand results from *an acknowledged collective production process*, where the self is turned into a representation to be sold to the public. From the individual's production process side, this phenomenon has also been called profile-work in social psychology (Silfverberg, Liikkanen & Lampinen, 2011) and personal branding (Petruță, 2016) in relation to social media services. On the other hand, image is also the result of what others believe and perceive from what is told to them about a person, and an interpretation of the personal brand. Later, this image can be communicated again, for example in Facebook comments, which can

be seen as a ‘brand construction by others’ rather than by the individual themselves.

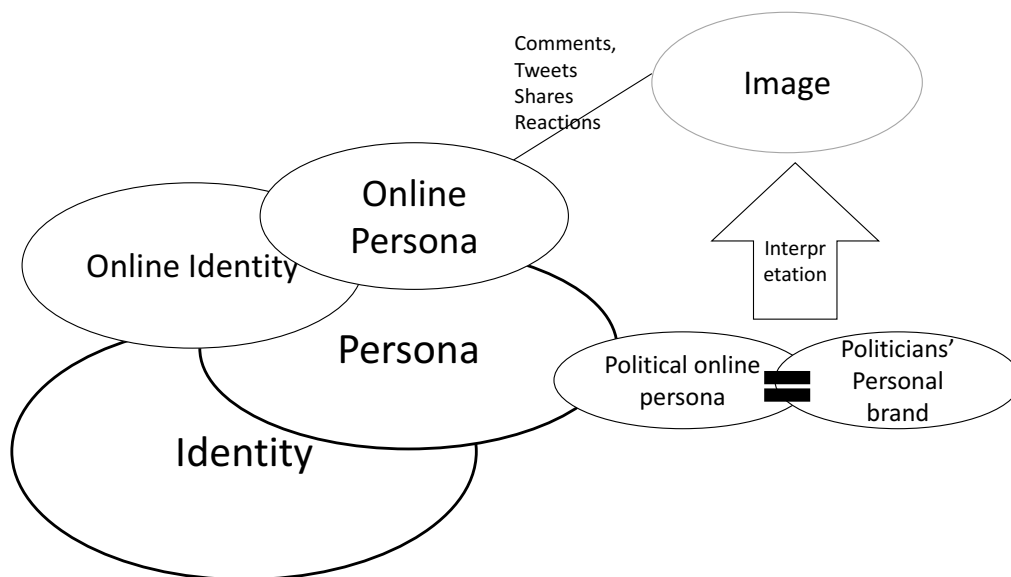


Figure 2. Flow and effects of personal brand and image online

The idea of an acknowledged production process is central to a personal brand, which is especially interesting because for politicians, the division between the private and professional self is blurred due to the public nature of their role (Street, 2004). Political personal brand identity is dependent and built through an emotional connection between the politician and the constituent, at the same time fostering the relationship between the actors (Farhan & Omar, 2021). Because of its human aspect, the brand identity cannot be categorized as strictly as with e.g. the brand identity linked to products (Marshall & Henderson, 2016). However, this human aspect is also a partly coincidental creation, rather than being purely the result of an acknowledged process.

Regardless of the long existence of influential figures and discussions of political topics through particular politicians, the concepts of personal brand and persona are relatively new in academic research, particularly in political communication and especially in the Finnish context. Thus, in this study, I develop also these concepts by drawing from different academic disciplines. The discussion of the personal brands of politicians and their construction intersects several fields. Political communication sets the overall frame for it, and campaign communication connects the topic with marketing. The conceptualization of personal brands also touches the fields of social psychology (Uski, 2015) and persona studies which reflects a growing research interest rising from celebrity studies (Marshall, 2014; Marshall & Barbour, 2015). Historically, the context of

persona representations has been broadcast media, where the publishing process differs from the user-based model discussed in this study. Isotalus and Almonkari (2014) have studied politicians' personalization in Finland in conventional media using the operationalization provided by Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer (2012) (Figure 1). They identify two distinct categories of the 'popular charmer politician' and the 'topic politician' (a literal translation from the original Finnish is the "matter of fact" politician) that describe Finnish politicians and their media representations (Isotalus & Almonkari, 2011; Isotalus, 2017: 73). They concluded that Finnish politicians do not have media strategies, nor do they focus on image building. This study elaborates on their ideas in the social media context, specifically on Facebook, and adds the concept of political personal brand construction into the discussion.

Finnish researchers emphasize the hybrid media environment (Chadwick, 2013), understanding the technical side with algorithms, and also that the emotionally orientated political communication style fitted for social media requires a new kind of expertise (Knuutila & Laaksonen, 2020). Thus, more research is needed in the Finnish election campaign context in order to better understand how political personal brands are constructed, how they become successful, and what disturbs their strategic construction in this environment. This is especially vital for developing and interpreting professional campaign communications. Here, the idea of the *personalization of politics* is elaborated with a marketing-orientated approach where strategic brand construction is considered as a further application of personalization, and studied in the context of political communication (Karvonen, 2009; Van Aelst, Sheafer & Stanyer, 2012). This focus on personal brands in politics is furthermore an example of persona politics; a form of politics where personal characteristics and attributes are included in campaigning (Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 232, 240, 256).

With their centrality in business and marketing, the importance of brands has also been recognized in political communication. However, the limited amount of studies on political brands have mainly been focused on political parties or party leaders (Lilleker, 2015; Scammell, 2015; Speed, Butler & Collins, 2015). Brands are constructed through communication and communicative acts. Personal brands are not only about the qualities of a person, but also about how those qualities are packaged (Lair, Sullivan & Cheney, 2005). In this study, the chosen focus is on brands in campaign communication which relates to marketing communication and political marketing, specifically political branding. Therefore, while the focus is grounded in the field of communication studies, it also intersects with the marketing dimension from a business studies perspective. Mackey (2016), on the other hand, suggests that studying personas applies to the field of public relations

with an application of strategic forms of communication. The approach to persona as a representation and production process places this study firmly in the field of persona studies, while also further developing it. Specifically, it aligns with Mackey's approach by moving from identity to personas and brands as strategic constructs. Furthermore, the analysis enables the testing of the ideas of Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 213) as they call for a new network of researchers to join the development of the multidisciplinary field of persona studies.

1.4 Structure of the Study

As a continuation of the brief introduction to the Finnish political system, the context of elections and the politician's role in Finland, Chapter 2 discusses Finnish campaign history in more detail and presents online discussions relating to political participation. After this, I describe the forums and content used for campaign communication, and explain the importance of target demographics for a strategic approach to campaigns. After introducing how users, platforms, and online discussions connect to my study, I turn to Facebook in detail and elaborate its functions for politicians and present how public pages work.

The concepts of identity, persona, and political personal brands are further defined in Chapter 3, where the Facebook affordances for personal branding are also described. This section underlines the relationships between these key concepts relating to politicians and their personas, and explains my approach to politicians' personal brands and their construction in this study. The methodology and data are explained in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 is the analysis chapter for the posts, analyzing the politicians as actors. The public are approached as actors within the personal brand construction process in Chapter 6, where the findings relating to their acts, comments, and their engagement with the politicians' posts are presented. The results are presented in Chapter 7, and in the concluding Chapter 8, I return to the presumptions where I start this study from.

Four interlinked presumptions form the starting point for this study, which are connected with the restructuring of campaign communication as required by the increasing importance of social media platforms and their affordances, and the subsequently evolving relationship between candidates and their electorate.

The first presumption is related to the role of social media in Finnish campaign communication. Regarding the history of Finnish campaigns, Railo et al. (2016) distinguish four theme periods of election years since the rebuilding period, i.e. the post-war period (further elaborated in section 2.1.1.). These are the period of party power 1945–1958 (Railo, 2016: 25–91), the period leading towards professional

campaigning 1962–1975 (Pitkänen, 2016: 92–154), the years of liberation 1979–1999 (Niemi, 2016: 155–224), and the period of online and financial power 2003–2015 (Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 225–314). Of particular relevance to this study, Railo et al. (2016) note that the internet has caused an upheaval for campaign possibilities, and in this study, I argue that social media is the true and more significant catalyst in changing the campaign game in regard to how it stands and how campaigning can be conducted.

The second presumption is that the affordances of Facebook both offer and require the production of more personal content. These affordances are outlined in section 3.3.2. In my study context, Facebook allows politicians to better connect with constituents through more authentic, interactive, and personal representations of self. This promotes a construction of more rounded personal brands that represent private and even intimate personas. It is argued that politics is personal, and as a result, constituents engage more fully with politicians, negotiating more dimensions of their persona, and connecting with its more private and intimate aspects. These representations of self are outlined in Chapter 3, starting from identity, which forms the basis for public representations of self.

The third presumption is that the public are active actors in the process of the personal brand construction of a politician when they participate in online discussions (Kannasto, 2020). This large audience – the actively participating and decision forming public – also expects interaction, thus paving the way for more strategic campaign communication in social media. Online, these discussions are public and remain archived, which gives them more exposure than a publicly voiced statement would normally receive. This is linked with the first presumption of social media being a catalyst for change, and can stimulate the beginning of a participatory period in campaign communication, where the public is seen to be more active than ever before. On Facebook, the participating public in Finland mainly focuses on personal attributes, such as character, outlook, age and gender, and past roles in politics and other professional life when negotiating their perceptions of political candidates. An analysis of the public as actors in the process via their comments on Facebook is provided in Chapter 6.

The fourth and last presumption is that strategic personal brand construction is a process that needs to be strategically managed for Finnish politicians in social media. Finnish politicians vary in their construction of personal brands, not so much in relation to their parties, but more so in relation to their identities and personal preferences. Their private life is mainly discussed in public only if the specific issues are public due to, e.g. a previous public career in business or sports. However, some politicians reveal more dimensions, thus offering a more diverse

persona. This appeals to people both positively and negatively, and while it connects and engages on one hand, it also adds criticism which is often more personal than political on the other. The analysis of how politicians construct their brands is presented in Chapter 5. Especially, the way they approach Facebook can show whether they utilize its affordances and succeed in their Facebook campaign communication by inviting followers and promoting engagement.

2 SOCIAL MEDIA IN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

This chapter presents the changes brought about by social media and platformed interaction in political and campaign communication in Finland. The main context of the data is social media as a campaign communication platform, and is outlined in sections 2.1. and 2.2., discussing how online discussion can and has affected the way political communication is carried out and what candidates need to consider when communicating with the public online. During this discussion, it needs to be noted that I am not stating that social media would have replaced traditional means of campaigning or broadcast media as a source of campaign information. But rather, it has become ‘the significant other’ in political communication, an arena open to those unable or unwilling to leave their homes, those seeking broad real-time audiences, and those familiar with the affordances of social media. Facebook and the principles of politicians' profile pages on Facebook are presented in section 2.4, and guide the understanding of how politicians utilize Facebook to communicate and as a tool in their campaigns.

Social media and its development have been characterized as Web 2.0. Also, generations have been named as generation X, Y, Z, and A referring to whether they have been born in the age of social media, or have lived while it has been developing. Since social media became an everyday tool for leisure, education and work, it rapidly came to provide platforms and tools for those who wanted to discuss, influence, gain power, and spread or fight propaganda. At its core are user-generated content, service-specific profiles, and social networks enabled by different types of technology such as mobile phones, tablets, and wireless networks. The divergent platform affordances dependent on their functioning logic and structure offer possibilities that have not been available before. For example, social media platforms offer inexpensive, direct and global real-time communication with the public, compared to television or radio time, or printed advertising that always has a limited audience and is more capital-intensive. Social media also allows multi-type content to be produced and distributed across platforms, and this can be challenging to the personal brands of politicians. What used to be a moustache drawn to a campaign poster and seen by few until it was taken down, can now be a viral hate campaign with national or even global exposure, and which always leaves traces online.

The internet allows for political communication without mass media, and can mitigate the effects that the availability of economic resources can have in campaigning. According to Sey and Castells (2004: 375), political communication changes online: messages are simplified, images are used, politics becomes personalized, and storytelling and character assassination, which is the attempt to

harm someone's reputation or credibility (Samoilenko & Mason, 2021) become central tools in the promotion or demotion of political candidates. These elements become even more true with social media, where a commitment to political opinions can be shown more publicly. However, they do not come for free, as content production, strategic planning, and more extensive exposure on social media require resources, and time, skills and money are needed to produce compelling social media campaigns and interact with the public online. Thus, the dynamic real-time elements and wide publicity of social media require more from politicians and parties than earlier online forms of communication with more static web pages and personal blogs.

For those politicians who are willing and able to exploit the communication possibilities offered by different platforms, active content production and interaction with the public can add to the exposure of political ideas, and offer a more personal approach with the public. The role of the internet in campaigning has been claimed as being central by the Finnish political parties as early as 2007. However, according to Strandberg (2009: 60–63), at that time, that role was up for debate, and his suggestion for candidates to start considering how they can benefit from using Facebook, Myspace, IRC-gallery, or YouTube which were widely used by young people (Strandberg, 2009: 84), has now partly become a reality. Some of the applications he mentioned have since been forgotten, while others have become more important. However, the ideas and argument for using social media in campaigns are stronger than ever. For example, in 2019, Facebook is still largely being used by all age groups, even though its use is declining among younger people (Pönkä, 2019). But globally, in May 2020, there were 3.81 billion active social media users, with Facebook being the most popular social media platform based on an audience of 2,498 million users (Statista, 2020).

In Finland, social media and internet utilization rates have increased and rapidly transformed since 2003. Strandberg (2016: 103–106) and Strandberg and Borg (2020: 112–116) also report an increase in citizen's use of social media for election news, and also the use of candidate selection engines between 2007 and 2019. The significance of age is also relative to the candidate's age and their social media usage. However, with citizens, the most active groups are those between 18-34 years old, with 42 % of them actively using social media and the internet for following campaign communications. Those most interested in politics are also the most active user group, with 41% following online campaign communications. Perhaps surprisingly, socio-economic factors have not been shown to have a significant difference on the social media and internet utilization rates related to following campaign communications. Those living in cities tended to use social media and the internet for following campaigns more than those living in rural

areas. However, even though the overall percentages increase, in 2019 they still account for less than half of the sample among the citizens, so following campaign communications online still remains relatively low in terms of numbers (Ibid.).

Studies show that candidates use different social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook for very different purposes (Jungherr, 2016; Stier et al., 2018), depending on the expected audience and the tools each platform provides (Zhao, Lampe & Ellison, 2016). Furthermore, they each have unique channels and ways to appeal to the public. The increased use of social media has been suggested to add to the success of non-professional politicians, whose communications in several cases are not strategic nor even politically correct (Strömbäck & Kioussis, 2014; Enli, 2017). At first, this was seen as a young politicians' unique opportunity. However, there have been various candidates in Finland who, together with their campaign communication offices, have been successful in using social media for campaigning. While Twitter and blogs had a significant role in the elections of 2012, the significant use of Facebook also shows in the numbers of active users and politicians available, with almost 90% of candidates having a Facebook presence already in 2011 (Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 304) and continuing into the 2019 elections (Strandberg & Borg, 2020: 109). Different platforms are used for different types of discussion, and in the elections of 2015, the candidates used Twitter for presenting and seeking opinions, while Facebook was used strictly for campaigning purposes such as updating information on the campaign-trail, showing support, and praising candidates (Nelimarkka et al., 2020).

Van Santen and van Zoonen (2010) claim that candidates use social media to communicate directly with constituents, but Kim and Chen (2016) focus on its participatory nature in advancing democracy. In this regard, online media can promote democracy by providing public forums for political debate and discussion, thus opening up what could be characterized as an additional public sphere (Habermas, 1989). Some other studies argue that instead of communicating *with* constituents, social media has been mainly used for communicating *to* them (Graham et al., 2013; Farkas & Schwartz, 2018). Before social media, Alho (2004) regarded democracy as silent, with information flowing but no real communication between political actors occurring. However, social media may have finally opened that communication with more possibilities for public interaction and more visible and open decision-making, and Coleman (2020) suggests that media ecology should be utilized to the fullest to encourage ongoing and stable discussion between politicians, the electorate, decision-making institutions, and their stakeholders. The relevant question here is whether social media is used by politicians to communicate *with* or *to* the public.

Fundamentally, politics is about negotiating common meanings and signifiers through communication (Weber, 1949). Political communication is a dynamic process of political public spheres, political actors, the public and the media, where the focus is on the interaction and communication flow. While most research on political communication utilizes quantitative methods exploring campaigning (Larsson, 2016), participation (Back, Teorell & Westholm, 2011; Boulianne, 2015; Kim & Chen, 2016; Quintelier & Hooghe, 2011), interaction (Sørensen, 2016; Valera-Ordaz & Sørensen, 2019), proving polarization (Iyengar, 2015), or the existence of an echo chamber (Karlsen et al., 2017), they all have in common a call for qualitative research on political discussion. So far, there have been only a few attempts to address this, and they are mostly focused on Twitter (i.e. Broersma & Graham, 2012; Goldbeck, Grimes & Rogers, 2010), partly because data collection has been less challenging with its more open API (Puschmann, 2019; Rieder & Röhle, 2017), and possibly because of the easier comparison and treatment of tweets as units in data.

Larsson (2015a, 2015b) and Karlsen and Enjolras (2016) have contributed to the context of Nordic social media research by studying the use of different platforms and their constituent responses in campaigning. Larsson's research on Norwegian party leaders on Facebook shows likes as the most common type of engagement, and suggests further exploration of the viral functions of Facebook in election communication. His further research on Swedish politicians shows that larger parties receive considerably more attention on social media, even though they are not the most enthusiastic in producing content. Blegind Jensen and Dyrby (2013) have also recognized Facebook as the largest and most relevant platform for research on strategic social media use by political parties in Denmark, supporting the choice of platform for this study. Political Facebook interaction has also been studied by Valera-Ordaz and Sørensen (2019), who have analyzed the Facebook interactions of Danish and Spanish members of European Parliament (MEP) during a non-campaign period and found that while they are active, they get less engagement than national politicians. They also conclude that the Danish MEPs use Facebook for interaction, while their Spanish colleagues avoid discussion. Bruns and Highfield (2013) and Enli and Skogerbø (2013) also found more engagement for individual politicians and their content on social media compared to parties or organizations. However, in the Nordic context, there is a gap in the research related to Finnish politicians and their activity in social media.

2.1 Political Communication and Politicians in Finland

Regardless of the public nature of their roles, Finnish politicians mostly refuse to be treated like celebrities (Isotalus & Almonkari, 2012), and they can be met in local markets and parks without guards or any special treatment. In Finland, political scandals and private life reporting have mostly been viewed as irrelevant and an invasion of privacy. Work and private life have been separated among the majority of the public. Women's magazines started to conduct more personal interviews revealing politicians' personal lives in the 1970s (Railo, 2011: 31), but the control over what was exposed was more in the politicians' hands. However, the public exposure of the scandals of Finnish politicians and their private life has been seen to increase after 2000. Some examples of the public scrutiny of politicians' private lives include the discussion of the love lives of former Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen, former Foreign Minister Ilkka Kanerva, and former Cultural Minister Tanja Karpela (Herkman, 2011: 11–12, 104; Isotalus, 1917: 96–101; Karvonen, 2008), or on matters such as Parliamentary Representative Harry Harkimo losing their driver's license (Viljanen, 2020). But this kind of flow of information and the blurring of the distinction between private and public is also typical for social media, where profiles are personal, so the content is also expected to address similar issues.

Finnish party leaders have stated that media has the most significant role in defining and constructing their identities (Isotalus & Almonkari, 2014). Nevertheless, candidates and parties make their own choices on where to focus their exposure and communication, especially in social media. As new applications and trends develop, new platforms are adopted for use in political communication. Herkman (2011: 49) suggests that political scandals and their more open exposure in traditional media show that media actively fills its role as a watchdog. But while the Finnish public trust of mainstream media is relatively high, their trust of social media is lower, regardless of its frequent use (Matikainen et al., 2020: 12, 17–28). For example, Matikainen et al. (2020, 26) report that over 60% of respondents in their study regard Facebook as a quite or very unreliable source of news. However, Facebook is important for interaction, and the Finnish public has been seen to show their disappointment in politics in online discussions using harsh words and angry or even hate speech (Haasio et al., 2018). This role of the public as the possible new watchdog is further examined in section 2.2.1.

The focus on individuals in the Finnish parliamentary election is also highlighted in the fact that while members of their party and having the party office's support, candidates usually work with personal support groups (Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 293–294). In these groups, they have close, committed and intensely hard working

assistants such as those working directly with the candidate's social media, or a looser group of participants who might either donate money or participate in individual campaign events. Some of the latter group may also do social media mobilization work through their personal accounts and profiles, for example, by writing about the campaign, or purposefully trying to hurt the opponent's reputation.

The often vaunted non-corrupt ideal of the Finnish society and the perceived image of a functioning system has been challenged through election financing scandals, police force corruption, research on cronyism, and problems with service acquisitions (Hämäläinen, 2019; Salminen & Mäntysalo, 2013; Sundman, 2020; Toivonen, 2015). These types of challenges have at their strongest destroyed political careers, and even if they have not gone that far, they are still visible in online discussions. Officially, Finland's corruption level has statistically been minimal, but closer consideration has found implications of strong structural corruption that effectively escapes the notice of the public eye (Salminen & Mäntysalo, 2013).

In social media, regardless of suggested problems arising from filter bubbles (Pariser, 2011), polarization (Harel, Jameson & Maoz, 2020; Iyengar, 2015), and hate speech (Haasio et al., 2018), communication possibilities and access to societal discussion becomes easier by the day as internet access has become a basic necessity, therefore taken for granted in most Western societies. However, even if the Western world fluently describes and lives in a hybrid media environment and memes on wireless internet connection as now controlling the bottom line of Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs can be considered accurate, then access is not self-evident in all countries and regions. For example, China limits social media access, for example to YouTube and Facebook. In some African countries, social media is limited by requiring users to purchase daily access passes. Together with the further possibility of a complete lack of access, these types of legislation widen the gap of these societies to those considered as hybrid media environments, usually dividing the so-called first and third-world countries even more drastically (Pitcan, Marwick & boyd, 2018; Van Deursen & van Dijck, 2013; 2019).

In the context of this research, in the online Finnish parliamentary election campaign communication in spring 2019, there are no challenges of access to communication. It also took place with no significant limitations to the freedom of speech, even if some parties practice some degree of self-moderation on their own and their candidates' social media channels. However, the limitations arising from the lack of electronic voting possibilities may in the future affect access to voting, for example, in situations such as the corona pandemic. In Finnish society,

inhabitants mostly have online access at home, and public spaces also provide access to the technology required for online communication. Additionally, the legislated right to express one's own opinion and ideas is only limited when it violates someone else's immunity, for example, through defamation of character (Penal Code For Finland 531/2000). Thus, in Finland, the public are allowed and even encouraged to participate in societal discussions and decision-making.

Election campaign contexts and communication styles are sensitive to their environments, and vary from one country to another even if the political systems show similar functions (see also Humprecht, Hellmueller & Lischka, 2020). The research on Finnish online political communication has been mostly approached from a political sciences perspective, but research is scarce when it comes to campaign communications. The studies related to campaigns in Finland tend to discuss the costs, voting choice, and publicity or exposure in the campaigns (Railo et al., 2016), populism (Niemi, 2013), and emotional content (Knuutila & Laaksonen, 2020) and lack the online communication approach to campaigning and the persona studies perspective. The history of Finnish election campaigns and their characteristics is explained next, to illustrate the context of Finnish campaign communication.

2.1.1 Finnish election campaigns

The particularities of Finnish parliamentary election campaigns have been most thoroughly outlined in the research project of Railo et al. (2016). Particularly, their book is used as the main source for contextualizing the history of Finnish campaign communication to show what, if anything, has changed in Finnish political campaigning when the focus is placed on social media. Coincidentally, the campaign communication of 2019 which forms the data for this study covers the first election starting from where their research period ends.

The Finnish parliamentary election voting percentage has ranged from 68.3 to 85.1% during 1945–2011 (Herkman, 2011: 50–51). Lately, it has been around 70%, and in 2019 the percentage was 72.84%. Four parties finished the election night vote count close to each other, with all of them finishing with less than 20% of the votes. The Finnish National Election Studies (FNES) concludes that in 2019, 24% of the interviewees were following the campaigning on social media either actively or very actively (Isotalo et al., 2019). Strandberg and Borg's (2020: 112) survey analysis concludes the public following elections on social media reached 26%. These studies therefore indicate the growing relevance of social media as a source and channel of campaign communication.

Regarding the Finnish campaign history, Railo et al. (2016) distinguish four theme periods of election years since the post-war rebuilding period. These are the period of party power 1945–1958 (Railo, 2016: 25–91), the period leading to professional campaigning 1962–1975 (Pitkänen, 2016: 92–154), the years of liberation 1979–1999 (Niemi, 2016: 155–224), and the period of online and financial power 2003–2015 (Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 225–314). But with the stabilized position of social media in campaign communication, the public have also entered as communicative actors in the game (Kannasto, 2020), which leads me to suggest that a new theme period could manifest itself as ‘the participatory period’.

During the period of party power between 1945–1958, the party organizations were weak but developing (Railo, 2016: 27–29). Candidates and parties were at an amateur level, and campaigns were mainly conducted on a local level. The class society reflected heavily on campaigning, and parties mobilized their own classes. The professionalization of campaigns started in the period between 1962–1975 (Pitkänen, 2016: 92–154). The strong party divisions eased off, and voters started to move between parties with their votes. As a result, parties needed to start targeting voter groups more carefully and find new means to reach the electorate. The personalization of campaigns added costs and also a level of competition between individual candidates, and the introduction of television offered increased media possibilities for campaigns.

During the years of liberation in 1979–1999, new parties were founded, women stepped up more frequently to take up political positions and roles, and media became more significant as the watchdog of power through new media companies and channels (Niemi, 2016: 155–224). The recession of the 1990s greatly affected campaigning and political messages, and the competition for power showed in the increased competition for exposure and the attention of both media and the constituents. This attention seeking led to more colorful campaigning, where humor and other methods were used to appeal to the electorate. Also, the campaigns turned to become more professional and strategic, and the focus of the elections turned more towards party leaders through the idea of the prime minister elections.

In broadcast media, the traditional division in the representations of men in societal topics and women in private life topics has remained stable (Railo, 2011: 253). This comes through especially in how joining personal life with a political career is presented in the media for the two gender roles. Mäkelä’s (2018) interview study of female political leaders concludes similar results, and their media representations are often connected to personal characteristics such as behavior, presentation, appearance and clothing, in addition to combining family

and work life. This is often done at the expense of topic issues, and Railo (2011: 131–133) also notes the change that more intimate content has been published since 1990 in politicians' interviews.

Railo and Ruohonen (2016: 226–231) consider the period of online and financial power between 2003–2015 as having challenged the parties in Finland to find ways to distinguish and separate themselves from other parties. Before social media, web sites were a significant outlet for election campaigns. Cornfield (2004: 23) finds websites problematic because the electorate needs to specifically find them and then go to them. By 2000, candidates and their offices also needed to know how to manage their online campaigning while meeting the electorate and producing traditional campaign material (Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 303–308). After 2010, social media managers became valuable members of campaign teams, and campaign events were reported and posted on social media, together with the added possibilities of live broadcasts and videos on social media. All of these were used in the campaigns of 2015.

For the new millennium, Railo and Ruohonen (2016: 230, 276–278) observed three significant phenomena that have affected campaigning; the breakthrough of the internet, increased campaign costs, and the more pronounced entertainment-orientation of media exposure. In the election of 2015, the average campaign cost for parliamentary representatives was 38,400 euros, and 8,000 euros for other candidates (Ibid. 286). A law was introduced in 2000 requiring the candidates to announce their campaign funds and donors, but some candidates refrained from reporting their funding because there were no sanctions (Ibid. 276–277). But this escalated into a scandal over campaign funding, and its media exposure led to so far the largest political scandal in Finland. However, in 2009 a new law on reporting campaign funds caused the use of donations in campaigns to experience a temporary decrease.

Strandberg and Carlson (2020: 78) report an increase in the digital mode of Finnish campaigns since the mid-2000's. Also, the increased private content on media about the candidates reached its culmination point in the new millennium, manifesting as the 'personalization of politics' in Finnish political communication. The added dimension of scandal publicity is one example of the entertainment orientation of politics, and since 2000, all types of media have published stories related to politicians that would previously have been regarded as tabloid material (Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 230–238). Karvonen (2008) refers to this as popular culture taking over in journalism, and politicians are more often represented as celebrities instead of through their professional work. However, regardless of the added private nature of content on politicians in broadcast media, the exposure of

typical political topics and news is still vivid. Yet so far, no comparative research has been conducted whether the two phenomena of the increased digital mode of campaigning and increased private media content correlate or are separate from each other.

The elections of 2007 have been termed as “the image elections” in Finnish election research (Pernaa, Niemi & Pitkänen, 2007; Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 242, 250). Alongside topics and issues, the candidate’s appearance, looks and immediate circles became significant. Television debates were central in this, but the candidates’ personal blogs were also seen as a contributing factor. Notably, campaigns were built strongly leaning towards the party leaders and their personal appeal. Individual online work was also highly visible, and 95 % of the candidates had their own personal campaign website.

The next elections in 2011 provided a focus point for populism researchers because the True Finns led by Timo Soini gained a significant increase in votes, despite their largely negative exposure, small party size, and lack of campaign resources (Palonen & Saresma, 2017; Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 269–270; Strandberg & Carlson, 2020: 69). Niemi (2012) and Ylä-Anttila (2020) argue for social media and the internet as being one factor that explains the success of the True Finns, which in August 2011 declared their English party name as The Finns Party. Notably, their support has been built through social media, where they have a visible base of followers who communicate in different platforms.

Other parties in Finland started to recognize the importance of social media, and to subsequently train their candidates for it. For example, in 2011 the Center Party guided its candidates on social media (Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 305), and they were told that in addition to discussion, contact and networking it is vital for the candidates to present themselves on social media so that the candidate can be recommended both as a good candidate and also as a person. In the same year, Facebook became widely used among the candidates (Strandberg & Carlson, 2020: 78–79), and its use has now stabilized close to 90%.

During the election of 2015, most parties used social media. The use of Facebook by the Finns Party differed from the main parties of the Center Party, National Coalition Party, and the Social Democratic Party (Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 306–307). Especially, they often shared more content on topic issues outside of the main topics presented in broadcast media. They also encouraged the public to participate in discussion and share more entertaining content. For example, immigration was present as a topic in every fourth post on their page. They also had triple the number of followers and seven-fold engagement figures compared to the other main parties. It could be that the traditional parties may have had a

hard time adjusting to new channels and tools, and the main parties used similar or identical content in both broadcast and social media. This suggests that the Finns Party was more successful in their content creation by being willing to break away from strict communication styles, or maybe not having such a strategic communication approach in the first place. However, this seems to have worked for them, and a similar approach has been reported for the election of 2019, where the Finns Party continued to highlight immigration issues and the threats associated with them (Knuutila & Laaksonen, 2020).

In the elections of 2015, over 10% of all candidates were using several social media channels for their campaign communication (Strandberg, 2016: 103–112), and 93% were using social media actively during their campaigning. Party wise, there was a significant difference in the active use of social media by candidates between different parties, varying from the big parties (81%), middle-sized parties (63%), and small parties (17 %). The age was only significant after moving to candidates of ages over 55 and then later to candidates over 39 years. The most active group were candidates between 35 and 44, with 72% being active on social media and the internet during the campaign. In general, female candidates have been more active campaigners on social media, with 65% activity on social media and the internet compared to male candidates at 54%. Those candidates who were already representatives in the parliament were more likely to be active on social media and the internet during the campaign. This could be because as parliamentary representatives, they have more resources for communication, and also because of the party guidance regarding social media communication that has been described earlier (Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 305–308). In general, they have the technology, profiles and platforms for communication, and with their role, they get used to interacting with the public through social media and are therefore more familiar with the platforms for their next campaign.

Today, money is increasingly used in campaigns on market research, campaign planning consultants, and training the candidates. The use of communication platforms like radio, television and now, online media, have raised campaign costs significantly, and there are no set limits in the campaign budgets for the parliamentary elections, even though the need for them has been a subject of ongoing discussion (The Act on Candidate's Election Funding 273/2009). However, the candidates must declare their campaign budget and support, whether direct money or items, when they are elected. Each source of support and its donor must be listed if they are worth more than 1500 euros, and an individual candidate or support group for the candidate can only accept a maximum of 6000 euros worth of support from an individual supporter. Regarding foreign sources,

only individuals can donate support for candidates in addition to communities or foundations representing like-minded ideals.

Social media was first regarded as a less resource demanding campaign platform, yet it has not replaced the more expensive media adds, nor has it proved to be less cost-intensive. Instead it has occupied a parallel market spot where strategic communication also requires financial resources. So far in 2021, the regulation of social media campaign communication has not been introduced in Finland. Also, more general rules for political social media advertising tend to vary between platforms and countries. As examples, in November 2020, Twitter and Facebook banned all political advertising on their platforms (Facebook, 2021; Haukka, 2019; Twitter, 2021), and Facebook also added specific social issues in its ban in the United States. In its application in Finland, some pages that were dedicated to societal themes were subsequently removed from the platform (Parkkinen, 2021). Now in Finland, political advertising and communication on Facebook are only allowed through public pages, and accounts need to apply for permission to conduct it.

Through interviews of 20 parliamentary members and party secretaries, Railo and Ruohonen (2016: 289–293) concluded that from the candidates' perspective, personal meetings with the electorate during a campaign trail are the most prominent campaign tool. The most effective way to influence the electorate is by personal encounters and through advertisements that the public are exposed to during their normal day. This type of personal attachment and inclusion into everyday life can take place when the electorate views an appealing message on their newsfeed in a social media platform. Elements of surprise, visual design and focus, fun, and presence have all been part of successful campaigns in the new millennium. Furthermore, slogans are not seen only as a tool relevant for parties, and some Finnish candidates have branded themselves through slogans that are remembered for years after the campaign. Thus, while candidates need new and innovative means of campaigning, these can only benefit them when they also understand how to utilize the platforms strategically.

In the parliamentary elections of 2019, the political environment faced the challenges of solving budget cuts, environmental and social healthcare policies, an exceptionally busy election spring that coincided with European parliamentary elections, health problems among leading politicians, and the current season's party changes within the government. The government working in the parliamentary season 2015–2019 had to manage a budget deficit, and several budget cuts evoked criticism. The same season saw turmoil within the political parties. For example, a popular vote-puller candidate Hjallis Harkimo, a

parliamentary member for the National Coalition Party, decided to start a new political movement called Movement Now, thus leaving his old party. Also, The Finns Party split into two groups, with Minister Sampo Terho starting to lead the Blue Reform group. This resulted in Finland having a government where a minister and some parliamentary representatives in fact represented a party that had not received any votes in the previous election.

In the Finnish media coverage on political actors, the concepts of intimacy and publicity were first analyzed in tabloids between 1961-1975 (Saarenmaa, 2010). Railo's (2011) work contributed to the topic of persona representations by looking at the gender representations of politicians in *Anna* magazine 1975–2005. Research on Finnish media representations has later been applied in regard to populism, gender representations, and female party leadership (Hatakka, Niemi & Välimäki, 2017; Maasilta, 2012; Mäkelä, 2018; Niemi, 2012; 2013; 2014a; 2014b; 2015; Niemi & Noppari, 2017; Niemi, Ruostetsaari & Rautio, 2017). Isotalus (2017) has studied the presentation skills and representations of politicians in media. Alho (2004) has discussed the idea of the public sphere raised by Habermas (1989) in Finnish politics concerning the decision-making processes of politicians, and regards mediatization as a fracturing process for the exercise of power. According to her, the political elite is not participating in the public sphere, thus leaving the rest capable of modifying the political agenda. However, these studies all focus on broadcast media, leaving a research gap to look at politicians and their representations online, resulting from both the participating political candidates and the public as producers of the personal brands of politicians. Supporting this approach, the increased importance and influence of social media for political communication (Bruns et al., 2015; Mattila et al., 2020) highlights the need for this type of research.

2.1.2 Politician as a professional role

Defining a politician as having a professional role is more difficult than professions where a certain education or meeting particular standards are required, for example as required for a doctor or a lawyer. However, politicians often have a specific knowledge background through their career which lends them credibility on issues which they set as their main agenda or some part of it. In comparison, athletes become referred as professionals when they are able to generate income through their role as an athlete (Finstad & Isotalus, 2005; Marshall, Moore & Barbour, 2020: 180–181, 185), and a similar view on professional politicians is used in this study. Politicians are elected representatives, and the level of politics defines the official requirements for their candidate eligibility and getting elected.

For example, city council level politicians rarely do only that role because city council work does not qualify as work in terms of pay and the required time effort. Also, their work does not necessarily result in national level consequences. Therefore, in Finland it is usually only those politicians serving on a national level or in the district offices as party officials that would meet the requirement of a full-time politician used in this study. This is based on the so-called institutional definition for a politician (Finstad & Isotalus, 2005), yet politics is about taking care of common things, and personal or private aspects of taking on the work is something for an individual themselves to manage (Railo, 2011: 29).

Politics is a collaborative action where aims are set and achieved through influence. When politicians address the public, they need to appeal to them on a symbolic, psychological and rational level (Davis, 2010: 83). This requires interaction and effective communication. A politician needs communication skills to achieve their goals, such as success in elections and influencing political agendas (Isotalus & Almonkari, 2012; Isotalus, 2017: 114–121). The performance of politics as a politician is a combination of argumentation, forming opinions, approaching people, and appealing. Campaign communication adds the need to sell ideas, issue calls to participate and vote, and reply to questions and comment on current issues, which increases the actors needs for and to participate in communication. In Isotalus and Almonkari's (2012) study, Finnish politicians expressed that they would like the media to focus on their performance skills instead of their personalities. However, the choice is not always in their hands, and especially in the online environment, the public can freely post anything about the candidates, and more striking content may end up going viral (Johnson & Perlmutter, 2010).

The personalization of politics adds pressure on party leaders and individual politicians (Isotalus, 2017: 51–53), and they need to be more skillful in communication and utilizing media. When political campaigning becomes more professional, it is crucial to understand its nature. Thus, analyzing what is emphasized in political campaign communication becomes an important factor. Currently, increasing numbers of marketing and communication professionals are working in the political field with several parties, and politicians are dependent on them (Kantola & Lounasmeri, 2014; Reunanen & Kunelius, 2021: 98). Railo et al. (2016) and Isotalus (2017: 134, 138) view this as an indication of a change towards an added professionalism in the field. So far, minimal attention has been placed on image building and political communication coaching in Finnish political life, which has been shown in research addressing both campaign personnel and politicians. For example, Isotalus (2017: 138) calls for an education of political communication professionals in Finland, which currently (and unlike in many other countries) does not exist.

In relation to citizens, the work of a politician can be considered as a service profession, where the base line is serving the public, and hence considering the voters as recruiters. (Finstad & Isotalus, 2005.) During campaign times, politicians cannot focus all of their interactions on the public, yet continuous interaction is needed to build trust and actual interest among the public. When campaigning as a political candidate, a politician can be seen as an active actor. Politicians are visible in broadcast media such as newspapers and television news. During campaign periods, especially party leaders are presented in televised debates, and they tour the country with other candidates to meet the local public. However, the politician is always a member of a collective, i.e. their party, and their responsibilities lie both with the voters and the party. But party membership naturally has an effect on the values of the politician, on their decision-making, as well as on the perceptions that other people have about them. Therefore, the party brand also influences the personal brands of its member politicians.

The official requirements for a politician are determined in the Electoral Act which also governs elections and campaigns (Election Act of Finland 714/1998). Parliamentary election candidates must meet the following minimum requirements for eligibility: 18 years of age, Finnish citizenship, eligible to vote, and does not hold a military office or high office in the Finnish court or governance. Candidates can only be listed for one party in one electoral district. However, they are not bound by their home municipality when choosing their district for candidacy (Ministry of Justice, 2020). All Finnish citizens of 18 years of age and over are entitled to vote, and voting is organized both in advance and on the actual voting day. Citizens living abroad may also participate through postal voting. In Finnish law, politicians in their role are considered as public figures who enjoy a more narrow protection of privacy (Penal Code for Finland 531/2000), which, for example, allows media to cover and assess them while they are performing their duties in this role.

After meeting the official requirements for eligibility, politicians also need to appeal to the public, which often has to do with their personality, expertise or credibility. According to Isotalus (2017: 125), the ideal politician for Finnish people is a genuine, ordinary, professional person, with a matter-of-fact objective. Enli (2015a; 2015b) also discusses similar elements of genuine, authentic and real as being the most important, because a politician's representation is built on trust. However, the public can be critical when they evaluate politicians (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2017), and if promises on issues and values are not kept, then voters do not get value for their votes.

As referred to in this study, a professional politician is a politician working full-time in politics and generating income through a role as a parliamentary representative. Even though the politicians in this study have been chosen because of their status in the election either as vote-pullers or party leaders (therefore having already established a role as a politician), in the campaign context of the study, they are referred to as *candidates*. This term is used when they are discussed in this study either as actors or subjects, and as those producing the posts and those who are being commented on in the post comments by the public. This points towards their status of applying for their politician role and the electoral mandate for it back from the public, thereby being candidates. However, while campaigning, most of them also act as representatives and professional politicians.

2.2 Strategic Campaigning in Social Media

Political campaigning concerns society, power, and influence. In strategic campaigning, the campaign's aims are defined related to these, i.e., reaching a majority position in the parliament, and the campaign is planned accordingly. Strategic campaign communication concerns the managed communication process in campaigning and policy-making, where goals are set and results are expected, shaping activities and including the right actors in the process according to expectations (Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2015; Kioussis & Strömbäck, 2015: 384). It is further related to political marketing and political public relations. Strategic professional campaign communication means that professionals in marketing and communications coach politicians, plan campaigning, write speeches, and aim to influence the media (Isotalus, 2017: 134–138), and paid advertising is also widely used. Different measurement and analysis methods are needed to see the effects of party communication, and that different media are used effectively. This highlights the intentional nature of communications when referring to strategic communications. Integrating social media strategically in candidates' communication requires continuous effort, and not just visits to a particular site during campaign periods (Blegind Jensen & Dyrby, 2013), and subsequently, this requires a plan and method of execution for all their social media content.

Platforms and also their use have changed since campaign strategies have been initially researched in political communication by Lilleker et al. (2011), who concluded that online campaigning focuses on the information-heavy mode through websites. Platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook offer possibilities for a more dynamic interactive form of content promotion, which Lilleker et al. (2011) call for, and their increased popularity has introduced them as channels for political and especially campaign communication. They allow for multimodal

content such as the sharing of images and videos, which Enli (2015a, 2015b) discusses as an image-building strategy. This is also an element in branding, which Gorbatov, Khapova, and Lysova (2018) define as the construction of personal brands, and constitutes a strategic process where positive impression management is created, positioned and upheld, and then communicated to the audience.

In 2011, Herkman (2011: 156) considered the role of the internet in Finland as mainly a supporting channel for marketing and campaigning. In the 2015 election, Railo and Ruohonen (2016: 305) noted a remarkable increase in the parties' guidelines for the growing importance of different social media platforms in campaigning. In the election of 2019, Herkman's (2011) idea of the supporting role was directly challenged, with many candidates and parties relying heavily on online forums in their campaigns. However, this increase in social media use, together with the added regulation on campaign funding, requires more expertise and therefore a strategic take on online communication within campaign teams. The rules and norms of new forms and channels of communication vary. Even though having control over one's own social media profiles and their content might seem easier than exerting control over media and journalists, the variety and spread of different outlets challenge this control, both from the perspective of talent and know-how, and also the ability to manage content. Those candidates who can effectively combine social media and broadcast media can become the most influential, in that they can get their online messages to broadcast media and gain exposure through their online activities, and vice versa gain more exposure for their broadcast media exposure by sharing it through their online channels.

In Finland, many voters change their position between elections (Railo et al., 2016: 334), and voters change their minds, find new candidates, jump between parties, and get drawn to strong personal brands. Therefore, successful campaigning can make a difference for the candidates. During the elections of 2015, over one-third of constituents chose their party during the election campaign, and over 60% of the constituents waited until the last two weeks before the election day before they chose who to vote for (von Schoultz, 2016: 160). This describes the significance of campaigning in Finland, and supports my decision to focus on communication during the last month preceding the election. For a candidate to get voters on board and stay there, there has to be appealing and ongoing communication that reaches the electorate at significant times. This communication also needs to be where the public is, which explains why it has moved rapidly online. Social media is an important channel for reaching a significant voting block that absorbs their campaign content only through social media channels. The differences between resources are suggested to be more equal between parties and candidates because communication online is seen as being more economical (Strandberg, 2016: 97,

112). However, while strategic communication expertise becomes an asset through the professionalization of campaign communication and more professional communication online, it is also resource-intensive. But overall, most elected candidates exhibit a versatile use of all the communication platforms used in their campaigns, so having multiple means and abilities is needed to succeed in this particular activity.

Bossetta (2018) states that the digital architecture of the platforms affects the political communication conducted on them. This architecture consists of network structure, functionality, algorithmic filtering, and datafication. These are and should be factors when political campaigns are planned and executed. At a basic level, politicians and their campaign offices need to consider which demographics they are targeting, which type of content is influential, and acknowledge the possibilities of allocating financial resources across different platforms.

The versatile use of social media and the internet by candidates increased significantly in the Finnish parliamentary elections of 2019 (Strandberg & Borg, 2020: 304). Both the online presence of candidates and the electorate's online activity grew. Almost 90% of the candidates were on Facebook, and over half (53%) of the candidates were using Twitter. Over 40% of the candidates were using Instagram. Those candidates who were already in parliament were more active on different platforms than their contenders. Also, candidates from larger parties were more active. This indicates that campaign resources matter in candidates' social media presence, even though social media is mostly free and accessible to everyone.

Garzia (2014: 86) calls for more studies on whether the electorate judges the politician against a role or as the person they are. This study sheds light on this question by analyzing how candidates are being discussed online. While the internet has not necessarily had a significant role in the formation of fundamental political values or the party choice of an individual, it influences the forming of opinions on individual politicians and topics (Hoff, 2010), and some parties are currently planning their agenda-setting and emphasis together with the electorate through social media. In 2004, Cornfield (2004: 107–108) recognized the growing role of online campaigning, calling for ways to utilize it more efficiently. In 2019, the 'hypermedia' setting where old and new campaign tools and platforms mix, has become a standardized practice in professional campaign communication (Lilleker, Tenscher & Štětka, 2015). Understanding this setting is important, as professional campaigning shifts even more towards the utilization of social media channels, and the online context becomes significant for all in regard to establishing politics, participating in politics, and following politics (Bossetta,

2018; Grant, Moon & Busby Grant, 2010; Jacobs & Spierings, 2016; Strandberg, 2016: 113.) But it all happens through content produced in these arenas for communication, and in each arena, that content is managed in diverging ways depending on the possibilities of the platform.

2.2.1 Arenas and content of campaigning

The arenas of election campaign communication have changed together with technological and social developments. The first forums of election campaigning were town meetings and other face-to-face situations where people met. The rise of broadcast media brought newspaper advertisements and articles as a platform for elections. Later, radio and television again changed the importance of rhetoric and appearance with the introduction of election debates and interviews. Figure 3 presents the various broadcast media structures in relation to election campaign communication. Generally, they are controlled by the guidelines for journalism and broadcasting, and represent the traditional media (The Union of Journalists in Finland, 2011).

As Figure 3 shows, increased fragmentation appeared in campaign communication with the development of the internet. The ease with which to start websites had parties and candidates building websites for promotion and information spreading. These quickly added personal blogs that are still a meaningful way to communicate arguments and political issues to the public. But instead of moving from one forum to another, ultimately, the forums and ways of communicating have increased both in number and the type of communication available. Particularly, social media platforms center around campaign events because they allow fast information to be given about the campaign trail. They can also be used to broadcast events and extend campaign trail conversations beyond the events. Different platforms complement each other (Lilleker, Tenscher & Štětka, 2015) and support different aims, and for example, Twitter is suggested to support dialogue with the electorate better than Facebook (Graham et al., 2013; Enli and Skogerbø, 2013).

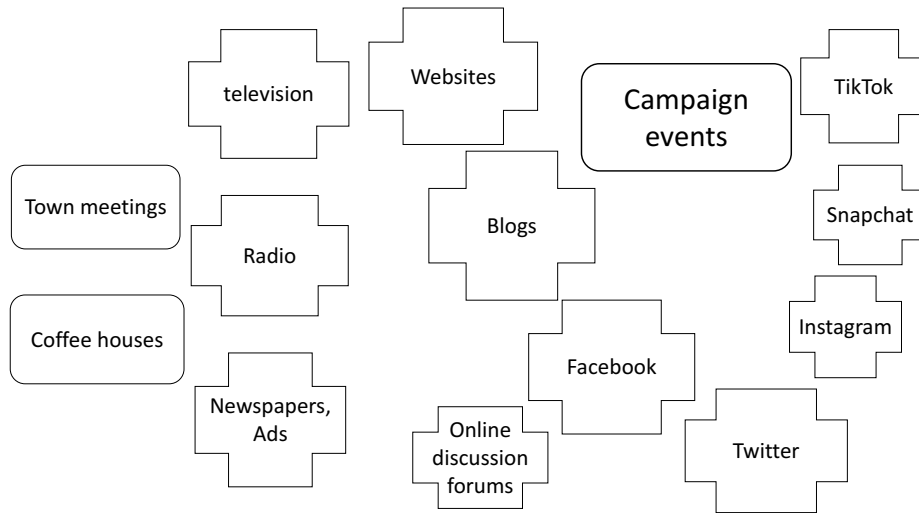


Figure 3. Arenas of election campaign communication

Figure 4 shows that various factors affect candidates' social media use in political campaigns. The audience, the electoral system, the candidate's current position, and the candidate's party are the main factor determining how candidates use social media. These primary elements have determining elements that candidates also consider when communicating in their campaigns, for example, predictions about the election result, their preference in platforms and social media use in general, their voter demographic, their parties' general approach to social media, and their opponents' use of social media.

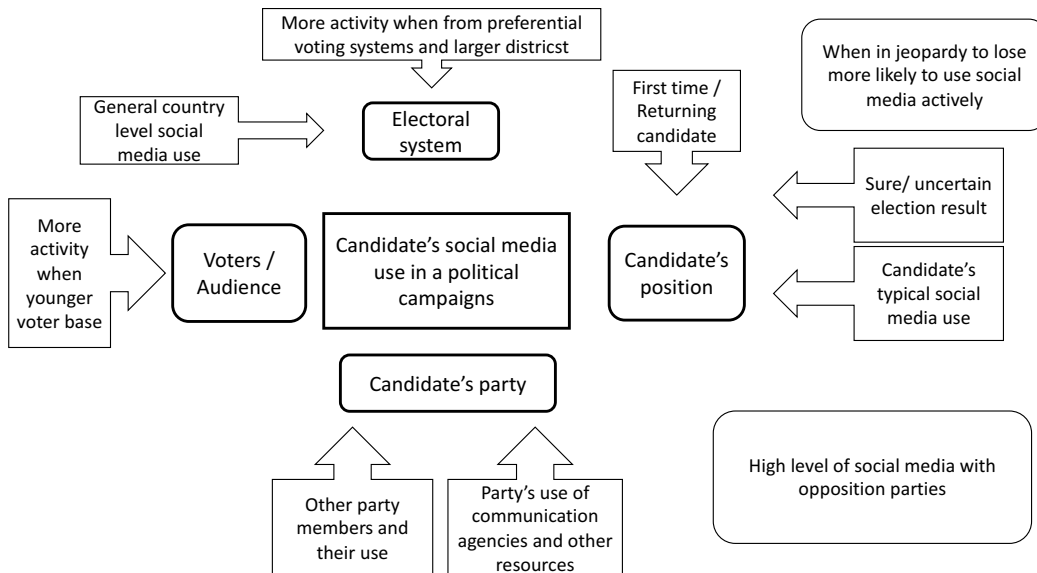


Figure 4. Factors influencing a political candidate's campaigning on social media (modified from Obholzer & Daniel, 2016).

Obholzer and Daniel (2016) conclude that the use of social media in campaigning is different depending on the electoral institution, and is affected by the candidate's party, target audience, voters, and legislator characteristics. Usually, those aiming for a younger voter base are more active on social media. Mobilizing younger voters for the campaign is more effective through social media (Aldrich et al., 2016). Mellon and Prosser (2017) have found that British social media users are younger, better educated, and more attentive to political issues. But they argue that because of this, for Facebook and Twitter, the user group is not representative of the whole population. However, Finnish election studies find a more heterogenic user group in social media following political communication (Strandberg, 2016: 105–111; Marttila et al., 2016: 117–118).

As represented in Figure 4, the candidates' position in the election is also another deciding factor in their social media presence. Those candidates with fewer resources or who are in a weaker position regarding the elections are more likely to use social media more in their campaigning. Strandberg (2016: 106, 109) suggests that online campaign communication is still controlled by bigger parties and parliament members, and they tend to use social media merely to distribute material. Accordingly, this would seem to imply that social media campaigning does not always work to the benefit of smaller candidates and parties. However, Gibson and McAllister (2011) see benefit in breaking away from traditional means and exploiting new ways and channels which serve smaller parties and younger candidates. This ongoing debate on whether social media campaigning promotes this is referred to as *equalization* or *normalization* which means that the dominant and established actors benefit more from social media activities, and has interested several researchers in political communication (Lev-On & Haleva-Amir, 2016). Even though some research has found support for less known candidates benefitting from social media (see Samuel-Azran, Yarchi & Wolfshed, 2015), a fair argument is that since more strategic communication on social media is resource-intensive, it benefits the major actors who have a ready-built exposure and more resources in terms of both human capital and finances. This approach has also guided my selection of data to include vote-pullers and party leaders.

The candidate's party and the guidelines and culture for communication of the party also affect the use of social media. Political parties often have a "prototype representative" who defines how the other party members are defined (Figure 4; Keipi et al., 2017: 25). In this study, the vote-puller candidates and party leaders are all candidates with general or concentrated visibility, with added attention to them as a person (Van Aelst, Sheafer & Stanyer, 2012). Thus, their social media activity can partly be seen as building an image for the whole party. Castells (1997: 360–361) terms this condition as 'the prophet', where one person gives voice and

defines the social media behavior in a group. This was seen as the case with Alexander Stubb from the National Coalition Party when he used Twitter dominantly in its early years (Hämäläinen & Stubb, 2016). From the Finns Party, party leader Jussi Halla-aho provides a similar example by almost always representing a party in their online campaign videos, and was seen to be especially active during the European Union parliamentary election campaign in 2019.

Some candidates actively use social media to interact with the public, and even parties form agendas through social media. For example, Donald Trump's direct and informal communication in the US political context has caused researchers to suggest a trend towards de-professionalization political campaigning, and adopting an almost amateur approach in political communication (Enli, 2017). While Donald Trump represents a case for de-professionalism in political communication, it is viewed in this study as an exceptional case that does not apply to how campaign communication has developed in Finland. However, some Finnish politicians approach the electorate spontaneously and with a less polished and strategic social media style. This type of approach is typically used by, for example, populist movements (de Vreese et al., 2018), and as stated before, The Finns Party has been exceptionally successful with this style. Particularly, it can be seen that the informal styles in communication of populist movements and candidates offer appealing content, which can help to mobilize masses.

In a study by Isotalus and Almonkari (2014), politicians criticized traditional media logic, and the interviews by Reunanen and Harju (2012: 135) revealed that politicians experienced Facebook as a 'forced necessity' requiring a presence even though there was no interest. However, they also experienced more interaction and positive feedback through their Facebook presence. While this study does not survey candidates on their feelings about their Facebook use, their content production can indicate their attitudes towards the significance of Facebook in their campaign. Overall, all parties and politicians have produced online content for their campaigns from a fairly early stage when possibilities like blogs were introduced. However, the significance of the internet and social media was evidently more visible in the Finnish election campaign communication context, notably in the Presidential elections of 2012 where the campaign of Pekka Haavisto created an online movement that exploited social media so skillfully that an unexpected second round in the elections became a reality (Eränti & Lindman, 2014). Thus, for Finnish politicians the internet is not just a tool, and it includes channels and platforms that offer a possibility for the candidates to convince constituents of both topic issues and their own personal appeal (Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 257).

Studies suggest that for many politicians, the use of social media in campaigning has contributed to the campaign's success (Pătruț, 2015), even to the extent that a candidate can succeed without the use of traditional media forms, but not without making an effort in the digital world (Mattila et al., 2020: 82). However, some studies also contest the correlation between campaign success and social media use (Zhao, Lampe & Ellison, 2016). Strandberg and Borg (2020: 106) evaluate that the use of social media has increased the interactive nature of communication. However, this interaction is still a question of debate if the use of different platforms is analyzed.

The use of social media by election candidates has been researched in regard to interaction and communication flow (Kalsnes, 2016; Nelimarkka et al., 2020), especially during elections (Isotalo et al., 2019), and benefits have been found for candidates who exploit these interaction possibilities (Grant, Moon & Busby Grant, 2010). However, these studies also highlight a need for qualitative research, which Strandberg and Carlson (2020: 84) note as being limited but highly needed regarding Finnish political communication. Also in Finland, more country-specific research is needed, and so far, only the Finns party has been analyzed as succeeding specifically through social media use (Maasilta 2012: 17, 113; Niemi, 2012; 2013; Ylä-Anttila, 2020). But regardless of national perspectives, more qualitative research in the area also contributes to the available research on online discussions and their characteristics.

My choice to focus on Facebook out of the different platforms present on social media is supported by both the gap in qualitative Facebook research in campaign communication, and also Facebook being more representative of the general voting population than Twitter (Isotalo et al., 2019; Mellon & Prosser, 2017), which is often referred as the elite social media platform in the Finnish context (Railo & Ruohonen, 2016, 205; Ruoho & Kuusipalo, 2018; Vainikka & Huhtamäki 2015). So far, the limited research on the social media use of elected candidates (Marttila, 2018: 72) has only recognized the centrality of Facebook as a tool for the Haavisto presidential campaign in 2012, and as a factor in the success of the Finns Party (Eränti & Lindman, 2014; Suominen, Saarikoski & Vaahensalo, 2019: 171–175). The choice to focus on Facebook in this study is justified both because of its size and the comprised demography of the electorate, defining its relevance as a campaign platform and addressing a noticeable gap in Facebook research in the field of Finnish political communication. When communicating on Facebook, the candidates target their messages to their target demographics. These form the *target audience* that they consider when planning and executing their communication in any channel.

2.2.2 Target audience

To understand the construction of politicians' personal brands, it is necessary to reflect on the concept of the audience because it is for this specific group that the impression management work is done. However, this raises valid questions as to whether a politician's role is similar to a performance, and indeed who the audience of a politician is in terms of the whole public or just the electorate. Still, it is justified for resource planning that politicians establish their target demographics and focus on the target audience, i.e. the audience they target their messages and persona representations towards.

Cheung (2000: 45) reminds us that a person's self-presentation is always multiple, and depends on the environment. While a potential audience is always imagined, when planning communication to a certain type of group, it can also be targeted. However, these expectations are not necessarily going to be met. Personas can include different elements of identities like gender, nationality, religion, family relationships, sexuality, occupation, free-time, political stance, and several more facets depending on the context, the audience, and the motive to present a persona (see Chapter 3). Some users make decisions regarding platforms based on, for example, showing a professional self somewhere like Twitter or LinkedIn, or performing a private self in a more closed platform like Instagram or Facebook, with sometimes more restricted privacy settings (Scolere, Pruchniewska & Duffy, 2018). Thus, the target demographic is simultaneously considered alongside the type of content when anything is shared on social media, which also affects the choice of platform to be used (Zhao, Lampe & Ellison, 2016).

The online world allows for a precise modeling of the self because of the extent of the audience, efficiency, convenience, and the lack of actual physical presence (boyd, 2014). Often for candidates, the public self is consciously constructed, or at least polished for the electorate. Also, paid targeting functions allow for even more specific planning for particular demographics. However, politicians and their self-representations are always dependent on their public off-line self, since they are public personas. Therefore, their online representation is merely an extension or an addition to what they already 'are' in the eyes of the public. Individuals shape and transform these representations based on their environment, and as boyd (2014: 48–49) describes, "self-presentations are never constructed in a void".

According to boyd (2014: 31–32), social media has brought us both "collapsed context and invisible audiences." By her definition, a user does not always know the exact audience they have online. But regardless of this, the content is created for a target *audience*. However, the audience following and viewing the content is relatively unknown, especially when accounting for those unaccounted users who

refrain from engagement thus leaving no mark of having viewed or even reacted to, for example, a post. But success cannot be measured based solely on the audience on social media. As Eränti and Lindman (2014) argue, the number of followers should not be regarded as an indication of the number of final votes or the influence of social media on the campaign. For example, in a study analyzing MEPs and their use of social media for connecting with an audience, it was found that the followers of the MEPs had a keen interest and awareness of European politics, which questions the representativeness of the followers for the total population (Roginsky, 2020). Mellon and Prosser (2017) found similar results in a British context, finding that social media audiences on Twitter and Facebook were different from the general population in terms of political ideas, voting tendencies, being least likely to vote, and more likely to support the left. However, they regarded these differences as arising from the demographic differences between users and non-users of social media. Importantly, their result show that when considering the audience on Facebook, it is not a representation of the general public, but more a representation of those using social media.

For the politicians in the data, the *audience* could be what Nelimarkka et al. (2020) have suggest as those who have "liked" the page, thereby following it at least in theory. A *target audience* includes those who the candidates wish to become page followers and engage with their content. Especially, the audience goes where its content of interest is. The algorithm exposes the page content more for the followers than random users. This can be further developed with Rudd's (2016: 166) idea of active media consumers who influence the content rather than just passively consume it. This can be seen, for example, in online discussions where the topics readily switch, with the active discussion transforming, for instance, a campaign mobilization call into a debate on immigration politics. Therefore, the issues and direction of political communication online in fact lie in the hands of the active users who are participating in the discussion, rather than with those who start the conversations.

2.2.3 From audience to users

The role and power of the audience have shifted with the introduction and especially the growth of social media networks. They are no longer those who just read messages and follow performances. Instead, even though politicians present their personas online, the audience can also participate in their negotiation, so becoming actors in the process (Kannasto, 2020) and the audience has power. But unconvinced constituents who can shift either for or against a candidate are seen as the most crucial ones, since many voters in Finland tend to make their decision

at a late stage (von Schoultz, 2016: 160). As a further consideration, the public can also cause damage if agitated in the wrong way, for example, by spreading harmful content online.

The view of the audience and its power in this study continues from that of Carpentier (2011), emphasizing that to have an active/passion dimension, it needs to be combined with a participation/interaction dimension. Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan (2012) and Vissers and Stolle (2014a, 2014b) propose that social media can increase political participation. Also, Boulianne (2019) evaluates the public's possibility for voicing political opinions as one of the greatest benefits of social media. Especially, it offers individuals possibilities to participate, form opinions, and express themselves through different platforms, and encourages these activities more than can be seen with traditional broadcast media. In addition to producing their own content, the audience also distributes content by choosing and sharing it, and in this way, through *social curation*, affects the circulation of content in social media (Villi, 2011). This *participatory culture* (Fuchs, 2014) separates social media from broadcasting media. In social media, the audience is not a passive message receiver, but rather an active signifier who carries out communicative actions. Also, their participation defines the monetization of their data derived from the different user activities, and there are no journalists that act as gatekeepers of what is passed and not passed on to the audience.

Paasonen (2013: 26) also discusses the changing nature of the audience in the online context, and those who are sending messages are also receivers. This two-way flow is presented in Figure 5. Instead of a direction-centered flow of communication, the emphasis is on the network, how people are connected, and how the information flows. In political communication, this flow occurs between the public and the political actors, but not just from one to the other, but in both directions from both actors. Therefore, by acting as content producers (Paasonen, 2013: 37), these users become actors in the process. Suominen, Saarikoski, and Vaahensalo (2019: 17) remind us that the balance of roles is not equal, and that there are many more readers of messages than those writing them. Thus, the audience again cannot be defined based only on those participating. Also, the most opinionated participants usually talk the loudest and most frequently, which can cause a seeming imbalance of ideas on the platforms.

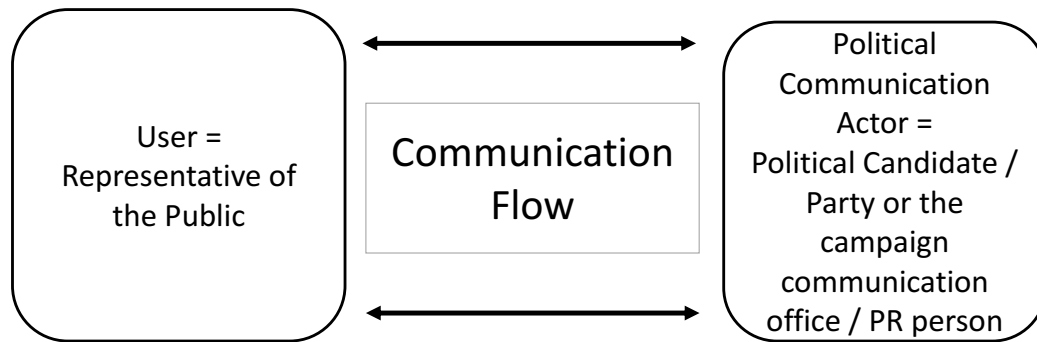


Figure 5. Communication flow in political communication

The success of internet campaigns is not only measured through directly influencing opinions. Instead, success can be seen in changing passive supporters into active participants who donate money, organize events, become volunteers (Strandberg, 2013), persuade their networks, promote candidates and recommend pages. This way, they participate in the campaign work and help organize the campaign with fewer resources (Eränti & Lindman, 2014). On social media, this converts to organic, un-paid reach and mobilizing people into talking with their network in real life, writing opinion statements in newspapers or online, and participating in campaign events. But so far, only limited evidence for successful mobilization and empowerment of the masses has been found for social media (Jensen, 2017).

Carpentier (2007: 88) divides participation into two different types. The first is participation as an activity, and the second is participation through learning and adopting behavior from media. Participation in online discussions creates communities that construct common meanings, share ideas and construct negotiated representations of individuals. Thus, social media can construct and strengthen *imagined communities* which are fragmented; some are tiny and strictly closed while others stay public and open to anyone (Suominen, Saarikoski & Vaahensalo, 2019: 18). In the political debate context, one has to take possible polarization into account and remember to see who is stating something and what they represent (Guerra et al., 2013). While people are exposed to broader views through social media, they rarely engage in meaningful discussion and argumentation (Yardi & boyd, 2010). This superficial mode in the majority of

discussions challenges Carpentier's (2007: 88) idea of participation through learning and adopting behavior.

Impression management (as discussed in sociology by Goffman, 1959: 203–230), means that an individual is actively influencing others' perceptions of themselves. These representations are managed through deliberating what kind of perceptions audiences gain, and also what perceptions audiences build. In the context of this study, the idea transfers to constructing personal brands in terms of the choices that the politicians make in leaving something out and including something else. The same consideration is needed for the public. When they comment, they might even give away clues to the performer or individual on how to act – what is expected. In this case, the person managing their impression could benefit from reading and interpreting these clues and modifying their ways accordingly if they plan to persuade that specific audience. This way, the audience can affect the communicative persona negotiation that the individual performs. On social media, this can happen, for example, in an online discussion where the politicians receive questions or comments about issues that they do not actively bring to the discussion themselves. They also receive comments and requests regarding, for example, performance in debates or activities in their campaign events, and furthermore, they decide whether they will allow some empowerment to the public by acting upon them, for example, by replying to or following the comments.

2.3 Platformed Interaction and the Electorate

Strandberg and Carlson (2020: 82) argue that in Finnish political communication, the online context continues to grow in importance, supporting the focus of this study. This study focuses on mediated communication, which is something existing between the sender and the receiver, and which develops through technological advancements (Dainton & Zelle, 2011). In the context of political campaign communication between the candidate and the voter in social media, Nelimarkka et al. (2020) refer to this as *platformed interaction*.

Media allows the channeling of information between the public and political actors, controlling political actors, and giving voice to different actors by providing forums for political communication so that also minorities and underrepresented groups can be heard (Herkman, 2011: 55). The online world provides individuals with a platform to network and engage in multiple mediated social activities that construct public mediated identities on a daily basis (Marshall, Moore & Barbour, 2015). Because media tends to favor individuals over parties and campaigns (von Schoultz, 2016: 159–160), politicians are often presented through multiple

technologies and platforms, which also defines the *mediatized persona*, one of the five dimensions presented by Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 68 - explained in detail in 3.2.1). These different platforms are used in different ways, but their main communication principles are similar (boyd, 2014: 5, 27, 38). In her social media research on teenagers, boyd (2014: 39–40) found that teens look for the best sites for their current particular problems and find people to connect with, giving an example of both using those sites and modifying the related landscapes. In this way, the network continually transforms both social media and its users.

Rudd (2016: 163–165) describes political networks as information channels that the public can use to gain more knowledge, shape their views on political issues, and for engaging with politicians. He uses the term *watchdog*, but to him, online media has replaced traditional media in this role. Matheson (2016: 191) characterizes social media's role and its channels similarly to Rudd (2016), adding that the aspect of developing political ideas is more prominent than public debate. In this way, the public are not replacing traditional media, such as news, with social media. Instead, social media is used as an additional forum for engaging in communication, and providing material and ideas for agenda-setting. However, the effects of this remain debatable. For example, in a political journalism study with Norwegian local politicians, Skogerbø and Krumsvik (2015) found little evidence of agenda-setting or, unlike several other studies, any claim that social media content would transfer to traditional media, regardless of the high activity of politicians. This contrary conclusion may indicate the differences between local, national, and global politics, but determining this requires more research. Also, research on polarization in political communications suggests that political opinions do not change, but rather strengthen through political debates among the public online. So, especially in political communication, polarization in fact seems to strengthen as a result of political discussion online (Bail et al., 2018).

The issue with social media in campaign communications is that communication through different platforms does not reach the electorate as a whole equally, nor has it been proven to add attachment or an interest in politics (Strandberg & Borg, 2020: 117–118). The platform affordances are given so the companies control what is possible in terms of organizing communication on each platform (Ridell, 2011: 20). These platforms also include several networks and communities, and each network also has its own communal culture, which then transforms its users' communication behavior (boyd, 2014: 5–6). This type of peer influence is also visible in the political context, where parties have their own norms and even guidelines for using social media platforms (Figure 2), text, and connectivity. By connecting with each other, the politicians also influence each other by learning, interacting, co-operating, and sharing each other's ideas (Svensson, 2014), thereby

contributing to impression management (Goffman, 1959; Šimunjak, 2018), and providing each other with publicity and credit.

Politics is defined as a systematic activity where different interest groups are negotiating and competing for the use of resources, and also define the common rules (Herkman, 2011: 16). Since politics and political communication are professional activities, different actions are performed by the political offices and professionals, and the politicians themselves. Online, it is challenging to know whether messages are presented by politicians or their campaign offices, unlike in television debates where the audience can usually see the politicians speaking (Rudd, 2016: 165). However, in television, the message can also be crafted by someone else, but at least the politician's authentic performance is seen.

Even though the internet allows for more direct access allowing easy accessible live broadcasts and interaction, Moog and Sluyter-Beltrao (2016: 30–56) claim that television will remain the most important political information source. However, younger generations have given up on television to some extent, and it is no longer the household's central item. Newer forms of participation such as social media offer more possibilities for participation and interaction, and allow all voices and opinions to exist. It is a useful forum for those who take the time to be heard. However, at the same time it might be seen as lowering the voices of those not participating because they are unwilling to do so publicly, or those with no access.

Social media grew with people approaching it optimistically, but its adverse effects soon became visible (Vaidhyanathan, 2018). The algorithm functions of social media are criticized for destroying democracy and building a false image of societies and policies (Cho et al., 2020). For example, the viral nature of negative content has become evident (Knuutila & Laaksonen, 2020). Certain groups and people have more power and influence on different platforms, and while the platforms offer an inexpensive, even free, possibility for exposure, visibility can also be bought, giving more power to those with more resources and skills to exploit the platforms strategically. In Facebook, when there are many posts on a page within a short time period, the algorithm considers this as an activity that should be paid for. Therefore, unless the posts are produced as paid, sponsored ads, they will not get extensive exposure. Also, unless posts get reactions, they are not seen as getting exposure. This aspect therefore better serves parties that have more personnel for planning and creating engaging content, and also the financial resources for paid content.

For campaigns, the traditional means of interaction has been to meet the public in town market squares, election panels, or at other communal events where public discussion is possible. But online, candidates can be reached directly by tweeting

and tagging on Twitter, posting or commenting on Facebook, or by commenting on their blogs from the comfort of one's own home. Campaign blogs were the earliest forms of direct online communication from candidates to the electorate. Their benefits are communicating political messages, strengthening the candidate's political profile, and gaining exposure on broadcast media (Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 257). Now, through websites of candidates and parties and online discussions, political communication can be found almost everywhere online. At first, politicians kept their online political communication formal in nature (Sey & Castells, 2004: 363–378), but nowadays, parties and politicians vary a lot in the ways they use social media (González Bengoechea, Fernández Muñoz & García Guardia, 2019).

The online arena also poses other challenges. The critical voices stating that commercial platform providers such as Google, Facebook and Twitter focus on monetization at the expense of security and morality, and twisting search results, allowing hate speech, data acquisition, criminal activities, and false advocacy campaigns are increasing. The Presidential elections of 2019 and the global Covid-19-pandemic had these platforms taking stands on content which was a significant development on their previous position as being "only platforms" that published user-generated content, and not media companies in the traditional sense. Media also carries legal and ethical responsibilities, which social media companies have argued they have no responsibility for. Thus, in these platforms, individual users control the communication, and broad content is ruled only by the algorithm set according to data monetization principles (Fuchs, 2014; Kreiss & McGregor, 2018b). Therefore, to understand how user-generated content can affect political communication, the characteristics of online discussions need to be described.

2.3.1 Characteristics of online discussions

The overlap of mediatization and communication has generated entirely new forms of communication. User-generated online content such as selfies, viral videos and memes, has changed the way people communicate. This change is a continuous process as new emojis are created, new types of likes are introduced, and even new platforms are invented and popularized (see Guynn, 2020). Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 39–40) define this "increased remediation of interpersonal communication" as *intercommunication*. This two-way communication has been the core of social media, where networks are not built on authority. Previously dominant media forms such as television, newspapers and radio attach to this exchange of information not as 'those who control', but more as 'those whose content is shared', and this user-generated distribution is one form

of discussing (Villi, 2011). Traditional media has also established their presence on these platforms, and most media companies, newspapers and tabloids have a page on Facebook where they share their news in real-time, and television shows include e.g. Twitter feeds on their broadcasts to encourage real-time engagement on multiple platforms.

In this study, public discussion in social media, more precisely on Facebook with posts and comments on public pages, is called *online discussion*. In general, online discussion is understood as a pair or a collection of initiating discussions, and the reply or replies to it on any web-based forum, such as a Facebook page post, Instagram post, discussion forum, or a comment chain in a website. Here, a post is understood as the initiation or call to discuss, and the reply or replies together with the post form the discussion (Farina, 2019). Therefore, a Facebook post alone, with no reactions, is just an attempt to discuss, not a discussion - rather, it can also be seen as either a failed invitation to discuss or a statement, which has no intention to invite discussion. These posts with no reactions on Facebook get little exposure because of the platform's algorithm, which gives more exposure to posts that get engagement. Also, the comments provoke other comments, but these are often written to be read as individual comments instead of an interaction or ongoing debate. However, the analysis in this study will include all posts and comments because they are all campaign communications that are visible to the public. Thus, they represent *intercommunication* where individuals produce content and also affect the professional content creation (Marshall, 2014; Marshall, Moore & Barbour, 2020: 39–40).

Communication through different semiotic signals and signs has been a way of negotiating meaning before languages and letters were created. Even in the earliest online communications, emotions were expressed through combinations of different keyboard signs, such as :-). Stark and Crawford (2015) argue that emojis provide “visual vocabulary”, and they can help discussion participants in platforms to express their feelings and maintain social connections. While they can sometimes confuse, give conflicting cues, or only be understood within a particular community, they offer a rapid, one-click opportunity for expressing emotion and opinion. In this study, emojis are viewed both as a way to engage with the candidate, and an expression used to communicate in a discussion. According to Knuutila and Laaksonen (2020), the use of reactions, particularly negative ones, can affect the Facebook algorithm by increasing the circulation of the posts. In these “sticky” networks, affective content promotes more affective content which can stimulate stronger opinions and emotional content being produced in these discussions. Emotions are strongly present in online discussion (Laaksonen & Pöyry, 2018; Rantasila, 2018). Especially, there is a lot of critique towards officials

(Hakala & Vesa, 2013: 234), politicians and the government, thus quickly producing negative representations of politicians. Because of the broad public exposure of these discussions, these representations and emotions can be significant for politicians' personal brands.

However, not all online discussion participants seek to influence (Suominen, Saarikoski & Vaahensalo, 2019: 257). Their motives and possibilities to participate in online discussions vary (Ibid. 18–19, 41), and opinion molding, information seeking, spending leisure time, or finding a place to share their own experiences with peers are common reasons to participate. Individuals consider online discussion as an everyday activity and as a means to get their voice heard (Hakala & Vesa, 2013: 239). According to boyd (2014: 7), after the rise of social media (around 2005), involvement in the platforms became a norm, and online, everyone has the right to join the discussion, form and present opinions, and start movements (Chadwick, 2011; Janssen & Kies, 2005; Papacharissi, 2004) in all different aspects of life.

Participation is not the only role that social media creates for the electorate, and now, they can better control and set frames for political communication. Matheson (2016) identifies the challenge that online media sets for traditional media, where resources no longer dictate political communication, and both the discussion and visibility of politicians are run and monitored by the public rather than media producers. Matheson argues that the power shifts to the public's active members, thus making them both actors and participators within political communication. Yamamoto, Kushin and Dalisay (2013) have also found a positive correlation between political expression online and political participation, which reduces the power and status of media in relation to online discussion and its control. Social media has given this illusion of power to the public by allowing more interaction between the public and the parties and candidates through commenting, posting, tagging, and other central social media elements. So, what used to be gatherings of smaller town groups, clubs, and political meetings organized by parties and other collectives are now also taking place online, giving at least an illusion that everyone participates and that messages are being heard.

Interactive digital media allows the public to decide whether they participate in a mediated or direct communication. The participants are looking for information and want to present their opinions. In online political discussions, participants tend to discuss issues with like-minded people (Haasio, 2015: 40; Rheingold, 1993; Valenzuela, Kim & Gil de Zúñiga, 2012), which reduces the possibility for them to be exposed to opposing views. Railo et al. (2016: 330) also remind us that social media conversations easily create bubbles where only those that share the same

opinions are present in the discussion, so opinions can easily be enforced since no alternative arguments are presented. But this can create a false perception of opinions. In Facebook, this echo chamber effect is strengthened by the algorithm that is programmed to show the user similar content to content they have previously liked (Bail et al., 2018; Thorson et al., 2021). However, Campante, Durante and Sobbrío (2017) suggest that it increases different forms of political participation such as grassroot protest movements.

Currently, it is possible to see a shift from Sey and Castell's (2004) view that the Internet's characteristics of two-way communication are not exploited in political communication. However, it is still mostly used as a tool for disseminating information (Nelimarkka et al., 2020), rather than actually calling for participation and interaction between politicians and the electorate (Ross, Fountaine & Comrie, 2015). This would require engaging in discussion and responding to the public (Blegind Jensen & Dyrby, 2013), and politicians might avoid this because engaging in debates can challenge their impression management and mitigate their control over it. My analysis will show how and to what extent Finnish politicians participate in these discussions and react to what the public are saying.

This study approaches online discussion as the exchange of meanings between people. The focus on Facebook directs it this way, and there is no chatbot option for communicating on Facebook public pages, even though approaching online discussion requires acknowledging the existence of possible chatbots or virtual characters (Suominen, Saarikoski & Vaahensalo, 2019: 16). Van Deursen and van Dijck (2013: 12) define conversation as information shared by two or more units addressing a shared medium. Importantly, there is no center dominating the conversation. Online, the discussion participants set the frames and control the direction of the conversations. Through the meta level of the discussion, where the focus is on the act of discussing, they can try to manage these contexts and directions (Suominen, Saarikoski & Vaahensalo, 2019: 29), but in social media, frustration is often expressed towards others or even the way the platforms work.

Online discussions vary on different platforms. They have a long history, starting already in the 1980s and moving quickly together with the technological transformation from coding uploads and simple text-based messages, into real-time interlinked multi-object messages in different social media forums. But the latter still resembles the original forms in many ways, and often they will sidetrack from the intended topics, and participants can ignore, oppose and provoke each other. As Suominen, Saarikoski, and Vaahensalo (2019: 17, 38, 53, 100) characterize, users aim to find communities, and the discussion follows and

sometimes refuses to follow the 'netiquette', i.e. the norms for online discussion and behavior. This type of chaos, such as going off-topic and choosing random topics in online communication practices was seen as a negative turn by the older users of the historic BBS-forum, which was a bulletin board system used for online discussion at the beginning of the 1990s, when internet connections were made with modems through phone lines.

Typically, in research, online discussion services are divided into synchronous and asynchronous forms. Most social media services such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are more asynchronous, even though in some of them, discussions can also form in real-time. In these services, the discussion remains like an archive which also explains their main categorization of asynchronous services. However, this division is more technical since most users communicate fast, even in real-time, through social media platforms. But as Suominen, Saarikoski, and Vaahensalo (2019: 136) contest, this idea of an archive-nature is difficult to maintain in practice because social media discussions are hard to browse afterward, and while they might stay in the digital record, they are challenging to find because the platforms are not primarily built for storing and browsing past discussions.

Karvonen (2008) states that media both describe and also affect reality. The situation is similar in platformed interaction, and while discussion and representations on social media portray the environment and the surrounding reality, simultaneously, they mold the user's perception and affect how they act. People are dependent on the information on politics provided by the media. It brings politicians close, under the public eye, and social media provides an easy and direct communication channel to them (Herkman, 2011: 27, 33; Strandberg & Borg, 2020: 106–107). Since 2011, all parties and leading politicians have been visible in the leading social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube (Herkman, 2011: 82), and this mode of interaction enables politicians to message the electorate for free, without journalistic interference (Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 300).

Online discussion and communication are platform-dependent, meaning they are different on each platform (Nelimarkka et al., 2020). Strandberg (2008) points out that the online comments related to Finnish politics are usually negative in tone. In the first campaign blogs around 2000, some comment sections were closed because of the negative comments (see Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 252). However, Waterloo et al. (2017) argue that a positive communication style is more appropriate for expressions in social media. The Finns Party's success is an exception to this, supporting Strandberg (2008), because their communication on

social media has focused on negative campaigning and attacks on other parties and policies (Niemi, 2013; Ylä-Anttila, 2020). Furthermore, their supporters are also active communicators in political online discussions, thus broadly promoting the party's messages.

In the Finnish political online discussion and its development, one of the most known political and societal discussion forums is the Hommaforum. Notably, it has contributed to well-known controversial candidates such as Jussi Halla-aho, the Finns Party leader and a current European Parliament member (Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 253). While the aim of the forum is described as influencing politics and societal issues, it is often recognized as a forum for anti-immigration and nationalist politics. The forum is publicly connected with The Finns Party and seen as a contributor to their success in elections (Suominen, Saarikoski & Vaahensalo, 2019: 171–175). As previously explained as typical with online discussions, the forum unites the like-minded, fosters opinion-forming, and the controversial discussions have also gained exposure in broadcast media. Of further note, their rhetoric has also spread in other forums, and new groups around similar ideologies have formed.

In the context of political communication in Finland, online discussion has mostly been researched through the ideas of online democracy (Suominen, Saarikoski & Vaahensalo, 2019: 13, 23), information seeking during a crisis (Haasio et al., 2018), and participation. Axford and Huggins (2001: 1–30) focused on the nature of word-based communication online, but were right in predicting the coming change towards more visual forms and possibilities. However, even though visibility has taken over most social media meaning-making, this change has still not become dominant in political communication online (Filimonov, Russmann & Svensson, 2016), supporting the choice to focus on text analysis in this study.

According to Hakala and Vesa (2013: 218), online discussions can provide similar information for research to surveys or interviews, in regard to people's perceptions and information sharing. Online discussions are usually studied as discussions formed within a community. These communities are formed around a topic, for example, a personal interest or celebrity, and the communities typically have specific communication forms such as communal phrases, choices in words, or a specific style of humor (Laaksonen & Matikainen, 2013: 199). The idea of virtual communities as a like-minded virtual collective (see Rheingold 1993) does not directly apply in this study because multiple profile pages of different politicians from different parties are analyzed. However, active users and participants of political campaign discussions online may have, or at least form community-type communication ways, for example, relevant to specific party supporters. But

regardless of this consideration, the discussion participants themselves have not necessarily formed any specific forms of communication or community-related text types. Therefore, the discussion can only be placed within the context of political communication, and more specifically, parliamentary election campaign communication and Facebook. So, it is therefore important to recognize this context, in order to understand the nature of the discussion.

Online discussions can be positioned in the field of computer-mediated communication. Thurlow, Lengel and Tomic (2006: 14–16) describe it as a theory starting from the first digital computer invented, and continuously developing as computers continue to affect communications. The academic interest in this area started with how people were using computers. However, according to Thurlow, Lengel and Tomic (2006: 14–16), since the mid-1990s, the field has attracted new attention and broadened the scholarly interest to include "any human communication achieved through, or with the help of, computer technology" as computer-mediated communication. This computer-mediated communication enables the forming of communities through language, playfulness, and standard rules and norms (see Walther, 2006), yet these characteristics also make online discussion disruptive by nature.

2.3.2 Disruptive intercommunication?

Social media as a public sphere includes more actors who participate in discussions that the digital platforms enable (Casero-Ripollés, 2018), and sets new rules in the process of discussion and forming opinions. It offers an additional public sphere where citizens meet, discuss and form opinions, as well as increasing the accessibility to information and sharing which enhances participation opportunities and supports the democratic ideal. However, there also institutions and political actors who interfere in these processes, which disrupts the original idea of Habermas (1989) about opinion-forming. For example, moderation can be seen as an act against citizen discussion and opinion-forming. Further, if the discussion is unbalanced, then in addition to limitations of access, instead of opinion forming and discussion, individuals shout their own opinions and often ignore the elements of listening and interaction. Issues of access, function, and research are also controlled by the platform owners such as Facebook and Twitter, who now govern how this additional public sphere functions with their interest being not with dedication to the public sphere and discussion, but rather with data collection and its monetization. While social media and its discussions often execute well the idea of subjecting the political system and decision-makers to criticism, the credibility of this criticism has suffered (Bennet & Livingston, 2018;

Van Aelst et al., 2017), which is why social media can be viewed differently to the political and rational-critical public sphere which Habermas (1989) characterized.

The public can easily disrupt communication strategies, and with the discussion that they create, they can steer topics in other directions and bring up unexpected issues. Tromble (2016) argues that a demand for interaction from the public would also engage politicians in discussions. Pertaining to the context of this study, when candidates engage, there is always a growing engagement among the public (Graham, Jackson & Broersma, 2014). This dialogue may further boost trust and empathy on both sides, for the politicians and the electorate (Gerodimos & Justinussen, 2015). However, this forces campaigns to follow not just one professionally planned strategy, but also to take part in and react to discussions when needed.

Social networking sites turn the control of content and framing away from mass media, and to PR teams and individual politicians (van Dijck, 2013). However, at the same time, some of that power also leaks to the individual users participating in online discussions. This public posting and commenting online on different platforms and forums where campaign communication is executed, has become influential in election campaigning. There are both one-way communication type communication platforms (i.e. campaign ads or articles on newspapers), and two-way communication platforms (i.e. social media channels where interaction between candidates and the electorate is usually public). Online, these discussions get significant exposure and can affect the perceptions and views of the audience exposed to it similarly to campaign advertisements. For businesses, this type of word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing is considered more effective and credible than professional marketing content (Trusov, Bucklin & Pauwels, 2009; Weisfeld-Spolter, Sussan & Gould, 2014). Its digital equivalent is called e-WOM, or electronic word-of-mouth marketing. In their research on political marketing, Iyer, Yazdanparast and Strutton (2017) found that age groups respond differently to messages, and older groups were more receptive to detailed and longer messages, while younger groups would respond better to brief messages online. Word-of-mouth marketing could similarly apply to politics, in that voting for someone because of a peer recommendation is more probable than voting for someone based on a campaign poster (Argan & Argan, 2012; Ozturk & Coban, 2019; Richey, 2008).

In 2019, a project called Vaalivahti ("Who Targets Me?") in Finland started to monitor targeted political online ads, collecting the data of social media ads shown to citizens (Vaalivahti, 2019). Cornfield (2004: 107) acknowledged the necessity of managing people and their online networks, but online campaigning has focused

on marketing text and the idea of targeting ads. This study goes beyond this to develop an understanding of those online networks, and how personas and meanings are negotiated in online discussion on Facebook. This can also be viewed as word-of-mouth marketing, or electronic word-of-mouth-marketing (E-WOM), which can affect people's voting choices and how they view the candidates.

Similar to how disruptive marketing has created new ways and innovations on marketing products, online discussion is now affecting political communication and campaigning. Importantly, more people are also getting their news and content on social media instead of following content produced with journalistic standards. Consequently, more candidates and parties can be seen to be using disinformation to their advantage, in the approach that an audience will believe what they read online with little or no source evaluation. This could superficially be argued as promoting democracy when all information is available for everyone. However, the polarization of arguments is becoming stronger because of how opinions form on and through social media. Research by Bail et al. (2018) again suggests that instead of political discussion online molding old perceptions by opening new arguments and providing more information, the views that one possesses tend to strengthen, along with a resistance to new views as a result of online debates.

Instead of managing communication, content producers are left more with the task of managing the context and presenting themselves so that their target audiences can find them (boyd, 2014: 46). However, promoting this access is not enough, and the politicians must also represent and construct their political personas to appeal to the public. Sánchez-Villar (2019) brings up the disruptive nature of content production in the form of blogs in political communication, referring to events like the Arab Spring. The public can also attempt character assassination when they talk about the candidates in terms of slandering political opponents (Samoilenko & Mason, 2021), and in campaigns, this is often conducted by independent and dedicated supporters whose volunteering is not led from the campaign office. Thus, the public can and will steer the direction and tone of communication through social media, and its possibilities allow this stream of (dis)information to spread quickly and globally when the topics and the public call for it.

A recent change in algorithm makes it so that in Facebook, discussions can flow on an individual's feed because someone in their network just liked, shared, or commented on something, and this affects what people see online. In addition to this seemingly random algorithm-controlled flow of messages (Thorson et al., 2021), there are also sponsored ads and messages that are carefully chosen to

target specific groups, and simple tools like reaction buttons that influence what is shown and what is not to the user (Beer, 2009).

Online discussions also add other elements, like trolls who disturb the communication flow in the political discussion arena. For example, there are electronic bots, fake accounts (Bastos & Farkas, 2019), and individuals who comment and spark discussions out of pure entertainment for themselves or to advance their own agendas and preferences (Virkar, 2014). Also, the act of "flaming", which is the intentional sparking of disputes and fights in online discussions, has attracted the interest of scholars (Aiken & Waller, 2000; Alonzo & Aiken, 2004). Research suggests that flaming occurs specifically with political discussions (Eveland & Hutchens Hively, 2009) when there are opposing views (Hutchens, Cicchirillo & Hmielowski, 2014), and that users perceive flaming as acceptable in political discussions (Hmielowski, Hutchens & Cicchirillo, 2014). Astroturfing is term used for professional and organized trolling activities, and challenges the recognition of what is real by inserting strategically produced fake content into the middle of discussion (Keller et al., 2020). These activities can significantly affect society and opinion-forming (Kovic et al., 2018), so education about them is necessary, and for example, the Finnish national broadcasting company Yle has started a website where people are taught about trolling through an online game project (Yle Newslab, 2019).

The public can discuss their political opinions on online forums, Facebook and other network sites, together with arguments for or against a particular position. Herkman (2011: 80–81) calls this counter politics, which is public activity undertaken outside official politics. These topics can turn into real politics if the public pressure becomes big enough and the politicians include the issues into their agenda. For example, the Finnish political party Movement Now led by Hjallis Harkimo, set one of their objectives to be an online discussion forum where citizens could voice their opinions on political issues, and in this way guide their representatives in political decision-making. In its official communication, Movement Now emphasizes that it is not a political party, but rather a movement of the people (Harrinvirta, 2019). This rhetoric aims to present the connection of the movement with people, so breaking away from traditional politics and power structures.

More professional marketing techniques have been used in campaigning since the 1960s, but the increased importance of media has placed an importance on professionalism, strategic planning, and the standardization of practices. Cornfield (2004) places 'the message' at the center of professional campaigning. However, with the increased personalization of politics, personalities and

individual politicians tend to dominate over messages, since they are also communicating the messages. On the other hand, the possibilities for sizeable public discussion have grown with social media, and new platforms are continuously being created. But regardless of these new platforms, Facebook has stabilized its position as the most used platform both for the politicians and the public.

2.4 Facebook Campaign Pages and Profiles

The Facebook presence and activity of politicians is not self-evident. While many politicians have a Facebook profile, they may not even actively update it themselves, but leave it to their campaign staff. One example of this in the data is the candidate Ben Zyskowitz, whose profile in March 2021, after data collection, was updated to state that the page is managed by the politician's support group. Even though social media exposure for political actors has rapidly increased in importance since the introduction of platforms like Facebook and Twitter that allow for real-time global interaction, there are still popular and well-exposed politicians with no strategic online content. The broadcast media like television, newspapers and even radio, still has a firm ground in political communication, and for example, television campaign debates hold their position in audience statistics. However, strong political brands might be carried through in online discussions, regardless of the presence or absence of the politicians concerned. One example of this in the data is the party leader of the Finns Party, Jussi Halla-aho, who does not have a public Facebook page. However, he has built a strong online presence elsewhere through his blog, Twitter, and a personal Facebook profile (Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 254), and through systemic and strategic online communication, has established himself as one of the vote-pullers in the election campaigns he participates in.

Different platforms have specific profile types, through which users can manage their accounts and content. Politicians and parties use these for different functions, i.e. informing, interaction, calls to vote, calls to participate, self-representation, and topical discussion. Figure 6 shows the opportunities politicians and parties have for platforms, multimodal content, exposure and engagement, and what type of communication can be performed on these platforms. In Facebook, candidates can set up public politician profiles and keep their personal profiles private. This option is often used by celebrities, but also by other brands, such as companies, services, and products. In this case, individuals are often referred to as "followers" on the page instead of "friends". These profiles include multimodal elements, where the page content consists of text, links,

images, photos, videos, connections, and network and personal information (Salonen, Kannasto & Paatelainen, *forthcoming*). Their exposure and engagement occurs through likes, shares, comments, and reactions produced by followers. In Finland, most professional politicians have chosen to maintain a public politician profile page. These are managed continuously, but their nature changes during campaigns so that there is more activity and campaign-related content.

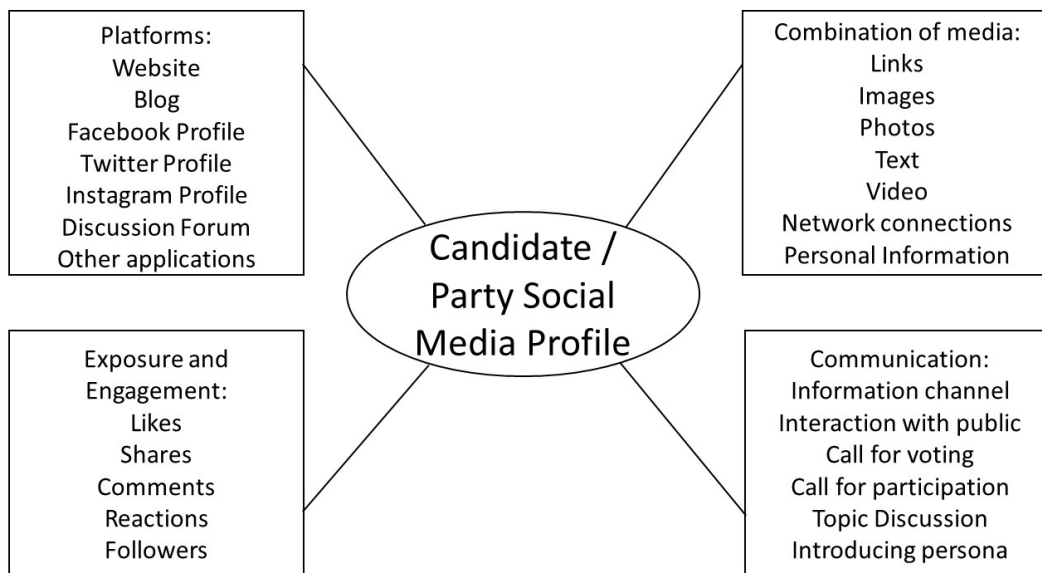


Figure 6. Social media profile of a political party and candidate

According to Taddicken's (2013) study on online self-disclosure, social media applications are dependent on the social relevance that the users see in them. As van Dijck (2013) and Hall and Caton (2017) argue, the control of self-presentation on these platforms can conflict with users, employers, and the platform owners' interests. Users choose a few channels and applications that they focus on. These choices are based on their social environment and personal preferences, and they also enable different types of representations. For example, more visual individuals may turn to Instagram, while Twitter appeals to those who are good with text and sharp messaging (Lee, 2013). This can affect how the persona is viewed. Also, the more focus there is on a specific social media application, the more information is shared. So, the candidates who view Twitter as relevant in their social network and who are focused on Twitter as an application end up sharing a lot more on that application. Taddicken (2013) also concludes that users share more personal and sensitive information when their friends use the same platform/channel. But the focus of her study was on personal profiles instead of the public pages that are analyzed in this study. In these, politicians have

supporters, and for example journalists as their followers, while their friends may be connected with their private profiles (see Reunanen & Harju, 2012: 138).

According to van Dijck (2013) and Enli (2015a), Facebook facilitates personal self-presentation, while, for example, LinkedIn requires a more professional and promotional approach. During their campaigns, through their public pages politicians mobilize and call people to participate in campaign events; call them to vote; post pictures from campaign events, and present arguments related to the topics that are part of their individual or party's agendas. They can also share posts by their fellow candidates, participate in public discussions, or comment on the actions of other candidates. In regard to positive commenting on others, Svensson (2014) calls this public endorsement virtual back-patting. In this way, candidates can manage political communication in platforms by utilizing and promoting each other's exposure, thus benefitting all of the actors in the process. But Laaksonen et al. (2017) again suggest that this type of candidate-to-candidate interaction often takes the form of negative campaigning via social media, where candidates enter into disputes with other candidates and shame their opponents.

In addition to policy messages, politicians can also present their private life by commenting on leisure time activities, showing support for teams or artists, or perhaps involving family and friends in the photos or texts that they share (Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 311–312). But there are visible differences between candidates and their behavior regarding private and intimate exposure. For example, some only portray official pictures on their public profile pages, while some include selfies and describe their family moments. Others start and continue their political messages through their private profiles while others systematically build, together with their PR-agencies, their public politician profile pages completely separate from their personal profile page. However, a wide range of politicians work somewhere between these two extremes with different platforms and content overlapping between their private and professional representations of self.

2.4.1 Facebook as a platform for reaching the public

By 2010 in Finland, it was rare to encounter a 20-30-year old without a Facebook account. With the development of the commercial possibilities and organizations entering the platform, the platform's popularity grew among other age groups. With the introduction of new social networking services, the popularity of Facebook has been declining among young people who view it as too commercial and too middle-aged. This change has been encouraged by new services such as Snapchat, Instagram and TikTok, that have served millennials (those born after 1980) and their interests better. Even though the decline in Facebook's popularity

is visible, it still remains the most popular social media platform, and its power and influence as a tool for communication are undeniable. With almost 2.5 billion global users in 2019, Facebook was the most used social networking site (Statista, 2020). There were about 2 900 000 monthly Facebook users in Finland, with only around 200 000 of them being under-age, so the voting age population with a Facebook account that they use monthly is remarkable (Pönkä, 2019). Facebook also remains widely popular with the +30-year old population, making it a wide-reaching platform, especially in regard to political communication (Strandberg & Borg, 2020: 114).

On Facebook, individuals can roam through two types of representations of people, brands, or organizations, either a private profile or a public page. Each profile is presented as a timeline set chronologically in order of last posts or comments (Fuchs, 2014). Private profile Facebook connections work in the form of friend requests and acceptances. Users can also set up their private profiles in multiple ways; open, partly open, or entirely closed. The privacy settings allow users to decide whether they can be found on the platform, whether other users can see their content, and define specific groups for friends with different privacy settings. These can be further set to define which photos or posts are shown to which group. However, the user rules allocate much power to the company to exploit the content of users, for example, in terms of photo rights. These user agreements also restrict the communication, to some extent, to the framework set by the company, and this has caused some people to turn away from the platform. Furthermore, personal data is also used for advertisement targeting functions (Beer, 2009).

User-generated content, user behavior, and demographic data are at the center of Facebook's business model (Fuchs, 2014). Not all users are aware of these functions, nor do they understand the logic of the algorithms employed, which is also the company's biggest secret (Beer, 2009). Users often tend to sign off on the user guidelines without reading them thoroughly, which results in them not knowing what they have allowed the company to do with their information.

When social media is studied, the essential elements of each platform's business need to be remembered. A major company owns each platform and application (Laaksonen, Matikainen & Tikka, 2013: 14), and delivering revenue functions as their target (Fuchs, 2014). Therefore, data collection based on marketing benefits and targeted advertising is the core business of companies such as Facebook. Different channels on social media offer different properties. Their technical possibilities, together with the group using them form the way they are used. Therefore, the communication possibilities of each channel are different, which also changes the way each channel is used in political campaign communication.

For example, Twitter offers an arena with journalists and politically active participants. Instagram, on the other hand, focusses on pictures and visual material. Facebook is the largest everyday forum for different age groups, and offers possibilities to spread news, write short or long posts, and reach out to people through their own profile pages and different groups that have been founded around, e.g. special interests, work, and regions.

Facebook is a social networking service founded by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004. It was first designed as a service for Harvard students, but by 2006 had become open to everyone over 13 years of age after its introduction to other universities (Brügger, 2015). The United States expansion grew into an international forum, where individuals could connect, post to each other's walls, share pictures and posts about their everyday life, and also connect with brands. The platform proliferated, and with the marketing potential which the company saw, the developers started adding new features, developing communication, and modifying the algorithms. Since 2008, similar to other social networking sites, the focus of the platform became monetizing the activities carried out on the platform through maximizing the data traffic of content and people (Fuchs, 2014). On May 18, 2012, the company held its initial public offering (IPO) with a peak market capitalization of \$ 104 billion (Tangel & Hamilton, 2012), adding pressure to bring even more profit to investors through its advertising functions. This changed the architecture of the platform, and shifted its focus towards storytelling and narrative self-presentation, for which the platform served as a tool (van Dijck, 2013). In so doing, this created an attention economy focusing on brands, and turned data (especially information about personal preferences manifesting through social media behavior) into capital.

In online communication, the role of Facebook is conflicting. It has been subject to criticism in several controversies. The Cambridge Analytica Data Scandal in 2018 involved the data of millions of Facebook users' friends being collected for targeting political marketing, without the consent of the users (Chan, 2019; Kreiss & McGregor, 2019; Metcalf & Fiesler, 2018). Data was also collected from the friends of those participating who had given their consent. The case went to trial, and the CEO Mark Zuckerberg was questioned in front of Congress. Facebook later made several reforms and applied the EU's GDPR to all operational areas of the member states. They also established Social Science One (2021) to support research on the platform. But regardless of the scandal, Facebook's revenue continued to rise in the long-term, but movement against the company grew. Cases of political manipulation have also been raised in major political cases such as the 2016 US Presidential Elections (Linville & Warren, 2020; Linville et al., 2019), inviting more criticism to the platform. In addition to this, harmful content, fake

news, self-esteem issues, and other mental health topics are often attached to the list of criticism concerning Facebook.

Facebook is easily accessible, both to political candidates and the public. However, gaining followers on Facebook is easier for candidates with an already established and considerable exposure. More active and dominant political actors also have more content to work with on content-demanding forums such as Facebook (Lev-On & Haleva-Amir, 2016). Strandberg and Borg (2020: 107) view it as a useful forum for political influence for those constituents who are seeking social connections from social media. However, for news and information content, its value has been debated. Boukes (2019) argues that more frequent Facebook usage causes a decline in knowledge acquisition, while the effect is reversed with Twitter usage. This effect was seen to be even more substantial with those who had no political interest, which widens the knowledge gap. Also, van Erkel and Van Aelst (2020) conclude a negative correlation between political knowledge and following the news on Facebook, and Van Dalen et al. (2015) point out that the content regarding political topic issues is so far limited on the platform.

In online political communication, campaigns are run, and politicians share information and promote themselves. In this additional and parallel public sphere (see Habermas, 1989; Lagos, Coopman & Tomhaave, 2013), citizens discuss and assess the candidates and topic issues, but not without the political actors, who control their own profiles. Political opinions form, persuasion and argumentation is central, and personalities are built through and in interaction with the public. Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 208) call this a *privlic* or private-public space. This term is suitable for platforms such as Facebook where usernames and other types of authentication are required, but the platform is nevertheless accessible to the public. In Facebook, most content is available to its users, even though some are limited to specific groups based on privacy settings that the users define. Ridell (2011: 18) divides the content production to inner and outer publics, based on whether the content is meant for a more secluded group of friends or the wide public.

In the Finnish parliamentary election of 2015, Facebook was mainly used for formal advertising and campaign trail updates, rather than sharing political topic messages (Nelimarkka et al., 2020). However, candidates found it challenging to state opinions or participate in discussions on Facebook (Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 309–310). A similar reluctance to engage with Facebook activity and its forced feel for politicians has previously been reported by Reunanen and Harju (2012: 135). Therefore, dialogue and interaction are elements that are often lacking from the Facebook communication of politicians. Nelimarkka et al. (2020) suggest that

candidates who are reluctant to participate in the societal discussion should actually refrain from Twitter and turn to Facebook, which is more traditional as a campaign platform. Even though many studies have concluded that most candidates use social media channels like Twitter and Facebook mostly for one-way information sharing (e.g. Graham et al., 2013; Farkas & Schwartz, 2018), by browsing through political profile pages and discussions under political issue related hashtags, it is possible to recognize patterns of interaction between the public and politicians.

Mattila et al. (2020: 61–63) conclude that in the election of 2019, candidates estimated Facebook as their most important campaigning platform, where over two-thirds of the candidates valued it either as ‘most important’ or as ‘very important’ for their campaign communications. Only 8 % of the candidates did not include Facebook in their campaign platforms. In their analysis, the researchers also found that a lack of a digital campaign produced a bad campaign result, and a versatile combination of traditional and digital campaign communication and a focused digital campaign resulted in a better likelihood to get enough votes to get into parliament. It was also seen that candidates who were already in parliament were executing more versatile campaign communications than their contenders.

In the 2019 election, 26 % of the Finnish constituents used social media to follow election communication (Strandberg & Borg, 2020: 112–113). Simultaneously, candidate selection engines and websites for broadcasting companies were considered as the most important information sources. The same year in the US, 69% of the voting-age population were seen to use Facebook (Pew Research Center, 2019). In Finland in 2015, Facebook was the most popular social media platform, with 56% of Finnish people using it (Yleisradio, 2015). Even though no research has been conducted on how many people in Finland follow campaigns particularly through Facebook, the parties and candidates have noted its significance. Most candidates have pages on Facebook, and most of them actively communicate there. Furthermore, 82% of voters under the age of 25 years regard social media as an important factor in their voting decisions (Strandberg & Borg, 2020: 115), and this should be considered when planning campaign communications for that particular demographic sector.

Facebook cannot be approached only as a platform for communication. The logic used by Facebook can also be regarded as an organizational and individual tool for strategic communication practices. Studies like that of Blegind Jensen and Dyrby (2013) suggest that political parties can benefit greatly in their vote shares from campaigning on social media. Facebook has the largest number of users, but most research in political communication is focused on Twitter (Blank, Graham &

Calvino, 2018; Casero-Ripollés, 2018; Evans et al., 2017; Graham et al., 2013; Jürgens & Jungherr, 2016; Karlsen & Enroljas, 2016; Larsson, 2017; Marttila et al., 2016; Nulty et al., 2016; Obholzer & Daniel, 2016), where research design and data collection have been seen to be more straightforward. This study fills the Finnish Facebook research gap contributing beneficial information for all actors involved in political communication. Because Facebook has become embedded in political life with communication agencies and politicians utilizing it as a tool, its research has become increasingly relevant (Carlisle & Patton, 2013), and even crucial for understanding everyday political communication.

In Facebook research, this study combines what Rogers (2019) refers to as the first and third waves of Facebook studies. The first wave between 2006-2011 focused on studying the presentation of self and the content of profile pages. The current third wave started in 2016, focusing on studying fake news, influencing campaigning, and studies of pages and memes. This study focuses on election campaigns, influencing through posts, the representation of self online, and online discussion, yet the measurements for studying campaign communication in Facebook and the significance of the actions carried out are still undeveloped. The next section focuses on the possibilities of Facebook, and particularly how its affordances determine how political candidates can utilize the platform as a tool for their campaign communication.

2.4.2 Facebook functions

Several functions of Facebook resemble how communication is organized in real life (Ridell, 2011: 18). In Facebook, online discussions happen through groups organized around different interests, such as towns or other communities. Another form is the discussion that forms in posts on the public pages of celebrities, organizations, or other brands. This discussion consists of posts and comments, and also reactions to those posts. The comments are formed either by people following or liking the page (and thereby seeing the content), or by someone getting the post and its comments on their feed through either sponsored post-activity or organic reach which happens when a contact shares, tags or reacts to a post. However, the latter type of reach can be seen as annoying because people see content that they have not chosen to see, for example by liking or following the page.

As Bossetta (2018) states, each platform has unique functions and algorithms, so campaigning strategies must be planned accordingly. The analysis on the US 2016 election by Bossetta declares Facebook as "most attractive social media for political campaigns on account of several architectural design features." Facebook allows

several functions like hyperlinking, multitype content, mobilizing audiences, and an open network structure with possibilities for efficient resource allocation. This, according to Ridell (2011: 227), creates a double role for its users where they are both interactors and performers in the wide publicity of the platform.

In this study, affordance theory is applied with the focus on factors that serve the candidates as tools. Blegind Jensen and Dyrby (2013) have recognized three factors that can be regarded as Facebook affordances for political parties. These are the promotion and facilitation of direct communication, expressing authenticity based on the informality of the platform, and building interaction and participation with the dynamic interaction and relationship of constituents and parties. Because the application of affordances in this study requires an introduction to brands, these will be combined and explained in chapter 3.4. There, I will present a version modified for this study from the party-focused model by Blegind Jensen and Dyrby (2013) for affordances, in order to present Facebook affordances for politicians' personal brands. However, here, I will briefly present the basic functions that can be used for candidate-public interaction in Facebook.

Before Facebook, there were several popular discussion forums. In Finland, one of the most popular in terms of user and post numbers was Suomi24. However, its site engagement with people has changed, and in 2018, while people still visit the site (possibly from search engines), they do not actively follow and post there (Suominen, Saarikoski & Vaahensalo, 2019: 14). This type of behavior also fits well with how Facebook works. Newsfeed rolls down, comments are seen, maybe a reaction is given, but only a limited number of users engage in actual long discussions. However, some participate in lengthy debates through different groups or even on individual posts shared by users. More often, though, a user might post a comment, and never come back to the discussion to follow the reactions or replies. As a further consideration, this non-chronological archive is not organized by topic, and a changing layout offers challenges to carrying out research on Facebook discussions (Suominen, Saarikoski & Vaahensalo, 2019: 200), along with the non-conversative nature of the comment threads. The users can also engage with Facebook posts by reacting through reactions, comments, and shares. But clearly they have different motives for engaging with a particular candidate or their posts (Gerodimus & Justinussen, 2015), and that engagement depends on the general political attitude of the individual, their approach to social media, the general context of a specific message, and the current context such as the mood or personal issues of the constituent.

The post reactions available in Facebook during data collection were the “like”, “love”, “amazement”/“wow”, “laughter”, “sad face”, and “anger” icons. However, these change from time to time. Hayes, Carr and Wohn (2016) consider these as single click cues that users can utilize to express both their relation and feeling to both the sender of the message and the content. This refers to the easy and fast way of communication that these reaction buttons allow. Reactions can encourage wider communication since it is easier to click a reaction instead of typing a message, mainly since many use Facebook on a mobile device with no physical keyboard. However, these reactions can easily cause misinterpretations because, for example, laughter (:D) as a reaction is used for different situations, such as when someone is told they are being really funny, when someone is reacted to for being ridiculous, or when someone wants to express more considerable happiness than a basic smile (☺).

Campaign discussions on Facebook are organized according to the various possibilities of the platform. There are groups devoted to political discussion or particular parties, for example, the support groups of candidates. Also, during elections, different groups organized around hobbies or lifestyle get their fair share of public campaign discussion, unless the group has limited politics out of its topics for discussion. Even in this case, moderation is often needed with the electorate seeking outlets to question, vent, and comment on election issues and candidates. However, these closed groups are often limited from a research perspective because of privacy settings and ethical considerations. Therefore, one way to research and understand online discussions is to look at the discussions forming on public pages and their comment threads, as in this study.

For companies, public people, and even products and brands, Facebook has the function of public pages. These highlight the performance aspect always present in communication on the platform (Ridell, 2011: 18). In political communication, parties and candidates have started to use this page-function to promote their political agenda, interact with the public, and support their campaign activities. These pages are the focus of this study. They are free to open and use, but they can also be used with the Facebook marketing functions, where different types of paid ads can be targeted to the public. The pages connect to the public through the follower function, and followers may then be more likely see the page posts on their own feed. This publicity is directly affected by the Facebook algorithm, giving more extensive exposure to posts that receive more comments and reactions. The public react to the posts with comments, shares, and reactions, and these form the campaign discussion or present individual bursts of concern, support, and policy debate. They can also be used as broadcast media topics, and journalists reference them when looking for news during the campaign (Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 310).

Facebook is a relevant example for studying social media comments, because the public page admins cannot disable commenting, so either the page needs to be moderated or left to reveal all of its discussions (Chan, 2018). This promotes the users to express themselves freely, and if there is moderation, they also express possible frustration because users expect full freedom of expression on Facebook.

2.4.3 Facebook Public Page and Feed

Politicians manage their self-representation on Facebook public pages which offer a politician-profile. These are required in case they want to utilize the paid advertising function. Individual campaign pages increase the visibility of candidates and add possibilities to manage their personal brands by choosing what to post and discuss. An example of a politician's page is presented in Figure 7. The figure portrays a profile picture, and when the feed is scrolled down, it reveals posts and their reactions and comments. In the example, a post with several photos in it from the last day of the campaign is visible. This is a typical presentation of the candidate's page to anyone opening it. If a post would show up on the person's newsfeed, it would not include the sidebar with the candidate's photo on the left. Only the latest written comments would be visible under the post, and others could be revealed by clicking the "show more comments" function.

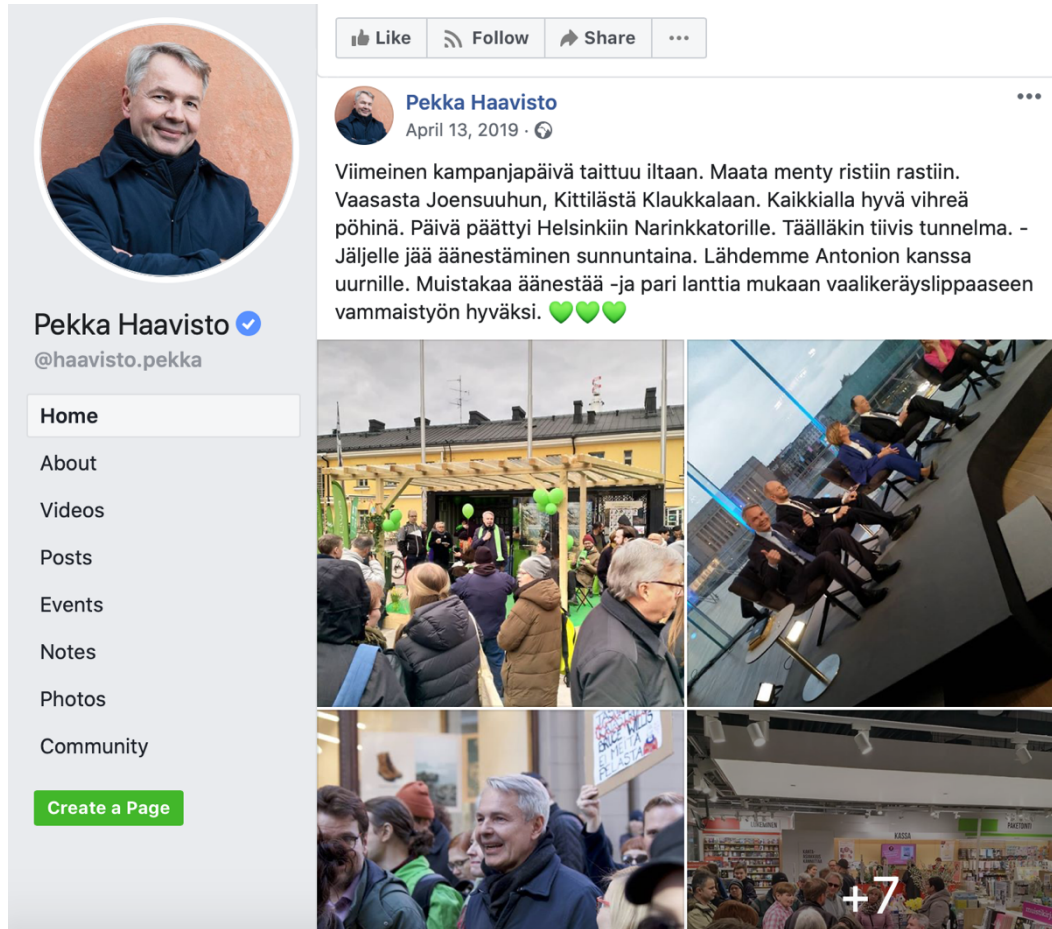
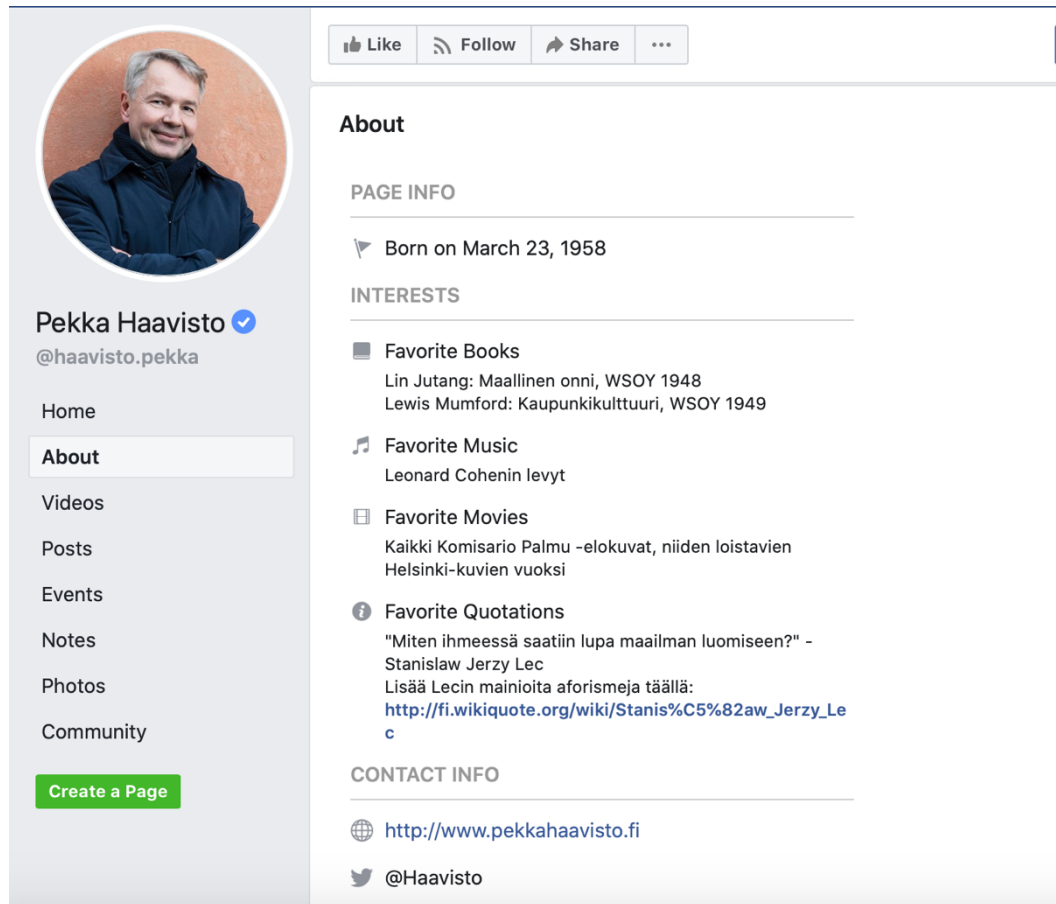


Figure 7. Example page outlook and post from candidate Pekka Haavisto

On the sidebar, there is an 'About' page that can be opened which is presented in Figure 8. It shows what the candidate has decided to disclose in the additional questions that the person can either answer or leave unanswered. For example, these are their birth date, interests like favorite books or television shows, and favorite quotations. The person can also attach their other social media accounts like Twitter and Instagram and their profile names to this page, or include a link to their website. However, the candidate's page feed needs to be viewed as more relevant in terms of personal brand construction, because only a limited number of people click themselves to additional pages, and most of the public only views the posts and latest comments that appear on their newsfeed.



Like Follow Share ...

About

PAGE INFO

Born on March 23, 1958

INTERESTS

Favorite Books
Lin Jutang: Maallinen onni, WSOY 1948
Lewis Mumford: Kaupunkikulttuuri, WSOY 1949

Favorite Music
Leonard Cohenin levyt

Favorite Movies
Kaikki Komisario Palmu -elokuvat, niiden loistavien Helsinki-kuvien vuoksi

Favorite Quotations
"Miten ihmeessä saatiin lupa maailman luomiseen?" - Stanislaw Jerzy Lec
Lisää Lecin mainioita aforismeja täällä:
http://fi.wikiquote.org/wiki/Stanis%C5%82aw_Jerzy_Lec

CONTACT INFO

<http://www.pekkahaavisto.fi>

@Haavisto

Home

About

Videos

Posts

Events

Notes

Photos

Community

Create a Page

Figure 8. Example 'About' page of a politician

A social media profile is a collection of different media objects. It is a presentation built of images, personal information, videos, texts, and networks. It shows the person's connections to the environment, their location, attitudes, and interests. These profiles can be very intimate, professional, official, funny, or a combination of everything, depending on the user and their aims in producing content and constructing their personal brand online. But regardless of what elements it includes, it is a channel and a context-specific representation managed by the individual or other people selected for the task. However, there are connections, people commenting and engaging with the profile, that affect and add elements. Next, I will explain how this persona-representation relates to the concepts of identity, persona and brand in this study, and elaborate on what kind of representations politicians have in social media. I will also characterize the affordances of Facebook for brand construction, as analyzed in this study.

3 POLITICIAN'S BRANDS AND PERSONAS

Politics has always attracted individuals who are charismatic, great communicators (Herkman, 2011: 31; Railo et al., 2016: 321), and possess good social skills. According to Herkman (2011: 15, 97–98), the focus on entertainment and commercialization has reduced the interest in party politics, thereby increasing the attention given to individual politicians. Perna, Niemi and Pitkänen (2009) argue that the importance placed on the image of the politician in the Finnish parliamentary elections of 2007 has added pressure on their self-representation. While the commercialization of politics focuses on faces that sell, the television culture promotes those who have charisma and an appealing appearance (Railo et al., 2016: 319, 321). As outlined in Chapter 2, social media serves the politicians who can communicate, provoke feelings, tell stories, and utilize the technological possibilities at hand (i.e., the affordances of the platform) to their benefit. The significance of online discussion and managing their self-representation on social media platforms is vital for their impression management. Especially, this creates engagement, which as the core of social media, guarantees exposure and visibility for politicians and their ideas.

An individual has an identity that can be seen as a process where the identity transforms and the individual evolves (Giddens, 1991: 5, 1995; Gauntlett 2008: 98–114; Bauman, 2009a). What the individual chooses to present publicly becomes the persona – i.e. the self-representation of the individual, contingent on the aim and dependent on the environment, the audience, and the timing (van Dijck, 2013). When that persona is represented with an idea of a 'sellable self' constructed for the public, the persona represents this individual's personal brand. This idea is expanded on in this chapter.

My approach to the concept of personal brand and its connection with the ideas of persona and identity is presented in Figure 9. The personal brand of a politician is understood in this study as the colloquial term used for politician's persona – especially their public self-representation with a focus on Facebook as platform for its construction. A brand is an especially fitting term when describing a situation where active social selling and influencing in social media is performed, for example during political campaigns. Figure 9 shows how identity forms a base for different representations of the persona. From these, its subcategories such as online persona and political online persona emerge. A politician's online persona specifies their professional role and can be conceptualized as a subcategory of online persona and persona, which stem from online identity and identity.

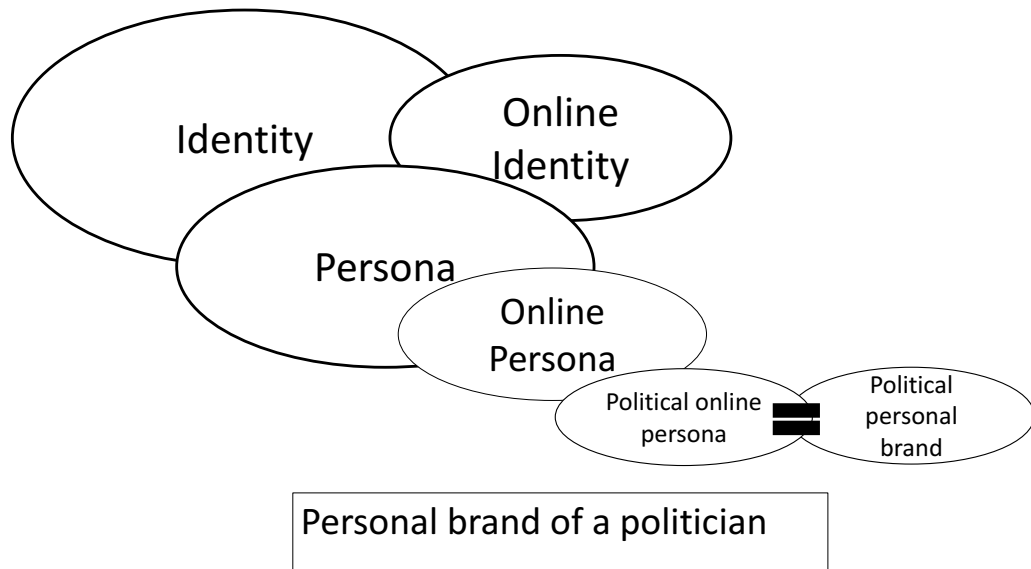


Figure 9. Personal brand of a politician in relation to persona and identity

Since the knowledge surrounding the concept of a politician's personal brand and the research related to it is limited, I have explored a variety of disciplines, drawing from concepts related to identity, so as to get an idea of what a politician's personal brand is, and how it can be characterized, researched, and evaluated. This chapter follows my steps for this. I start from the concept of identity in section 3.1, outlining how identity as a concept and the significance of identity have changed. As several works published before 2010 refer to identity even when discussing public representations and other ideas more relevant with persona, my discussion between these terms and my own concept formation moves between the two terms. In section 3.2 I continue to a more precise ideas of a political persona and a publicly presented self, where I root this study to persona studies, a relatively young yet important research field due to the growing importance of self-representation. In section 3.3 I discuss personal brand in relation to politicians and their challenges in defining the private while having such a public role in society. The dimensions of private and public in relation to a politician's persona and the public nature of their roles are explained, together with a discussion of how this connects to celebrity and added recognition. Section 3.5 outlines how these concepts are used in this study.

3.1 Identity as a Base for Persona

Identity forms the base for and from which the construction of persona starts. For Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 31–34), the concept of persona is related to how in sociology, Goffman (1959: 14–16, 27) has discussed the "presentation of

self". The construction of the persona can be seen in Goffman's explanation of impression management. Similar ideas about identity being a production up for choice and debate are forwarded by Giddens (1995), and the concerns of a loss of authenticity by Melosik (2009) also describe persona, rather than identity. Chapter 2 considered how this impression management takes place in online discussions and on different platforms. Particularly, social rituals are part of impression management, referring to "what is given and what is given off" as a means of presenting self, thereby constructing an identity. With the expression of 'giving', Goffman (1959) refers to communication in a narrow sense of verbal symbols or their substitutes, whereas 'giving off' describes additional non-verbal misinformation, things, and actions that are not expected. These are reflections of status-related acts of communication.

The philosophical foundations for self as a thinking identity (see Descartes, 1994) continue in all developments about the concept of self, and Miller (2011: 160) reminds us that self is both temporary and continuously forming. Identities are also continually formed (Isin & Wood, 1999) and renegotiated, thus making them process-like (Butler, 1999). When enacted through performativity in public, the private self becomes a persona, which is also affected by interaction with others over time. Persona can, to some extent, be reshaped through changing actions or choosing what to share publicly (Moje & Luke, 2009; Enli & Skogerbø, 2013), even changing platforms, and can thus be managed in the way Goffman (1959) suggests. Whether we consider the self as something attached to the physical body or as something built on an image, how one expresses themselves is typically a conscious decision, but can also happen accidentally.

Another essential notion on identity is argued by Hall (1994), in that to have something as an identity, an opposite is needed. So for example, to call someone old, a notion of young is needed. Identity is often constructed through separating oneself from others by noting contrasts and differences (Melchior, 2009: 105–113; Miller, 2011: 160; Paulgaard, 2001; Szkudlarek, 2009: 87–103). Distinguishing oneself from others, noting differences, and separating one's identity in terms of personal, social, and cultural terms is central to the concept of identity. This distinguished self is consequently a base for the notion that brands have something that separates them from other similar actors.

Different roles and identities compose the several 'selves' of an individual. Identity has been used to being defined by a few primary attributes like nationality, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, gender, and familial (Smith, 1991; Smith, 2009). However, these are starting to diminish and have even become difficult to define as citizens in the global world refuse to be defined by them, thus challenging their

traditional contexts. Furthermore, for example, citizenship does not necessarily define an individual's culture, so identity is thus relational, and the idea of fixed identities has been abandoned (Isin & Wood, 1999: 17, 160–161). To Gauntlett (2008), there is no definitive list of things constructing an individual's identity, and preferable is a set of "biographical narratives" that can include gender, sexuality, lifestyle, body and agency, intimacy and relationships, life story, personality, or traditions. However, as Gauntlett argues, many of these are changing, and their significance is declining. Isin and Wood (1999) also support the transforming nature of identity. To them, identity is rather a transforming construct of an individual's values, communities, and groups they belong to, but at the same time, there are specific permanent and stable attributes and qualities constructing the identity. In this way, identity is similarly affected by the environment as is persona. Thus, it is not just public representations that may fluctuate, but also identities.

The challenge with identity is that it is an individualistic concept, purely dependent on interpretation and emphasizing things placed in it by the individual. For example, national identity can refer to a political community, social space, patria, citizenship, shared values, traditions, or a common economy (Smith, 2001: 9–14). Definition through many of these latter attributes is becoming more challenging, with the growth of multicultural countries and global economies. Gauntlett (2002: 13) also reminds us that identities are "complex constructions". For example, gender is only one aspect of a sense of self or identity, and some of these aspects have more significance than others. For example, ethnicity may or may not be more relevant than national identity. Changes in external circumstances and factors like education, residency, cultural background, access to communications, or social status, might change a particular aspect's emphasis or influence. Gauntlett (2002) suggests that the physical body is less significant to identity, however, this may also have changed, as for example in regard to personal trainers, models, or others whose professional identity, physical performance, and outlook are the base of their persona. Ultimately, it can be said that our perception of someone's identity is highly dependent on the persona they decide to construct and their impression management. Thus, presentation and appearance do in fact matter, and they create perceptions regardless of whatever else there is.

Skeggs (2008) positions identity as "a category, a social position, and an affect". While identity is always constructed through history, geography, biology, institutions, memory, fantasies, power, status, and religion, identity primarily lasts through time and space and is self-sustaining. People organize their cultural material based on their environment, their individual understanding, and the different needs set by society and themselves (Kempny & Jawlowska, 2002: 7,

360). Identities stretch through all areas of life, which gives them much power in societies. Nguyet Erni (2008: 193–197) makes a compelling case by separating the discussion of identities from theorization, with the explanation that they should be considered in terms of operation/operationality as they are actual and actualizing entities. Leading from this, when trying to conceptualize identities; identities should not be considered as a set of categories like gender, class, ethnicity, but instead turned to as a result of an active and acknowledged process of giving meaning, valuing self, and representing an individual and their relation to others.

Entrepreneurs use their identities and personalities to brand themselves and their products as more vital (Iso-Berg 2015). Identities are used for branding because they help to connect with customers, and in politics, identities can help to relate to constituents, show the human aspect in the middle of political issues, and create personal value for the voter.

The roles and power of celebrities and fans have changed with the rise of new types of celebrities. These recognized personas or reality television stars may come from modest backgrounds and handle the "celebrity game" through their authentic personas, instead of ones built by a team of professionals or a recording studio team. Lin (2008: 1, 3) suggests that the rich and the powerful dominate the identity game as they have more capital to maintain advantageous identities. Lin (2008: 3) describes identity work as "Linguistic, discursive, institutional, and cultural processes of fixing/essentializing identities and subject positions while constructing multiple, mobile, fluid, favorable identities and subject positions for selves, attributing and reproducing privilege and positive (moral) values to these subject positions." In addition to their nature as processes, personas are tied with their collectives, together with the way they are negotiated and their context. But instead of the identity game that Lin's "constructed identities" play in these public representations; when considering the well-known political individuals who also have an audience creating meanings and constructing their personas, we should perhaps turn to examining persona and impression management.

3.1.1 Identity as a process

Elliot and du Gay (2009) turn the focus towards changes in the notion of identity. They describe 'Postmodern identity' as most widely used in social theory, referring to phenomena like the crisis of masculinity and the increased use of mobile phones. For them, this "Involves the deconstruction and reconstruction of the self as fluid, fragmented, discontinuous, decentered, dispersed, culturally eclectic, hybrid-like...". The postmodern definition of identity takes it closer to the definition of persona and the approach taken in this study. As described by

Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 31), the term persona identity seems fitting to define this action as a performance, including various scripted selves dependent on environment and motives, and almost like role-play. Identity may still be more constant, but the public representations it manifests in different roles and environments – the persona – gives opportunities to build a new self from scratch, to hide the old, and offer new representations for each new situation and time. Because identity work is a process, these alterations in the construction of persona are easier to understand. While an individual constructs their concept of self continually as a process, its public representation also becomes a process. Bauman (2009a) highlights this decentralized nature of self, and describes identity as "episodic and brittle".

The term identity refers to identification, and to the process of how people see themselves and portray themselves to others (Aresta et al., 2015), and to the concept people construct of themselves. Bauman (2009b: 19–30) also uses the term identification instead of referring to identity when discussing changes in attitudes. Changes necessarily require cutting some ties, and this plurality of roles can be defined by separating roles and identities: "Identities organize the meaning while roles organize the functions." (Kempny & Jawlowska, 2002: 7) Identity is often defined in reference to three groups: individuals, collectives, and the relationship between the two (Giddens, 1995: 7–10). In their own political groups, politicians are different from when at home with their family and close friends. There can be overlapping similarities, but different things are given more emphasis, and different attributes are more present. Thus, different personas show different elements of their identities and are designed for presenting intended roles, like that of a professional politician. Personas can also develop their values and opinions when they learn more about issues and build new networks, and this type of transformation in perspective and emphasis also highlights the idea of the fluidity of identities.

If identities are viewed as a process, they are more transformable and changing than ever before (Gauntlett, 2008: 98–114, 245–247). In representation, they may vary across platforms. Their nature becomes more layer-like, as online, there is a digital archive of an individual's actions which can be accessed at any time (boyd, 2014: 33) when identities are turned into personas in and for public negotiation. The conversations stay present, so there is a record of opinions. For example, a politician who changes their political party or re-determines their values is always shutting something away or turning their back on something else. This kind of inclusion and exclusion is essential in the construction of personas and brands. With the choice to represent something comes the choice of not to represent something else. This also supports Hall's (1994) notion of the requirement for

opposites. In relation to this, Bauman (2009b: 19–30) reminds us that while identity involves private choices, it can soon become tied with collective groups and so become a master of many.

Identities are often valued and fixed in collectives, but individuals have a strong aim to change and move forward. This supports Beck, Giddens and Lash's (2009) view on constantly re-envisioning and re-negotiating self. This leads to disposable identities rather than the layer formation that was first described. However, the archive-nature of social media content challenges this. The fluidity of identities and the decline of tradition are evident with mass media as the driving force of change, and with increased communication and knowledge, there is more space for a greater diversity of identities (Gauntlett, 2002: 247–249; Kempny & Jawlowska, 2002: 3). People have and make more available choices for their self-representations. Understanding identity and later performing it as a persona has become an acknowledged act requiring planning and execution, based on the analysis of the surrounding world. As Gauntlett (2002) suggests: "your life is a project", and Giddens (1991: 5) also proposes the individual self as a 'reflexive project', where continuous reflection and revision exist. Thus, multiple roles are played and these can even be played at the same time.

Bauman's (2009a: 1–12) idea of choosing identities and being ready for new choices describes the professional self that politicians need to represent. As Miller (2011: 161) reminds us, identities are "contingent upon time and place". Their relational nature (Ibid. 161) comes specifically true in online representations which are often less spontaneous. Here, the ideas are disposable, values can be replaced, and the persona can be negotiated multiple times and in multiple ways. This negotiation is a choice (Wood & Smith, 2005: 51–57, 60), and lately, for example, party identities have been changed as several politicians have switched parties. The core identity of a politician is thus not defined by the party. Rather, party identification is representative, and thus party identifications are disposable because they can be adopted through other party memberships. Therefore, it is not specifically an identity question. So should identity be understood as a stable core of self that does not transform but only consists of things that stay constant, regardless of whether the person changes their values, looks, nationality, gender, etc., and does that sort of constant exist? O'Brien (2009: 33–39) contests the idea of fluidity with cultural concept examples, offering stereotypes that stay regardless of changing times, such as an example of Irishmen considered as drinking heavily no matter what they do. Some identities stick, and a Finnish example of this would be the idea of silent Finns who do not show emotion.

In the public presentation of identities, communication is vital. Identities are represented, negotiated, and valued through communicative acts. A persona is always layered, and new presentations build on top of former ones. A new approach to the subject is the effect of interaction. Identity building can happen "through the interaction of language, culture, history, and territory, with the ability of integration, cooperation, and networking" (Tubella, 2004: 385–398). A politician can almost seem to be different depending on which context he is viewed in, because as Goffman (1989) states, identities are dependent on the surrounding time and place. Politicians build their personas on already existing party values and symbolism, so certain expectations are based on the parties they belong to. Also, they are influenced by media because it naturally influences and changes our perception of ourselves and others. While people do not necessarily think that media influences their own identities, it nevertheless provides narrative frames and stories that are used as mirrors and platforms for constructing identities and later personas (Gauntlett, 2008: 253–268).

Initially, Frosh and Baraitser (2009: 158–168) view identity as a concept referring to the physical body and parental identification, but also turn the focus to new contexts and experiences, adding an emotional aspect to the sense of identity. Paulgaard (2001) suggests that the online context changes the idea of identity belonging to a particular place, because online, people have total freedom to negotiate their identity into a persona independent from physical boundaries. According to van Dijck, Powell and de Waal (2018), platforms like Facebook support having one transparent identity that is negotiated online through collectives. In this, identity is expressed collectively through self-presentations and interpretation, thus forming a persona.

When describing identity as an ongoing process (Miller, 2011: 161), a more appropriate concept is that of persona which describes the planned and context-adjusted nature of the process-like self. Even though personas can adjust to different contexts, as brands, these public representations require stability because they are effectually customer promises. Therefore, while they negotiate meanings, they are ultimately constructed by finding constant elements. Unlike personas, identities are ascribed, not chosen. Moreover, they are fundamental to the subject rather than something that can be spontaneously changed and decided, at least in the way that individuals perceive them. This contradicts viewing identity as a performance (Goffman, 1959; Marshall, Moore & Barbour, 2020: 31), hence steering the idea of being chosen and describing what can be explained with the term persona. When we consider public arenas, instead of focusing on identity as a process, we should consider as representations of self which are always

reassessed and represented. In the online context, they are also referred to as online identity.

3.1.2 Online identity as self-determined representation

The dynamic nature of the online world and especially social media challenges campaign activities to find the right channels and ways to get their message through (boyd 2014: 39–40). Papacharissi (2013: 207–218) views technology as a stage for the interaction where individuals transform and present themselves to multiple audiences. This "identity negotiation" is therefore simply staged in a new setting when it happens online. The ideas of boyd (2014: 49) set these negotiations to profiles where online personas are negotiated. In these, self-representation can vary depending on the context and the imagined audience, thus creating a collection of self-representations. The permanent nature of digital prints like online discussions needs to be remembered when personas are re-negotiated, as content is easy to find and copy. Different channels online are used differently, but certain principles stay the same (boyd, 2014: 5, 38). Our communication in real life remains within a small circle in most life interactions, and it is not saved in any files. But this changes online. Our actions are not only saved, but they can be looked at repeatedly even decades after the communication has taken place. This changes the way our identities are both formed and looked at. Our opinions, statements, participation and expertise follow us, and construct our identities. For a politician, this means that political ideas are tougher to change, and there is a possibility of older material reaching the electorate, rather than current opinions getting through.

The self can be different when looking at reality, hopes, the past, and the future (Arestra et al., 2015). The elements constructing one's online identity are permanent, but the value and weight placed upon them change as new elements come to the picture (boyd, 2014: 33). Previous statements, acts and networks influence the current perceptions, and both the past and the present influence the future. Given that persona negotiation can be done for specific purposes (like campaigning), it is modeled depending on the instrument in use, the targeted audience, and the specific aim (Keipi et al., 2017: 19, 22, 29). Thus, the comment of boyd (2014: 40) of "Separate context - and thus a separate digital persona" refers to this dilemma of even changing personas, and how they are negotiated on different platforms and for different contexts.

Feher (2015) uses the term self-determined digital identity when referring to online identity. This term is apt, and online, individuals choose which elements of their identity to share, hide and emphasize (Aresta et al., 2015; Weinstein, 2014)

even more than in reality. So, users in fact determine their own identity in this context, thus defining their self-representation. However, as described in section 2.3, even though online identity can be controlled and carried through by one's actions, like blogging and social networking, this is not always the case since, especially with celebrities and politicians, the audience is also an actor in the process (Kannasto, 2020). People and their actions are discussed online in several networks, and this discussion subsequently affects the way others view them (see Dutta, 2010; Harris & Rae, 2011; Labrecque, Markos & Milne, 2011). But this has more to do with their brand or the actively sold self, which some argue that self-representation and the publicly presented self always is. This is further deliberated in the analysis by including the audience as an active actor in the process of persona negotiation.

In some contexts, online identity is referred to as concerning online privacy through, for example, the issue of identity theft. However, this context falls outside the bounds of this study. Here, online identity is understood as the representation of self that one creates collectively through online networks with different actions online, *sic.*, the digital representation of a person (Aresta et al., 2013; Milne, Rohm & Bahl, 2004; Williams, 2016; Wood & Smith, 2005: 68–72).

In relation to a text-based virtual world and peoples' embodiment in text, Sundén (2003) argued people are "typing themselves into being". Sundén's idea describes the difference between an individual's online and real-life self, and could be applied to online identities. This separation is even more manifested in the difference between a private Facebook profile versus a public page. Followers can get a sense of friendship with the page owner by getting their content first and having this direct route to them, thus forgetting that a page is a strategically constructed public representation of self, and not the private person. Östman (2015) also discusses this through the concept of life-publishing, as a situation where individuals use several platforms to build their identities and make their private life public. These are constructed for an audience, but invisible audiences cannot all be considered (Aresta et al., 2015; boyd, 2008). Warnick (2007) and Thumim (2012) also remind us that this is rarely spontaneous nor completely honest in the case of politicians, and seldom an independent action.

Individuals can create and transform their online identities with their choice of online platforms and the possibilities they offer (Aresta et al., 2015). This is not necessarily impossible for an unknown person. However, in the case of celebrities and politicians, their real characters need to be similar to their online identities as a lot of their activity also happens in real life and is dependent on their genuine identities. A more extensive reinvention of self is also challenged by a previous

public representation of self. In real life, identity is the actual view of the person himself (Gauntlett, 2008: 100), but online, that truth is even more about what is perceived and negotiated by others. Also, online the body or physical features as part of an individual's identity can be meaningless (Shvets, Luzyanina & Maximova, 2001). Researching text-based internet before the WWW, Turkle (1995) argues that on the internet, people create their presence consciously, and often in this creation process, they consciously make themselves better. Chatrooms and websites allow representations through avatars, as well as various styles of communication. Before social media, in 2005, Wood and Smith (2005) viewed control as the main motivation for adopting roles online. But after the popularity of fluctuating representations, a call for authenticity grew online. However, alternative online roles and representations still take place in online roleplay, where avatars are used in virtual game environments. These avatars are, in practice, experiments of identity, and stories rather than presentations of identity, so reinforcing the earlier view of Turkle (1995: 180) who fittingly calls the internet "a significant social laboratory for experimenting with the constructions and reconstructions of self".

When the public or other media create the presence, the representations are not necessarily better versions. Online identity is thus a collection of layers that can be recreated continuously, without the previous layers losing their existence. This archive nature of online content is also noted by boyd (2014: 33), and online identity is the sum of all the content available online of the individual, which can be created by the individual, other media and institutions, or in public discussion by private people. This can further be conscious or accidental, so avoiding creating some kind of an online identity nowadays is nearly impossible (Aresta et al., 2015).

As I described the role of the public in disrupting communications in section 2.2.2 with regard to social media, this element of control becomes partly lost. Citizen participation has become a norm (boyd, 2014: 7), so complete control of the representation of a politician from above is no longer possible. The discussion and content produced by private people and institutions add material to the politician's online identity. Online, individuals have more chances to highlight appealing traits and hide traits they do not want to appear in their persona at a given moment. However, it is unclear whether the online world provides this possibility for public personas, and public figures who are well known, such as politicians, may not have a similar degree of control as their roles and images are often constructed by others.

Media and mediated negotiations of persona are always choices of what is presented, but that choice is not always entirely up to the individual in question.

As Turkle (1995) and Aboujade (2001: 33) suggest, it simply gives an outlet for ideas and persona negotiation. With interesting public personas, it is more than them participating in the persona negotiation through forum discussion, and involves the comments, shares, and reactions on different profile and fan pages that come from other people. This way, not only what the person views of themselves, but also what others view of them becomes negotiated. Actual representations, the persona, and constructions of brand need to withstand time, publicity, and opposition. Persona negotiation online also needs to be coherent, even though multiple personas are affected by their network (Turkle, 1995: 255, 258). The social world is therefore not a constant operating in small networks, and a global context and broad public debate are constantly possible with social media. In this study, I argue that due to social media elements, those associations and connections are currently active actors in the construction of personas, and perhaps disturbingly, it matters who follows who, who comments or likes and what and they react to, and who shares our posts and which ones.

Figure 10 presents the online identity models modified from Fraser (2009). Online identity can be personal, professional or organizational, and these can overlap. They can also be represented in different platforms, meant for specific contexts. As Figure 10 shows, personal online identities are used for social network sites connecting with friends and family through sharing photos and messaging. In these personal profiles, more private content is shared, thus making privacy a vital concern. Professional online identities are used to record and promote work achievements, create publicity for professional elements, and connect with colleagues and professional networks. When political candidates or their offices perform campaign communication online, they build both their professional identities and their brands. Sometimes this process is acknowledged and strategic, but especially early-career politicians may not have earlier considered online communication as part of their brand construction. The politician's persona is also negotiated on various platforms, and while candidates have chosen the channels they use, the public also choose the channels they use for political communication. Especially given the span and reach of online platforms and identities, representation and reputation are essential issues to consider because people are building their professional image. Lastly, online organizational identities are used to perform work duties through different channels. These can be public or within the organization, and are used within the organization's context.

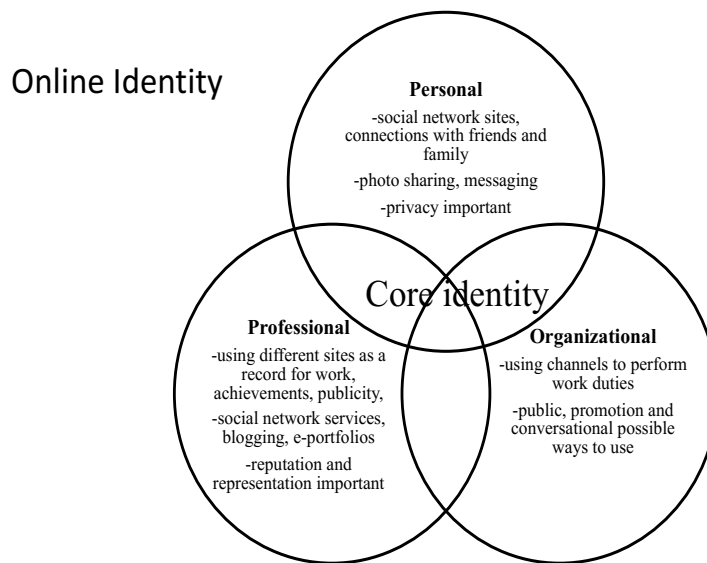


Figure 10. Online identity models (modified from Fraser, 2009).

Different profiles and their types can vary. In the case of politicians and their online personas they develop as political personal brands, so in this research, the focus is placed on professional online representation (Fraser, 2009). As Figure 10 shows, politicians' online identities concern their reputation. Thus, they use different platforms for negotiating their political achievements, and work and build their professional networks. This does not mean that the only things referring to in a politician's online identity would be political opinions or their role as a political candidate, and political identities are constructs of an individual. However, during a campaign, candidates are always discussed as political candidates. Therefore all discussion concerning them can be viewed as part of their professional online representation, meaning it is impossible to distinguish between professional and personal content in relation to politicians. As an example, a politician or some other famous person can have a private profile, maybe even under an alias, and also a public profile. However, if this is the case, it is still nigh on impossible to maintain two completely different representations of self, especially given that private profiles can also become public through screenshots and privacy leaks. People also have their individual styles which carry through these different representations in profiles for separate contexts and uses. Thus, private and professional representations often overlap, and the individual chooses elements from one profile to display on the other, while some elements are left to construct only one specific persona. Considering multiple selves, boyd (2014) distinguishes the internalized notion of the self and projected self, where the first refers to the actual self, the identity, and projected self is the self that a

person chooses to share. This projected self is similar to the idea of how persona is defined in this study. This term can also be implied when someone else is constructing the persona. Hence, the politician, the media and the public are all building a projected self of a political person when choosing to publish something and deciding the tone and approach for it.

An overlap of terms is also seen when boyd (2014) discusses the terms self-presentation and self-representation similarly, referring to online identity in her research on the online representations of teenagers. To her, online identity is "online self-expression," and creating profiles online is part of it (boyd, 2014: 30, 49). I use Marshall, Moore and Barbour's (2020) term 'online representations' in this study when referring to these intermediated presentations. Thus, personas are the public representations of self, and this study focuses on them in an online context, specifically Facebook.

To Aresta et al. (2015), the online identity of an individual consists of digital representation, privacy management, and reputation. Digital representation is the content produced relating to the individual, and it consists of all the elements of an online identity. Reputation refers to the individual's intention in building their personal brand, and their motive includes the reasons behind this reputation construct. Content creation is dependent on the audience and their participation and engagement which affects how the content spreads and how much attention it gains. This can affect the way new content is developed and the style in which it is produced. Also, it can affect the online life of the content, meaning that, for example, if a fake media site is not gaining an audience, it might not stay up. All of these elements are interconnected and affect one another.

Lundby (2008: 5) also referred to "self-representational digital stories" as "personal stories, told with the storyteller's own voice. They are representations in the first person." The idea that identities are stories is supported by Lundby's (2008: 9) statement that there is a degree of multimodality in the identity process. However, social media and its functioning logic have turned the focus more towards authentic personas. The negotiation of persona is more about what is revealed publicly, and not necessarily on which story is told. Also, even though false presentations are illegal on platforms, they still exist in the form of fake profiles and bots that were discussed in section 2.2.2. Some platforms allow for a minimal presentation through allowing several profiles, avatars, and unidentifiable usernames. These negotiated personas are normally constructed with a theme and design of web site, dependent on the affordances of the platform, future or imagined professions, hobbies, personal artistic, creative work, life context (pictures, hobbies, jokes, references), referent group styling (favorite band

style, etc.), faith and spiritual search (rare) or different interests. Politicians might even carry distinct types of communication on Twitter rather than on Facebook. However, the present media environment is such that content overlaps between different platforms, and posts can be shared between forums, and also the audience can share content between platforms, increasing the fluidity of communication.

Platform choices also set challenges to individuals due to the logic of the platform. For example, by offering the public page for candidates and declining their opportunity to advertise their campaigns through personal profiles, Facebook forces them to create a presence on a Facebook page. Online, individuals can share distinct ideas of themselves between different channels, profiles, chat rooms, or conversation forums. Bratteteig (2008: 271–281) reminds us that online, there are technological limitations on self-expression, and two-way communication changes the way self-expression is performed. The character limit on Twitter and the interaction with comments, shares and likes on Facebook are examples of this.

An identity is an explanatory view that considers life, actions and influences. Online, general ways in which personality is defined do not exist or are hidden (Shvets, Luzyanina & Maximova, 2001), and this can emphasize the importance of, for example, linguistics or network in constructing an online identity. Donath (1996) states that identity plays a crucial role in understanding and evaluating interaction. Goffman (1959) also showed that information about individuals helps in defining the situation and expectations. However, online, this information is not always the defining factor. Anyone can participate in almost any group or promote individual agendas independent from their role in real life. However, it is possible to argue that this can also happen in reality. When one walks into the middle of a public place, there is not necessarily any information available as to what roles everyone has in terms of profession, social status, nationality, or gender. Aboujade (2001: 20–33) denies the authenticity of e-identity. Regardless of the abandonment of the terminology related to e-life, he describes e-identity as similar to a persona online, reflecting the dynamic process of the individual's social media profiles, networks, actions, and their life as a whole. This is something which is more extensive than its single elements combined, and even transformation or a renegotiation of self-presentation is possible. However, as discussed in section 2.2, these personas also possibly invite negative comments and possible attacks on the person involved.

In the case of politics, the online discussion and reactions often collate with negative commenting and news. Social media has widened the dimension of online discussion, which can also construct brands. As the most popular social

networking site, Facebook offers easy access to these discussions and an engagement with political topics and personas. This can intentionally produce false images, but more often it is about commenting, sharing, liking, and generally discussing, thereby negotiating meanings. oyd (2014: 49), other individuals affect online identities, and that: "Impression management online and off is not just an individual act; it's a social process." Online identities are personas presented in online contexts, and the public discussion online always contributes to the construction of the persona of a politician when referring to them. On Facebook, the algorithm works so that when an individual engages with a post or a page, it gets more exposure. Also, there are no restrictions except for individual moderation of specific pages, as to what kind of meanings are negotiated in and through posts, comments and reactions. This concept of persona negotiation in political campaigns is explained in the next sections.

3.2 Persona – the Public Self

Identity and online identity have been explained in previous sections because they form the base for personas, and the public representations of self. These are supported through the concept of persona offered by Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 2–4). As a young field of research, their first book introduces persona studies as a field where this study partly positions, and I develop their concepts in this study of politician's personas and personal brands. The research on persona studies is limited, and the work has mostly so far been developed by these authors, so this chapter is focused on their introduction to persona studies. They begin from the idea that everyone is producing a public self, a persona, and a separate from identity, every time they are in public or at the "front of stage" as Goffman (1959) describes it. No matter how authentic or genuine, this representation is always a performance and a projection, where somethings are left out, and other things brought up. Shepherd (2005) also supports the idea of a performance as a meaningful approach to personal brands. However, he notes that personal brand construction is the deliberation that happens *before* the performance takes place, while I argue that the process continues *when and after* these persona negotiations take place.

Considering personas in campaigns, what is brought front stage is what is intended to be 'sold' and used to convince the public. As Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 25, 32) argue, personas are constructed and planned, deliberating the audience to whom it is directed, and highlighting the idea of a sellable self which connects with personal brands. Personas are produced and presented public selves that can be different in each context and platform. Also, the traditional idea of

celebrity is a subset of persona, and Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 4) point out that celebrity is connected with the media, while persona as a concept relates to what is private and public.

For persona as understood as a constructed publicly represented self, the mediatized form, digital objects, conscious construction, and collective role are central considerations (Marshall, Moore & Barbour, 2020: 51, 52, 98). Especially, there needs to be a medium or some platform where users can network and negotiate their personas. The actions carried out in these *micro-publics* develop the persona and form the ideas for its construction. While their members may be the same, some people may only be involved with one platform. Therefore, each micro-public and its audience has different types of personas that they are familiar with.

Personas can be created and developed through text, pictures, videos, or other digital objects. The construction is not an accident but more a collection of deliberate actions which are sometimes performed strategically and sometimes in a shorter period of time. However, there is also an element of coincidence with brands, as these publicly represented personas are interpreted in different ways, and their exposure is partly incidental even with strategic communication. However, if each platform is considered a micro-public of its own and as a stage with its own audience, then the persona is not the sum of all these presentations but rather a combination of them (Marshall, Moore & Barbour, 2020: 88). Thus, a persona can be seen as "communal".

While mediatization is central in the representation of self, the concept of persona is more than just a media or online presence. This study focuses on online persona constructed in Facebook, but they can be influenced by representations outside the online world. For example, a politician's performance in a television debate or a speech in a campaign event can be discussed online, so allowing it to become part of the online persona. Persona can also be linked with celebrity, but these two concepts are not synonymous. Last, the individual and collective nature of personas is crucial, and they are negotiated within and as part of collectives. For politicians, these collectives can be parties, different interest groups, social media followers, and any other networks that they are part of.

The word persona's etymology comes from a Latin word meaning the mask worn by actors in the theater (Marshall, Moore & Barbour, 2020: 24–25). This ties the word to "the role, character, avatar, personage, front (Goffman, 1959), and façade". When assessing persona analytically, as with identity, it cannot be analyzed as a constant. It is a developing process where identity is represented publicly through both one's own actions and in a collective. Persona is a production, similar to a

performance, where the public have access to the person. Thus, persona as a word refers to the mask used in these performances (Marshall, Moore & Barbour, 2020: 24). However, these masks may challenge the authenticity of these representations. Politicians get coaching for their performances, they plan their speeches, and communication professionals help them in producing content. This aptly describes the ideas of a mask and performance, but further underlines that in professional roles, communicative actions presented publicly are deliberate and planned, not spontaneous.

Communication is central in the production of personas, and the perceptions are dependent on the content producers, the audience, and the platform of the production process (Marshall, Moore & Barbour, 2020: 22). The communicative actions of politicians are dependent on their personality and capabilities, the party guidelines, and the offices working with and for them. In the next section, I will describe political personas, in relation to the considerations raised by Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 190). Especially, they have developed a model of academic self, which has inspired me to suggest a model for political selves in section 3.5.

3.2.1 Politicians' personas

Turning our focus to politicians and their negotiations and production of these public selves, we start from the notion that the individuals themselves produce them. However, they can also hire agencies or PR staff to help them. Politicians often have a campaign manager, a secretary, or a press agency that constructs their persona in a professional strategic manner (Roberts, 2006: 136; McNair, 2018: 138–170). Individuals make strategic choices on their identity work, based on how their social environment receives them. These different self constructs are displayed for a particular goal or social aim (Van House, 2009). This public persona is not necessarily a completely authentic representation of self, and politicians make strategic choices on the issues that they stress in a given moment, in a specific environment, or with a particular audience. These choices can also be as conceptually trivial as to what they are going to wear on a television debate to appeal to the electorate.

Meanings are constructed through cultural attributes and the purposes of individuals' actions. But it is unclear whether politicians define their own meanings and construct their personas from their identities, or rather based on what they think the audience or their party wants them to be like. For example, a politician who supports a national team in sports on their Facebook post may bring up their national identity, or perhaps establish a collective cultural identity with

people who share the same interest, thus benefitting them as supporters and connections. Community building activities like mottos, organizations, or online recognition through hashtags or Facebook groups can strengthen people's need to belong to groups and communities. Professional politicians are skillful performers who have been trained by PR professionals (Enli, 2015a). The characteristics of a candidate can affect the electorate in two ways; First, people can evaluate the candidates by choosing between individuals. Second, these evaluations can affect the parties, when the party leader is significant for the party choice.

Garzia (2014: 2, 80) argues that the electorate relates to parties more based on their party leaders than on social or ideological identities. The image of the party leader can then have a substantial effect on electoral decisions and the party image. The role of media is central in the shift in focus from politicians to persons in the public eye (Garzia, 2014: 85). Because of increased personal exposure, the electorate cares about and relates to individuals, and learns about them, not just their politics. There is an added public interest and exposure to the private life and personal experiences of politicians, which in Finland has been discussed as the 'intimization' of politics (Herkman, 2011: 97–98). As a phenomenon, it is not new and is attached to the changes that television and cultural change brought in the 1960s–1970s (Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 319). Karvonen (2009: 121) recognizes personalization in Finnish politics, but reminds us that its developments are neither fast nor dramatic. Party leaders are more significant to people when they evaluate their party choices. The numbers in personal votes among individual candidates are rising in Finnish elections, which indicates the importance of personality, being strong, standing out, and having a personal brand. The majority of voters pick specific candidates. However, Karvonen (2009: 122) emphasizes that political and ideological factors are of primary importance when choosing candidates, instead of just the people themselves.

Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 67–79) present five dimensions of persona which are shown in Figure 11. These are: 1. A public dimension, which is the "official version of self" offered to the public. 2. A mediatized dimension, where technology is used to present self. 3. A performative dimension that shows how individuals produce material such as comments or photos of themselves. 4. The collective dimension that describes how the persona is connected and communicates in the network. 5. The interpersonal dimension, where the audience dynamic explains how the different types of relationships are complicated by the affective bond between followers and celebrities.

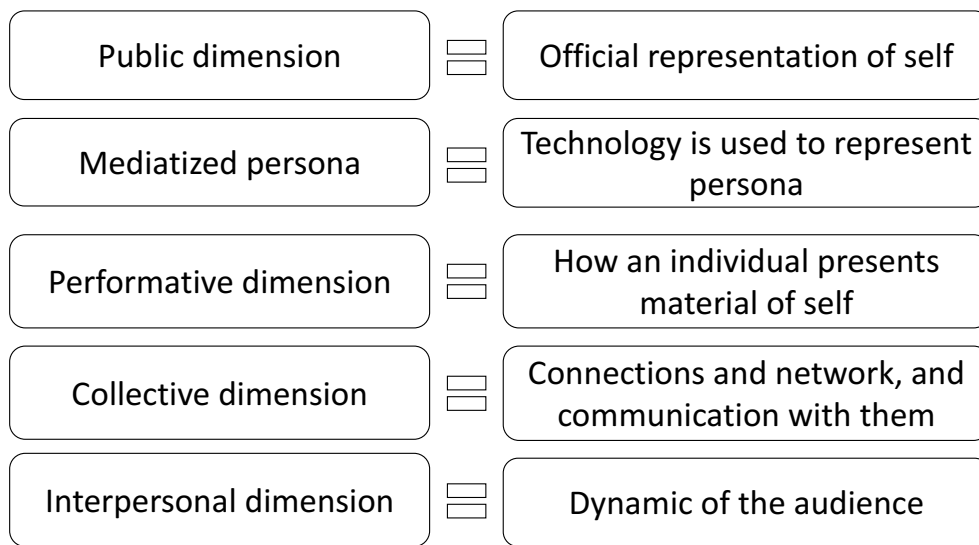


Figure 11. Five dimensions of persona (Marshall, Moore & Barbour, 2020: 67–79).

For a politician on Facebook, the public page represents the public dimension, and shows the candidate's selected photos, their personal/professional information on the about page (see also Figure 8), their posts, and their responses to comments they have received. This is already their mediatized persona, but the candidates can also choose to link other mediatized content like videos or blogs of themselves on their page. This has to do with the performative self, involving aspects such as which style they use to write their content, how they frame their photos, and what they choose to share. The collective dimension almost resembles friendship dynamics as networks follow the guidelines of "following." This can further be explored through the interpersonal dimension, where the audience's engagement and then the responses to the audience can be analyzed. However, this interaction perspective is left out from the analysis in this study because the posts and comments are analyzed as separate texts that negotiate meanings. Thus, the persona construction addressed here is understood to be happening *in* a collective, but not necessarily in interaction *with* it.

Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 186–190, 201) call for more research on "the way that various professionals play in and across the public, mediatized, performative, collectively constructed, and intentional dimensions in constructing their online reconfigurations of their professional persona." They present their division of the presentation of academic personas into five types of self, as presented in Figure 12. The academic persona model provides a good starting point for analyzing politicians' personas online. So far, similar types of presentations

have not been identified for politicians. Thus the proposed model arising from both the modification from their model and the preliminary round of data analysis is presented later in Figure 16. This is used in the analysis to find brand types of politicians as a result of this study. My application of the different 'selves' of politicians will be used as part of the theoretical framework in this study to answer how personas of politicians are presented online and how these manifest as their personal brands.

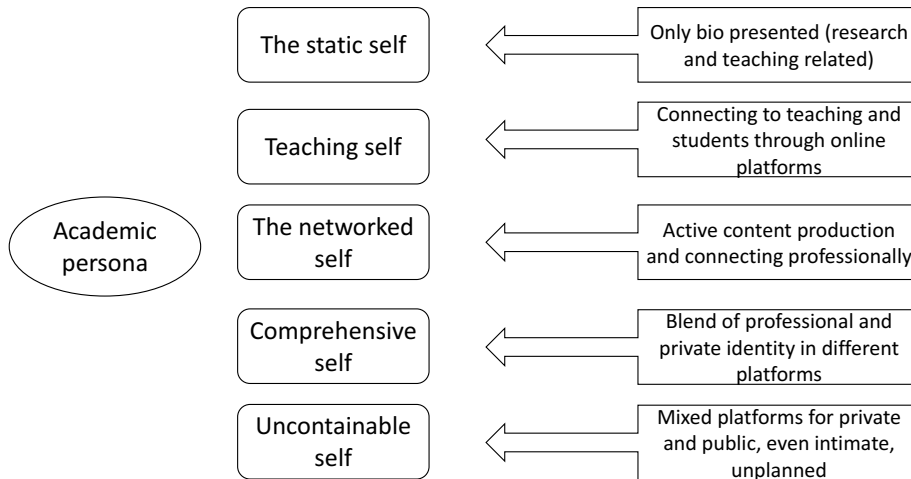


Figure 12. Five types of academic persona (Marshall, Moore & Barbour, 2020: 186–190).

Five types of academic persona are presented in Figure 12. First is "the static self," where only a university bio strictly related to teaching and research is presented. The second one is the "teaching self," where the academic persona connects to students and teaching through online platforms. The "networked self" actively constructs content, and connects with other academics, engages with their content, and uses social media for professional and public profiles. A further developed blend of professional and private identity through various platforms describes the "comprehensive self". The last and the most blended version is the "uncontainable self," where the academic mixes platforms, and private, public and even intimate content without consideration. In this case, the determination of professional expertise can be unclear, however, a professional's economic and cultural value is created through the trust they can build by constructing and conveying their professional persona (Marshall, Moore & Barbour, 2020: 186). Leading from this, a political persona can be strengthened with strategic and conscious persona

construction, together with firm communicative acts that generate trust towards the politician by appealing to that specific audience.

While Marshall, Moore and Barbour's (2020: 133–151) studies on personas have focused on artists (see also Preece & Kerrigan, 2015), professionals, academics, doctors and lawyers, this study elaborates their analysis on politicians. As outlined in section 2.1.2, politicians are an interesting professional group because they do not fulfill a similar definition for a professional as, for example, a doctor. Instead, they could be defined through a similar frame as athletes or the artists that feature in the work of Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 66); and accordingly, those who earn an income through their practice of politics can be referred to as professional politicians.

There is a gap in research in this new field of persona study. Previous studies on political persona, especially online, have mainly been focused on the US Presidential campaigns of Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, and Barack Obama (Bostdorff, 2017; Dow, 2017; Gerodimos & Justinussen, 2015; Nai & Maier, 2018; Ross & Rivers, 2020; Sahly, Shao & Kwon, 2019). Contrastingly, this study brings new information in the Nordic context on politicians' personal brands that are not necessarily globally known, but still important in a national context. However, taking this approach to political personas, looking at them as a more general approach to personal brands, and conducting research on them will be beneficial for any professional considering branding their role. Therefore, considering the categories of the types of academic persona, in my final discussion I suggest a model for types of politicians' personal brands that are presented online. But before I go into my model and bring the concepts of identity, persona and personal brand together, I will discuss personas in relation to campaigns and what is considered essential

3.2.2 Personas in campaigns

Rogers (2015: 2) highlights the importance of outstanding people in campaigns. He also states that astute and effective communications are essential for a campaign to succeed. For him, a great campaign needs the following features: "Clear vision, a unified team and authenticity, a PR-led strategy and consistent narrative, a collaborative rather than adversarial approach to media, forging friendships and breaking down barriers, embracing the evolving concept of celebrity, integrity, and purpose, building genuine movements, optimizing digital technologies, convergence and integration, leadership, storytelling, and creative flair" (Ibid. 198–207).

When a persona is sold through communicative acts to the public in situations such as campaigns, it becomes a personal brand. The features outlined by Rogers (2015) are related to the construction of brands and dealing with personas, before, during, and after a political campaign. These attributes and their mastering would constitute a successful personal brand for a politician that the public engages with and votes for. As I have argued, coincidence is also involved, but nevertheless, polishing the required elements is a good start in the negotiation of persona.

Enli (2015a; 2015b) argues that authenticity can also be a production, i.e. the illusion of authenticity. Politicians are not required to show anything and everything in their lives. Rather they are expected to be genuine, trustworthy, and true to the party. Success is not made alone, and a strong team with strategic aims is required to succeed in a campaign. While there are candidates who do not use PR agencies, the more professional and national-level campaigning is done, the more a strategic and professional take on campaigning is needed. This is also shown in the financial resources that more professional politicians reserve and use for their campaigns. A consistent narrative, storytelling, leadership, and a creative flair create the foundation for an attractive personal brand. A strong personal brand is recognizable, it stands time, and it speaks to people. In campaigns especially, it engages people and makes them want to follow and in the end vote for a particular individual.

Co-operation with the broadcast media helps the self-representation of a politician because they then have more control of what is brought on stage and what is left out. For example, with good co-operation with the media, they can negotiate and make decisions on how intimate information is shared in public. They can also negotiate the publicity of topics and their timing, and even get help from media for dealing with a crisis, for example, by getting information out ahead of publishing something relevant to their narrative. Simultaneously, politicians can benefit when they know how to embrace and exploit publicity, and more exposure means becoming more acknowledged among the public (Stanyer, 2013). Learning how to take advantage of this exposure can greatly benefit their campaigns.

Networking is central to a politician. They need to build strong ties both within their party and with politicians from other parties because the core of politics is negotiating and influence. What Rogers (2015: 2) calls building 'genuine movements' has lately been seen, for example, with presidents Trump and Obama in the US, and in Finland with Pekka Haavisto in the presidential election of 2012 (Eränti & Lindman, 2014). These movements grow organically, and their core is in being able to create a strong follower base. Examples of these are the strong

advocacy movements that spread on social media through hashtags and can promote legislation changes.

Nielsen and Vaccari (2012) discuss an abundance of politicians on Facebook in the US political scene who successfully exploited the relevancy of the platform, yet only a few strong personas may manage their impression correctly. So far, no systemic research has been conducted on topic this for Finnish politicians. Naturally, candidates need to distinguish themselves from others, and to brand themselves better in order to stand out on social media, but this is particularly relevant to most of them (and especially in the future) for targeting groups more familiar with social media platforms. For example, Strandberg and Borg (2020: 117) view that the increasing online activity of younger candidates and constituents will lead to the growing significance of online and social media campaigning.

Since campaigning has to do with marketing and it is now done in hybrid media environments (Chadwick, 2013), the candidates must know how to optimize digital marketing. Therefore intelligent ad targeting, choosing the right platforms, and creating engaging content is essential. Similarly, both online and in real life, the candidates need to turn their 'likes' into votes, and it is not enough just to get people to follow them. They have to get their electorate to the voting booths and to commit to the candidate and the party. This can be done by committing the electorate to politicians' personal brands, which sell their personas in campaigns.

3.3 Personal Brand of a Politician

Representations of persona naturally lead to personal brands, specifically in politics, where ideas and politicians are sold to the public. Political images, political identities, brand communication, and differentiation constitute political branding. Political parties, politicians, and other political actors have a brand, and even some policies can become brands in the political discourse. Karvonen (2008) argues that the only way a political persona can survive is as a celebrity. Thus Karvonen might place political persona into the same subset of persona as celebrity, with an added connection to media. This supports the significance of media for celebrities as stated by Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 33–34) in their description of the difference between persona and celebrity. Similarly, the only way a party or an ideology can stay alive is as a brand. If people are regarded as commodities, then political personas naturally convert into personal brands that appeal to the public through how they are represented and also what they represent. In this discourse, the electorate equals to consumers, wanting to know

about the products, politicians, parties and policies, which indicates a need to construct a positive political brand.

According to van Dijck (2013), politicians and their personalities have been marketed as products with the goal of turning their social value into resources. Hearn (2010) describes that consumers no longer only buy a product, but live through it. In politics, brands can simplify the voters' choices and tighten the relationship between the voter and the political brand they choose (Kaneva & Klemmer, 2016; Khumar & Dhamija, 2017; Mokhtar, 2017). While a political personal brand is a combination of several characteristics, policies and representation, successful candidates have a few key characteristics in common (von Schoultz, Söderlund & Kestilä-Kekkonen, 2020: 170). These include previous experience as a representative both in parliament and on a local level, and public exposure either through a political career or as a celebrity from sports, media, or other public area. Generally in Finland, middle-aged or older candidates get the most votes.

Gidden's (1995) idea of life politics refers to life choices forming a central area of political activity. Political choices are seen as a result of the morals and values of an individual, and are affected by personal lifestyle, tradition, socio-economic background, timing, and preferences of styles. In Finland, especially new (e.g. Movement Now with Hjallis Harkimo) and populist (e.g. True Finns with Timo Soini) parties have leaned on the charisma and personality of their leader (Niemi, 2012; 2013). Hjallis Harkimo has built a career as a business mogul, an innovative venture capitalist, a former athlete who has sailed around the world and performed in reality television shows, all of which have been major determining factors in his role as a politician. Notably, these strong, often controversial personas bring their values and views and combine them with good rhetorical skills, utilizing current events and challenges to boost their ideals. Furthermore, their brand leans on their media performances and previous roles and activities.

Social media is a presentational media because the users are the content producers, and there is an active audience in the form of each person's network. The platforms are necessary for sharing information, but the active members are also users themselves. While traditional media organizations have not lost their power, some power has been ceded to the platform-owning companies. This influences our culture and choice, and changes media content more towards individuals and layers of self, thereby adding to the authenticity requirement of everyone producing content (Marshall, Moore & Barbour, 2020: 18, 48–49). As stated earlier in relation to persona representations, authentic content that seems more spontaneous and humane is more likely to engage users on social media

(Enli, 2015a; Enli, 2009; Nave, Shifman & Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2018). However, even though there is a requirement for authenticity, marketing, and strategic selling may violate that authenticity and lead the audience to be skeptical towards content, which suggests caution needs to be taken when employing these principals.

The personal brand of a politician is the sellable persona; i.e., a constructed public representation of self which results from all the activities that individuals and their audience perform publicly for the political role and setting. This is understood through Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2015, 2020: 7), who argue that political persona is negotiated through meanings dependent on the prosopographic relations (e.g. via shared characteristics), and a bio constructed from the person's life and careers. These are often brought up when creating a persona narrative that looks to be appealing to the public. My approach in this study to set online personas as equal to personal brands is similar to van Dijck's (2013) view of the concepts. According to Petrucă (2016), social media is the best and easiest platform for constructing a personal brand, gaining a reputation, and achieving exposure in a particular field or niche. The personalization of politics has been suggested as one reason for the broadened discussion about politicians' personal brands, and has been argued to have increased in Finnish politics (Isotalus, 2017: 51). Thus, the added focus on people also invites deliberation of politicians' personal brands and their effect on campaigns and political life.

3.3.1 Personalization and personal brands

A brand is used to include all of the elements associated with an individual, company, product or service (Omojola, 2008). A political personal brand refers to individual politicians and how they are viewed. Hearing or seeing a certain politician's name associates it with the issues belonging to that politician's personal brand. This way, a brand is a promise, and almost a guarantee to the people. But when voting for something that goes against their early representations, politicians are often seen as "turning their coats".

As political communication becomes more personalized (especially when related to campaigns), politicians' personal brands become the central focus. Rudd (2016: 163) as well as Plasser and Plasser (2002: 1, 344, 348) argue that parties are no longer the center of campaigns. Instead, it is the leaders whose popularity is pivotal in engaging with the electorate through different media. The persona of the party leader has been considered as a significant factor in how a voter commits to or relates to a political party (Isotalus, 2017: 56). However, research on the topic is controversial and varies through countries and timelines. Political personal brands

are essential in connecting with the electorate, providing ideas on how parties or candidates can represent the public without outlining each topic in political communication, and give ideas to those members of the public who are not as informed on political issues. Political brands are also dependent on the perceptions of the people that value them.

For example, when assessing the Finns party slogan building the brand around the "Finland for Finns" value, it needs to be remembered that this builds an image of a racist, anti-immigrant party for some people. In contrast, for others, it builds an image of a party trying to protect Finland and care for its citizens, and is thus easy to connect with. Similar right-wing populist movements are also seen in other European countries, and this value sets a promise to the electorate that the party considers anti-immigration policy as their primary objective. Thus, the viewpoint changes the perception and image, even though the brand stays the same and represents the party identity.

Šimunjak's (2018) study on Croatian politicians concludes that they use social media to distribute information on campaign activities, instead of representing their persona or themselves as individuals or discussing political issues. Surprisingly, the mediated newspaper content was seen to be more personal than the more direct social media communication, which would suggest that social media does not add personalization by nature.

The identities of political candidates consist of their personalities and their personal and professional lives (Frame & Brachotte, 2015). These identities are represented in public, thus creating a political persona. This persona is connected with self-branding and reputation, and its influence depends on the effect and resonance of the persona (Marshall, Moore & Barbour, 2020: 113). According to Hearn (2010): "Self-branding may be considered a form of affective immaterial labour that is purposefully undertaken by individuals in order to garner attention, reputation and potentially, profit." Politicians' personal brands should describe to the voter what kind of values, decisions, and actions they can expect from a politician. Some politicians use their private lives to relate to constituents and seem more approachable (Isotalus, 2017: 86), and in this way, they can also represent their values in a more personal way.

Branding in politics is significant for gaining support and votes, and also for maintaining reputation. Similar to Karvonen (2008), Davis (2010: 83) compares politicians to celebrities, and mentions charisma and personal qualities as a significant part of the popularity of several politicians. This requires talent in negotiating personas. Therefore, the politician's stand on certain issues is not the only important thing when gaining popularity. Media also looks for personal

stories to engage the public with the politicians (Davis, 2010: 84–86), and these need to be effectively communicated.

While marketers approaching politics sometimes view political brands as similar to consumer products, it is essential to remember some key differences. A political brand consists of previous representations and new information relating to a politician or party. While de Lantsheer and de Vries (2015) as well as Enli (2015b) highlight the importance of authenticity and acting as promised, Smith (2009) argues that in politics, political brands are not expected to have an equal level of honesty to commercial brands because politicians are expected to change positions and be populist in their rhetoric. In political branding, it is often more common to highlight the differences of the competitors. A third difference that Smith (2009) notes, is the significant impact of individual politicians in the case of political brands, where the personality of a politician, particularly party leaders, can have a considerable effect in building the image and popularity of the party.

The terms reputation and image are used in similar contexts with brand, and are often defined similarly in research. Often, brand is discussed in relation with customers, and image is discussed when communicating to stakeholders. This supports the selling aspect related to the concept of brand. Image could be seen as similar to persona without the collective aspect of its creation. According to Isotalus (2017: 122, 124), when referring to politics, image is more widely used, even though he suggests it is more trendy to talk about constructing a brand rather than modifying an image, even though similar issues, results and actions are referred to. Especially, the use of social media in political communication is steering the terminology more towards brands.

In this study, brands are considered to refer more directly to the idea of marketing and sales in the context of election campaigns. The idea is more in ‘selling the persona’ and the idea of a current moment, even though there are also long-term ideas involved. For example, during a campaign, a politician chooses to promote specific issues and remind the electorate more of certain characteristics relating to a particular campaign. The aim is to create a character that is associated with particular messages and emotions, and who also appeals to the voters. The politician also externally resembles their message and style. Isotalus (2017: 124) states that each politician has an image, and they only need to be familiar enough to have people attach specific values or characteristics to them. Therefore, image requires publicity as something to make a politician known. There are two sides to image, and while it is something external that is built and constructed with communication, on the other hand, it is also about individual perceptions (Karvonen, 1999). In the same way, brand construction requires public

performance and is dependent on an interpretation from outside. My focus is also in contributing to persona literacy (Marshall, Moore & Barbour, 2020: 129), hence the choice to outline the concept of image from this study and focus on persona as the public representation of self.

Kaputa (2012) defines personal brand as an exceptional promise of value that separates an individual from others that are in similar professional or other dimensions. Brand represents value by including image and reputation. It communicates the value placed on a particular product, service or company, and at the same time gives a specific customer promise. Brand is constructed through various communicative actions, and constructing a brand requires long-term performance and excelling in the actions performed.

The concept of personalization can be understood in several ways. My theory-building follows Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer's (2012) operationalization that separates personalization into two dimensions: individualization and privatization (Figure 1). Individualization refers to the increased focus on individual politicians at the expense of parties or policies. This can be further divided into general visibility and concentrated visibility. General visibility means that the exposure is generally attached to individual politicians. In contrast, concentrated visibility describes the visibility attached to political leaders, such as the prime minister or party leaders. Likewise, according to Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer (2012), privatization has two dimensions. The detailed focus on personal characteristics includes evaluating the personal attributes and characteristics of politicians, and the revelation of private life centers around their social relationships, hobbies, or childhood. This study elaborates a previous study conducted on personalization in traditional media in the Finnish context by Isotalus and Almonkari (2014) to the setting of Facebook and the idea of a politician's personal brand. I do this by analyzing how persona and personal brands are constructed in campaigns in a dual actor model, including the politicians and the public as actors in the process.

To include the emotional dimension of social media discussions, Metz, Kruikemeier and Lecheler (2020) add the personalization typology of three dimensions of professional, emotional and private to Van Santen and Van Zoonen's (2010) theoretical framework for self-personalization. However, instead of this application, I discuss emotions as part of the private dimension in my operationalization. This is because the typology in three dimensions oversimplifies how content is constructed on Facebook, and posts mostly present all of the dimensions. Thus, their content needs to be analyzed with a more precise research approach and content categorization, for which Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer's

(2012) operationalization fits better with the modifications required by the application on social media context in this study.

There is also a privatization model based on Stanyer's (2013) concept of three circles of privatization. The first is the intimate circle consisting of health, preferences, lifestyle, sexuality and religion. The second circle includes close relationships, like family, friends and lovers. The third circle is built around the individual's personal space, like home and vacation spots. Personal space is prominent in Stanyer's (2013) framework, however, it is not considered relevant in the context of this study, where the focus is on social media.

When political candidates are active online, they build up their online identities, thereby building their personal brands. In social media, politicians act as influencers, using micro-celebrity techniques for their party, themselves, and for their political ideas (see Senft, 2008). In relation to Twitter, public representatives have been recognized as needing to pay attention to both what and how they tweet (Frame & Brachotte, 2015). Yet by 2020, there have been parliamentary representatives in Finland whose tweets have been subject to further investigation because of their inappropriate content, and usually the cases have been related to hate speech (Strömberg & Hakahuhta, 2020).

By arguing that "the similarities between the online presentations of people and products, individuals and brands are striking", van Dijk (2013) points out that similar strategies and tactics are used, and that the interfaces are similar, regardless of the type of platform and its communication focus. Facebook further supports this narrative and the self-promotion of individuals. One reason for this is that Facebook has a similar approach to both aspects, and the pages used for branding either individuals or products look the same and follow similar guidelines. I will now turn the focus on the affordances of Facebook specifically in constructing personal brands for politicians.

3.3.2 Affordances of Facebook for personal brands

The construction of brands on Facebook is conditioned by the tools or functions the platform offers, and what it allows the users to do. This can be examined by turning to affordance theory, particularly that relating to technology. Hutchby (2001) describes affordances as recognizing the constraining and enabling elements of technology. On Facebook, the affordances are socio-technical, meaning that they are both human- and technology-centric (Malhotra, Majchrzak & Lyytinen, 2021), because the focus is on the interaction between the users, the platform technology, and the social context (see also Ariel & Avidar, 2015). For the

candidates, brand construction is, or as argued earlier, should be an acknowledged strategic process where they can use multimodal posts and replies to communicate directly with their constituents. The public, on the other hand, are doing it in less acknowledged and more often less strategic ways, unless they are part of the volunteer organization or committed supporters or opponents of a candidate. They also communicate with multi-modal messages and reactions or by sharing the candidate's material elsewhere. However, both actors use the tools that the platform affords for their interaction in the platform.

While campaign staff and candidates are more familiar with the professional side of campaign communication through communication training and consultants, the public might not actively consider that they are working on the candidate's brand when discussing issues in their comments, even if their discussion relates directly to the persona. More often, for the public, commenting is used for relieving frustration, showing admiration, or seeking attention for a topic or even the individuals themselves. Whether this is unintentional or not is a relevant issues, because on Facebook, the level of exposure exceeds that typical of coffee table discussions.

Kalsnes, Larsson, and Enli (2017) propose operationalizing social media logic into three "connected affordances". They divide affordances according to the basic functions of Facebook. *Acknowledging* refers to likes and favorites, *redistributing* refers to shares, and *interacting* to comments. Their study focuses on easily measurable affordances of Facebook. However in my study, by adding a qualitative perspective, I analyze the posts and content through what kind of affordances they show to be used. I approach affordances with a broader view point, as a more broad description of how Facebook can be used for expressing, constructing and promoting a personal brand. Hence, the adaption of the model which Blegind Jensen and Dyrby (2013) have formulated for political parties. This approach is similar to that described by Bucher and Helmond (2018) who describe the concept of affordance as something that "material artefacts such as media technologies allow people to do." Based on their definitions, this approach takes the high-level affordance dimension where the focus is on the conditions and dynamics that are possible because of technology, platforms, and media.

The affordances of Facebook for the construction of a politician's personal brand are presented in Table 1. Based on what has been argued about campaign communication goals and functions on Facebook, I have developed the table from Blegind Jensen and Dyrby (2013). The groups of *facilitation*, *projection* and *creation* are kept the same. However, modifications have been made to the specifics within those functions of how a user can benefit from using Facebook for

personal brand construction. This individual's perspective requires some modification when relating to the affordances for political parties which is more narrow in scope.

The original affordances (Blegind Jensen & Dyrby, 2013) were: Direct communication, promotion of political messages, Dialogue and control for the facilitated group; projected authenticity, informality, and personality; and created interaction and involvement. For personal brand construction, I have focused on affordances that add engagement. The middle column shows what the candidates want to facilitate: communication planning, mobilization transparency as a way to build trust, hybrid media presence, appealing to the masses, and impression management. Projection involves issues of approach, an illusion of authenticity, and personality, and McGregor (2017) refers to this as the possibility for the politicians to humanize themselves. Lastly, for what candidates want to create, I have added transparency and exposure. The role of the public was not considered in the original frame, so I have added an additional column on the right compiled both from theory and preliminary content analysis of the data.

In Table 1, the main affordances are written in bold capital letters, and connected with linked affordances that describe how each main affordance can occur. The affordances cannot be placed in order of importance, but in the table, they are placed in order starting from the effects on the individual, and moving to the effects on society. As Bucher and Helmond (2018) describe, affordances are “communicative actions” that should be analyzed through what is allowed and limited by the technology in question. In this study, Facebook is the environment where these communicative actions take place, and they are shaped accordingly.

As Table 1 shows, direct communication as an affordance is facilitated by both user groups on Facebook – the candidates and the public. The politicians address the electorate on-topic messages and self-promotion. They can solicit wishes, ask for the politician's stance on topical issues, and communicate societal issues that they want the politicians to address in their policies. The candidates can in turn express their values and policies through these topic messages and sharing information.

Table 1. Facebook affordances for personal brand construction

Groups of Affordance	Main and Linked Affordances – Candidates	Main and Linked Affordances – Public
Facilitation	<p>DIRECT COMMUNICATION; topic messages, sharing information, influence, campaign trail updates, promoting ideas, immediate communication</p> <p>HYBRID MEDIA PRESENCE; sharing other content (blogs, videos, articles), announcing television appearances</p> <p>VOTING; announcing candidate numbers, voting instructions and reminders</p> <p>COMMUNICATION PLANNING; resource distribution, strategy</p> <p>IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT; editability, content choice, non limited production</p> <p>DIALOGUE; timing, emotion, networks with others</p> <p>MOBILIZATION; seeking support, recruiting volunteers for campaign staff, asking financial support</p> <p>APPEALING TO MASSES; connection, introducing the persona, value discussion, expressing multiple sides, multiple content, presenting persona as a whole</p>	<p>POLITICAL IDEAS; asking information, soliciting political opinion/ view, bringing up societal issues</p> <p>OWN OPINIONS; formation through discussion, expression of own opinions</p> <p>SUPPORT; comments on debates, linking the candidate to others, expressing agreement, direct voting expressions</p> <p>HYPERMEDIA PRESENCE; comments on appearances, articles, blogs</p> <p>CONTROL: content choice, editability</p> <p>IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT; networks, presentation of self</p> <p>TROLLS; bullying, opponent campaigns</p> <p>MOBILIZATION; calls to vote, participation calls, team spirit</p>
Projection	<p>ILLUSION OF AUTHENTICITY; likability, positive behavior, choice of content</p> <p>APPROACH; informal tone, unconventionality</p> <p>PERSONALITY; image, reliability, presence, credibility, sense of listening</p>	<p>OWN IMAGE; expressed opinions, community</p> <p>RESPONSE TO COMMUNICATION; perceptions of candidates, counter arguments, support</p> <p>SOCIETAL ISSUES; concerns, humane stories, intertextual referencing, past decisions</p>
Creation	<p>EXPOSURE; wider appeal and recognition</p> <p>TRANSPARENCY; easy and close interaction and persona representation</p> <p>INTERACTION; activity, dynamics, reaction</p> <p>INVOLVEMENT; trust, support, ambassadors, followers</p>	<p>INFORMATION; learning, new ideas</p> <p>UNDERSTANDING; added information, changed views</p> <p>CONNECTING; with candidates, with other users</p>

Another similar affordance for both the electorate and politicians is the hypermedia presence described in Table 1. Politicians can get more exposure for their articles where they are covered, their television appearances, and for their own content elsewhere, while the public can use Facebook as a forum to comment on and inquire about them. For example, television debates and topics can be widely discussed by the public, and also in their interactions with the candidates.

The facilitation of voting is significant to candidates (Table 1.). They can easily facilitate voting by reminding the constituents of voting locations, numbers, the general importance of voting, and promoting themselves or their party as the right choice. Through mobilization, they can connect with the electorate and mobilize them for the campaign, for example as campaign staff or for fundraising. Politicians can facilitate dialogue by collecting opinions, listening to the electorate, and allowing free discussion, and this requires that they also listen and reply when the electorate expresses their opinions and wishes.

Table 1 presents that by using multiple types of content, i.e., photos, videos, text, emojis, and links to articles, candidates can appeal to the masses by expressing a whole persona, and presenting different dimensions of their life and career by showing both the practical and the emotional sides of themselves. This type of content play can also appeal to the masses because it is how the public themselves use the platform. Facebook is more informal, and it is almost expected that more personal and intimate content expressed in a personal style and with multimodal type content is shared. Facebook also allows more possibilities for impression management for the candidates because they control the representation and narrative on their page (Metz, Kruikemeier & Lecheler, 2020). Namely, they can moderate discussions, remove and edit content, and choose what they post and bring to the public. The possibilities of Facebook and the requirements for a candidate's communication planning facilitate a more strategic approach for communication. However, while possibly being a less costly option for political marketing, it still requires planning and the strategic distribution of both money and labor.

Through Facebook, candidates can project an illusion of authenticity (Enli, 2015a), and in that way try to appeal as likable, approachable and relatable candidates to the electorate. Facebook as a communication environment can be used to project an approachable persona and a more relaxed, more "human" or down-to-earth persona because the platform allows for easy language and communication through emojis or different visual content like memes. The pages can be made personal by presenting more of a person's personality, through personal content, choosing profile and layout pictures, and strategically considering each post to

support the planned aim as presented in Table 1. This way, it is possible to choose what to share, and which issues support the candidates' image-building, credibility, and the sense that they listen to the electorate.

Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 50) describe Facebook as a CV-type addition for portfolios, an outlet where individuals can create identities representing the public version of themselves. Bockowski et al. (2018) also describe Facebook as a platform where the "socially acceptable self" is displayed. However, van Dijck (2013) argues that the interest of the platform is in authentic and transparent persona representations, since that supports the data acquisition needs of their advertisers. However, this is related more to individual users, not necessarily the public pages. Enli (2015: 121; 2015b) also discusses this dilemma of mediated authenticity concerning persona representations, where self-performances are produced, scripted and socially constructed. Several technical factors on the platform promote the idea of selling a persona on and through it. Facebook enables large text postings, sharing images, creating events and groups to promote activities, and also to measure engagement with the analysis tools it provides for users on the platform. However, in the study by Scolere, Pruchniewska, and Duffy (2018), the interviewees reported the harmful effects of these algorithmic functions and their effect on managing their self-branding and promotion.

As seen in Table 1, Facebook allows and builds broad exposure for candidates if used correctly. This exposure can be cost-efficient and appealing to the electorate through strategically produced organic reach because it resembles word-of-mouth marketing. For the candidate's personal brand, the use of Facebook can add transparency, especially if the candidate constructs a complete and authentic persona and is willing to reveal more about their private side.

Politicians can use Facebook to create better interaction between candidates and the electorate. This can be dynamic at its best, with low hierarchy and fast reactions, which can help remove the barriers between the electorate and politicians. This and the built trust can foster involvement, and the electorate can connect better with the candidate, thus becoming committed followers and supporters (Table 1). According to Kalsnes, Larsson, and Enli (2018), interaction is performed with comments, but their view is limited compared to this study. I am analyzing interaction through all types of engagement, including comments, shares, reactions, and following.

Table 1 shows that when the public discuss issues online, the use of Facebook also facilitates their own impression management. The networks they belong to, the discussions they join, and the reactions they give are all part of their self-representation. This then projects their image, and who they discuss, who they

follow, and which topics they discuss all define how others perceive them. Through some content, they may also receive added exposure, and they can contact the candidates directly. The public can show support or oppose candidates through Facebook, and they can use the platform to argue their opinions and to mobilize others. With these interaction possibilities, the public can seek information or verification for a candidate's or party's stance on political topics, and also suggest topics they feel the candidate should take forward. For example, citizen initiatives are often spread on Facebook so as to gain them more exposure.

The public can project societal issues on Facebook, promoting past decisions, and referring to policies and cultural topics. On Facebook, they share humane stories and concerns on a personal level, and those are used to draw attention to, for example, health care or unemployment issues. As Table 1 shows, the public can also use Facebook to inform themselves and others, learn through political discussion, or to follow multiple candidates to get different viewpoints. This relates to improving their understanding, and they can acquire new information and arguments for particular topic issues. Similar to journalists or campaign staff, professionals can also use the platform to follow multiple candidates and get news content and other information that typically comes first on social media because the platform functions in real-time and is used for more spontaneous publishing.

Table 1 presents that the public can create connections through Facebook. Especially, they can build relationships and dialogue with the candidates, and re-live or extend their meetings with them by sending more information or comment on a live meeting in a campaign event or elsewhere. Furthermore, they can connect with other users by forming networks, support groups, or get a shorter sense of community by engaging with those discussing a comment thread.

As described in section 2.2.2, some people use Facebook for damaging purposes, such as trolls causing disturbance or those who want to spread hate campaigns (see Table 1). Strong counterargument or hate campaigns can be used to lessen a candidate's credibility or appeal, and for them, this may support an aim to prevent someone from being elected. This type of behavior has been studied as election harassment, and in the national election study of 2019, over half of the 770 candidates who had responded to the survey, reported having noticed election harassment in websites or social media accounts (Wass, Isotalo & Limnell, 2020). Thus, damaging a candidate's personal brand is considered part of a conscious brand construction act from the public's side, and even if Facebook is used for harmful purposes, this use is noted in the model and my analysis.

Facebook has created an illusion of communication based on the ideal of non-hierarchy. Broadcasted media always has its gate-keepers, but Facebook seemingly

hands this power to individual users. Because of this logic, individual users and their content have overriding importance, for example, compared to organizations who struggle to find natural and appealing ways to communicate through this platform built on individual-to-individual-based communication. However, this power is still just an illusion, as the platform controls its algorithm and affordances, which can either benefit or challenge the users in reaching their communication goals.

The monetization aspect in the functions of Facebook is important for self-representation. While the user is conscious in making decisions on what to present, the platform and its algorithm functions decide the narrative to support the interests of their advertisers (van Dijck, 2013) because it decides what people encounter online (Beer, 2009). For example, people who tend to like or share political news content are categorized as being interested in politics in the algorithm, which is then likely to show more similar content (Thorson et al., 2021). For this, behavioral data generated content such as single clicks for likes and reactions is often not a strategic or conscious consideration of self-expression from the user. According to van Dijck (2013), the algorithm defines "a qualitative validation of someone's influence" through these things. In this way, the reactions and engagement to the pages and posts of a politician, together with their influence and social value are measured in Facebook. This then affects the organic, un-paid exposure they get, for example, by being shown on someone's feed as a result of a friend commenting or reacting to a post. On Facebook, these reactions are a central form for promoting engagement. But according to Gerodimos and Justinussen (2015), in their study of Obama and his Facebook page in the election of 2012, they found that when analyzing the followers, their engagement was selective, and there was more engagement with campaign messages and policy-orientated posts than with those that were purely promotional.

The targeting function makes Facebook a useful forum for marketing, for example in a political campaign, because it allows a specific definition of the users who will see the ad on their feed or sidebar. These functions also build Facebook as a company because most of its revenue comes from advertising, and since 2012 it has been a publicly listed company (Fuchs, 2014). Public pages also include the Page Insight Data function, which enables the page admin to see what kind of posts work by considering engagement and exposure (van Dijck, 2013). In this way, even rapid changes in approach are possible, and strategic planning in terms of target groups and content can be less resource-intensive than working with outside PR agencies. However, in order to fully exploit these possibilities, it requires both financial and time resources, which speaks for the benefit of bigger parties and candidates with more resources. The vast resource intensity in time, energy,

capital, and technological knowledge, for self-branding on social media has also been noted by other researchers (Scolere, Pruchniewska & Duffy, 2018).

The design of Facebook profiles works similarly on pages and profiles. Timelines are organized chronologically, supporting the impression of narrative in self-representation (van Dijck, 2013). Each action such as the decision to post, comment, or react can be considered as conscious or unconscious identity shaping. Profiles are focused on the friend-function, making them more personal, while pages are seen as more of a tool for promoting self for the audience with a follower-function. These public profiles allow individuals to connect with the page owner globally instead of just connecting with those in the tighter network, and van Dijck (2013) characterizes this as a shift from connectedness to connectivity. This connectivity has been argued to require more personal and time commitment in the activity of self-representation. But in social media, professional, private, and intimate content often overlap and intertwine, especially with individuals who have added exposure, such as politicians.

3.4 Professional, Private, and Intimate Boundaries

The public persona is detached from home life, even though it can play a part in the public projection of self. This projection is mediatized and public, and it requires networks to engage and encourages actions of likes and followers. Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 26, 54, 79, 126) argue that this requires "interpersonal forms of communication, strategic management of the performance of the self", and continuous communication activities. The user is both the consumer and the producer of content in online networks. Therefore, those responsible for the persona and its construction need to understand how the networks work, and how the self is presented. This study aims at precisely that, by helping politicians, their communication agencies, and the public understand both the significance and process of personal brand construction, and also the affordances that Facebook offers for it.

Politicians need to balance between the professional self and the private because of the public nature of their work. Especially, they are prey to both the media and the public when revealing too much intimate detail, and this can also weaken their credibility as politicians. However, in deciding to maintain a purely professional persona, it may be hard for the electorate to relate to the politician. Social media is especially tied with personal representation and engagement. Thus, exposure is usually only possible through negotiating meanings that are more private, interesting, and revealing. In the same way that magazines sell more when they

publish more private and intimate content (Juntunen & Välvirronen, 2009; Karvonen, 2008; Steensen, 2016), an individual post or comment online ‘sells more’ if measured through engagement, when it reveals something interesting or is styled so that it triggers the public. Therefore during a campaign, the different dimensions of persona are vital for a candidate in connecting with the electorate, appealing to the public, and presenting a credible and relatable persona.

According to Herkman (2011: 34) and Street (2004), media exposure frequently blurs the lines of the private and public dimensions of a politician’s personas, since the content is created from both the public and professional role, and the private life of politicians. In broadcast media, these lines can be renegotiated and changed. However, media does not always ask the politician whether something can be published (Karvonen, 2008), and their lives are expected to belong under the public eye (Kunelius & Reunanen, 2012). Social media has added even more confusion to this development. Public figures have their own social media profiles, which provide more direct access to them, or at least a more viable way of communicating with them than provided by any newspaper opinion piece or public event that is not directly attended. Public figures also have control over what they choose to publish on their profiles, but not on what the public choose to publish.

Railo (2011) argues that when looking at profile articles, any personal content is always political. He states that personal life is used to polish the public image and develop popularity. In his study, he notes that it offers a possibility to show their softer side and relationships for men, while for women, it is mostly about the thoughts of balancing a home and career. However, he also suggests that after 2000, there has been a reversion to the personal being personal again, which highlights the idea of individualization in society. At the same time, Railo (2011) suggests that politicians are symbols of the political values and topics attached to their personal brand. Accordingly, politics is followed through them, and personas are seen as significant when the electorate decides whom to vote for. Thus, I argue that for the electorate, political is personal.

3.4.1 Celebrity politicians

The best way to understand a politician’s persona is by way of looking at celebrities and the way they are understood and viewed. The culture around celebrities and how they perform public representations of self and negotiate their identities resembles the online production process, which has become a public tool for everyone (Marshall, Moore & Barbour, 2020: 34, 39). The central idea is in self-production, and celebrities provide models and frames for organizations and individuals who want to construct public representations of self. In this, the

audience, participants, and these personas form a collective where personas are constructed, where perceptions are formed, and where the need for these personas becomes evident.

McMillin (2020) suggests that in online communities, political actors are approached as icons resembling fictional characters, with idolizing fans appearing in the form of followers. This suggests that with online culture, the fan culture has transformed to apply to real individuals from all aspects of society. This transformation has been put forward by the online world and the rise of reality television, where ordinary citizens have become television stars and been considered as celebrities. However, new forms of celebrity culture have affected how business CEOs, politicians, and other visible personas are considered and treated on public stages.

Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 35) state that “celebrity is a sub-set of persona”. Therefore, celebrity is one dimension of an individual’s persona, but it does not constitute it as a whole. Celebrity status can provide more exposure and interest towards a persona, but other factors determine what it is for each individual. The idea of politicians as celebrities furthers earlier views from Marshall (1997), where he discussed celebrities as having discursive power, the power to be seen, and expressing themselves in front of masses. Politicians already have that power, but now use celebrity status for added exposure for both themselves and their agenda. But while doing this, they also expose themselves to the possibility of getting negative attention. Thus, while seeking the glamour, there is always the possibility of being resented (Marshall, 1997: 3).

Karvonen (2008) suggests remembering Turner’s (2004) differentiation between public figures and celebrities, where the public nature of the role of an individual would always make them a public figure, but only an added interest in their personal life makes them a celebrity. Therefore the process of ‘celebritization’ as a change in the interests of the public and media, defines whether a politician is seen as a public figure or a celebrity. The basic premise of Facebook is the interest in individuals and sharing their life through a timeline, and thus challenges this division of roles. A similar challenge comes from the part of the electorate for whom political is personal, and who view the private dimension of persona as essential to connect with politicians. Also, in Turner’s (2004) definition, the role is defined by the media’s interest. However, Karvonen (2008) suggests that these two roles can co-exist, depending on how the politicians are represented at any given time.

Figure 13 presents how celebrity can affect and serve politicians. Some individuals are already celebrities when they start their political career, whereas others

become celebrities after entering the political game with more public exposure (Herkman, 2011: 110). Finnish examples of these celebrities defined by their political life are Alexander Stubb (Hämäläinen & Stubb, 2017), Sauli Niinistö (Karvonen, 1999: 111), and Matti Vanhanen, while for example, Jaana Pelkonen, Sari Essayah, Hjallis Harkimo, and Mikko Alatalo represent celebrity candidates, whose previous careers have had exposure in sports, television, and music, and their celebrity status existed before their introduction into the political arena. However, even if they benefit from added recognition from before their political exposure, surveys have shown that the electorate rarely considers these celebrities as credible candidates. In the 2019 elections, only 10 of the 200 elected candidates were seen as this kind of public figure when campaigning (von Schoultz, Söderlund & Kestilä-Kekkonen, 2020: 110). Thus, status and added recognition are not always beneficial. In Finland, while it seems that several celebrity candidates have entered the parliament, many have not received enough votes, so the significance of celebrity status is debatable concerning the voting result (Herkman, 2011: 104; Niemi, 2007: 151, 173). Consequently, this indicates that something other than celebrity status is needed to win the electorate over. McMillin (2020) reminds us that when a politician becomes an icon or someone who is idolized, there is the problem that the fans set themselves up for disappointment because the politicians will make decisions that contradict the fans' values.

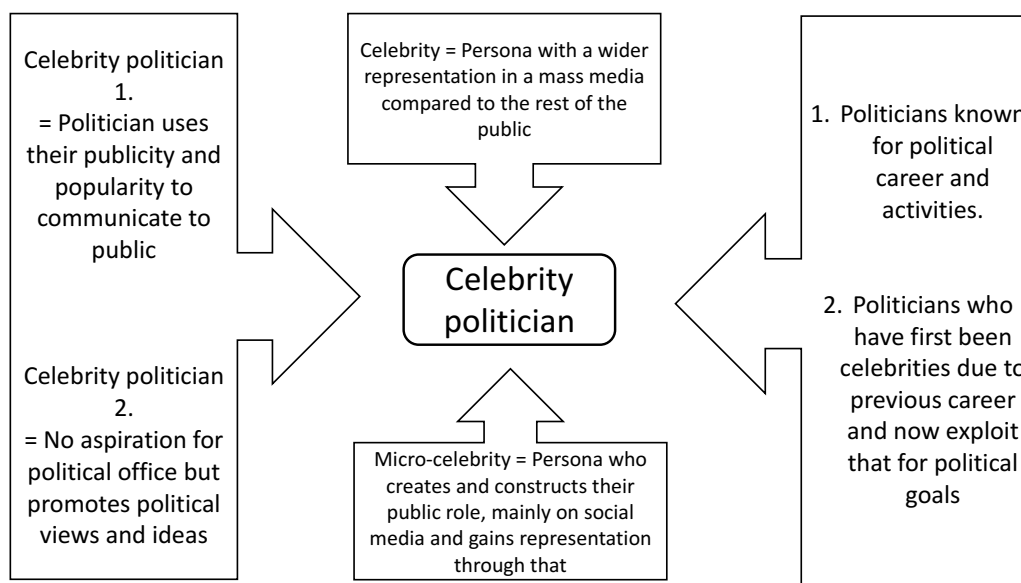


Figure 13. The celebrity politician (Modified from Street, 2004; Marshall, Moore & Barbour, 2020).

Before a campaign, a candidate may already have had significant publicity, which can benefit both the candidate and the party (Railo et al., 2016: 321; Figure 13).

This, for example, can determine who receives exposure in the media (Street, 2004), and can also effect how much private representation there already is of the politician. While some candidates use publicity merely to bring political issues to a broader public and focus strictly on politics, others are willing or forced into greater exposure which can hurt or benefit them in elections. Herkman (2011: 18) views that while media exposure is not the only publicity area, its significance is increasing. For example, Harkimo has utilized this in the Finnish context. As a celebrity candidate, he has gained exposure for both him as a candidate and politician, and to Movement Now which he founded to challenge the traditional political parties. He has also tried to find other candidates with previous recognition for the movement. Politically, media exposure is a central forum of political activity, where opinions are formed and molded. Mediatized publicity does not require presence or time since politicians can speak to the electorate through interviews on television or news articles. However, with social media, politicians are no longer tied to time and place in addressing the electorate, and they can tweet or post through their pages on their way to meetings or just before going to bed. For example, Alexander Stubb (Hämäläinen & Stubb, 2017) describes in his book how taxi trips and flight delays were spent tweeting ideas to the public. This way, the public are also partly invited into their private life when politicians communicate to them directly, even from their private life situations and locations.

3.4.2 Negotiating professional, private, and intimate

According to Isotalus (2017: 84), when it comes to characteristics and more intimate information in Finnish politics, there are the ‘people charmers’ and the ‘policy politicians’. These, and the further dimensions in their representations are presented in Figure 14, showing how professional and private content may overlap also being more prominent compared to intimate content. This phenomenon is referred to as the privatization of politics, and Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer (2012) distinguish two categories. First is the media attention of the politician’s personal characteristics and private life. Here, private life in practice includes family, free-time, love life, past, childhood, and growing up. Some characteristics are hard to distinguish as the private or the professional self, so systematic research on the topic is rare. There are also significant differences between different countries and political systems regarding the privatization of politics (Isotalus, 2017: 85). For a politician, their decisions to share something with the public are usually irreversible, so sharing the private and intimate requires careful consideration.

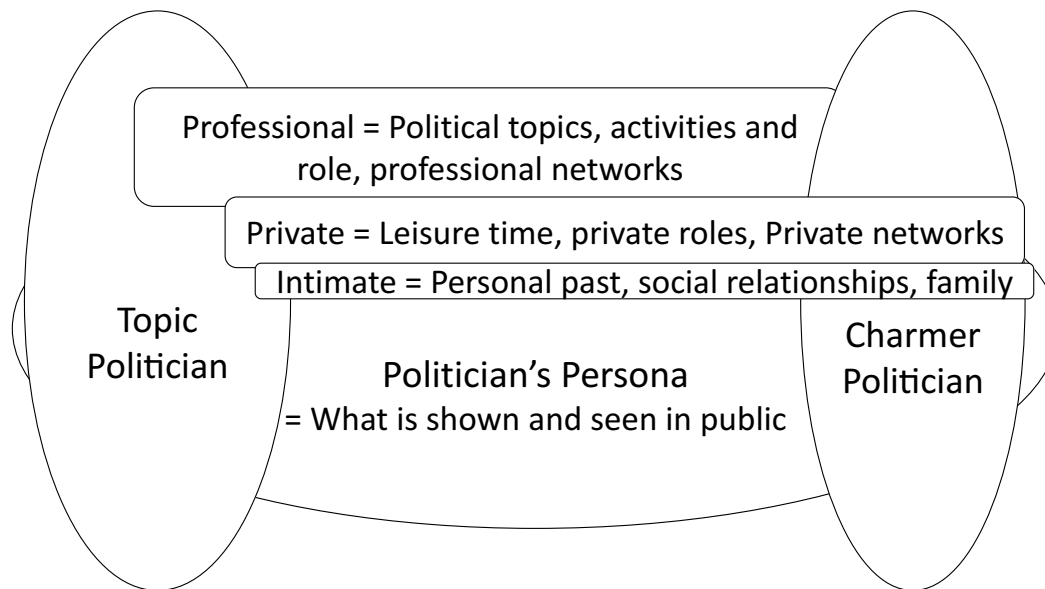


Figure 14. The politician's persona (modified from Isotalus & Almonkari, 2011).

In my research, I use the concepts of professional, private, and intimate to separate the type of content that can be distinguished from public pages, their posts and comments, and which are thus used to construct the politicians' personal brands. These concepts function as my tools for defining Finnish politicians and their personal brands. The division is based on the operationalization by Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer (2012); Professional is defined as the official, work and career-related content. Personal content includes leisure, characteristics and feelings. Intimate content consists of the personal that is only shown to close ones such as immediate family, close friends or lovers, and including topics of health and religion. Persona is the interplay between these dimensions of content, and the intimate dimension is understood in this study through the definitions of Stanyer (2013), Frame and Brachotte (2015), and Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 4, 80).

The ratio between professional and private content has not exclusively been investigated in Facebook posts, even though the blending of the two is often discussed concerning social media. In Frame and Brachotte's (2015) study on the content of the politicians' tweets during European parliament campaigning, they separated private content as anything outside the political arena. They further separated personal content from private as content that involves intimate issues, like romantic relationships and intimate relations. This distinction is similar to the framework chosen in this study. However, the analysis considers that sometimes in politics, personal is used to build credibility for the professional; for example,

parenthood may be referenced in order to build credibility for discussing policies related to children.

Langer's (2009) analysis of Tony Blair in the United Kingdom concludes that the degree of private in relation to the political persona is dependent on the personality of the politician, and also their communication strategies. Even a widely visible leader can still have a mostly private life, despite whether their actions and role are very public. In Finland, several politicians keep their private life private, and Finnish politicians have differing views to the media about their private lives and how public they should be (Isotalus & Almonkari, 2014). The resistance to include intimate or private in politicians' image and their need and want to hide their private life and keep it away from public gaze has been reported by Isotalus and Almonkari (2012). However, increased exposure potential poses challenges to this choice since it embraces a wide variety of media representations. Thus, it is very dependent on the individual, and also whether revealing a higher degree of private persona is felt to work for or against their political persona.

While intimate information is not expected from politicians in Finland, it is common that citizens know very personal things about politicians. Their hobbies, personal likes, and the spouses of politicians are common topics in the media. Perna, Niemi and Pitkänen (2009) refer to this as "the expansion of the media exposure of politics", referring to this increase of political news content to include other content than just political topics. Railo and Ruohonen (2016: 232, 240, 256) have also suggested that the use of private and intimate dimensions of the persona as a political campaign tool can provoke the electorate.

Studying this topic contributes to understanding whether politicians are considered as public figures, celebrities, or micro-celebrities (Turner, 2004; Marshall, 2014) in Finland, and if the same dimensions be applied to them as to other professionals. Some politicians form their identity through professionalism by building a political career where their political knowledge and experience makes them more recognized among the public. However, there are politicians with a background, for example in the entertainment industry, being first known for something completely different (Herkman, 2011: 104). Modern-day politicians can thus be divided into categories based on how their political role has been formed, which party they represent, and how they construct their brands through and with the help of these factors (see Figure 14). In the next chapter, I propose a model that will be used for my analysis, and elaborate how the concepts of personal brand, persona and identity are defined and used in this study.

3.5 Personal Brand, Persona and Identity in this Study

Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 6, 201) explain persona studies starting from the notion that online personas can be negotiated and strategically produced. The theoretical framework in this study is rooted in the five dimensions of persona they present; the public, mediatized, performative, collectively constructed, and intentional production of persona. Politicians' brands in campaign communication are the result of an active and acknowledged collective production process, and are represented publicly through media. The exposure and publicity of a politician are approached through the celebrity politician types modeled by Street (2004). The approach for analyzing political personas online is modified from the operationalization on personalization presented by Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer (2012) that distinguishes personalization into two dimensions; individualization and privatization. As brands include all dimensions of the person, the analysis of the dimensions of brands is performed by reflecting the representations of political self modified from the representations of academic self presented by Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 190).

Especially, the use of social media in political communication is steering the terminology more towards brands. The term brand can be used in connection to big corporations or single products, so it is important to distinguish personal brands in this context of election campaigns to separate the discussion about individual candidates from parties. Personal brands are closely related to persona, the publicly represented self. Still, with personal brands, the focus is on selling the persona, having a marketed self, and the idea of that particular moment, even though there are also long-term ideas involved. As Duffy and Pooley (2017) describe in their study on the self-branding of academics, personal brands are social capital, and a way to stay visible and to validate one's influence. For brands, one must also consider what others are doing and saying because personal brands are constructed collectively, the result being partly strategic and partly coincidental.

A brand can be developed, in that it can switch focus and be something for one person and another thing for someone else. As such, it can be seen as a transforming process. Regardless of the ideas of selling and process related to personal brand, it needs to be genuine, unique, visible, relevant, and have continuity (Preece & Kerrigan, 2015). For example, during a campaign, a politician chooses to promote specific issues and remind constituents of certain characteristics in relation to a particular campaign. The aim is to create a character that is associated with specific messages and emotions. The politician also externally looks like the message and style that they publish. Isotalus (2017: 124)

states that each publicly recognized politician has an image, and they need to be familiar enough to have people attach specific values or characteristics to them. Therefore, an image requires publicity, in order to make a politician known.

As van Dijck (2013) suggests, on online platforms, the self can be promoted as a "standardized tradable product", which in this study is understood through the concept of the personal brand - the sellable self. She also reminds us that this self is not a true reflection of self, but rather a platform-shaped reflection of behavior, steered by different user group interests. While van Dijck (2013) presents identity formation as being shaped through algorithms, the default setting, and protocols, I suggest adding the effect of user-generated content. One element in this is the algorithm affected by the reactions and comments as an indicator of the magnitude of engagement. However, my focus is on the content of the posts and comments, as they show what the public see, what they learn about the politician in question, and what they would know without filtering or evaluating the public discussion on Facebook.

Figure 15 portrays the actors and the process involved in constructing the politicians' personal brands. The persona is negotiated by an individual themselves, their representative agents, media producers, and other individuals. Online, this persona in the political campaign context is marketed and communicated through the active selling of the persona. The campaign context defines the communication platforms and actors. This combination then results in the politician's personal brand which also exists outside the campaign periods. But during campaign periods, the communicative actions are enforced to ensure exposure and electorate engagement. The ideal personal brand is therefore a result of the process of creating, positioning and maintaining a positive impression of self (Gorbatov, Khapova & Lysova, 2018).

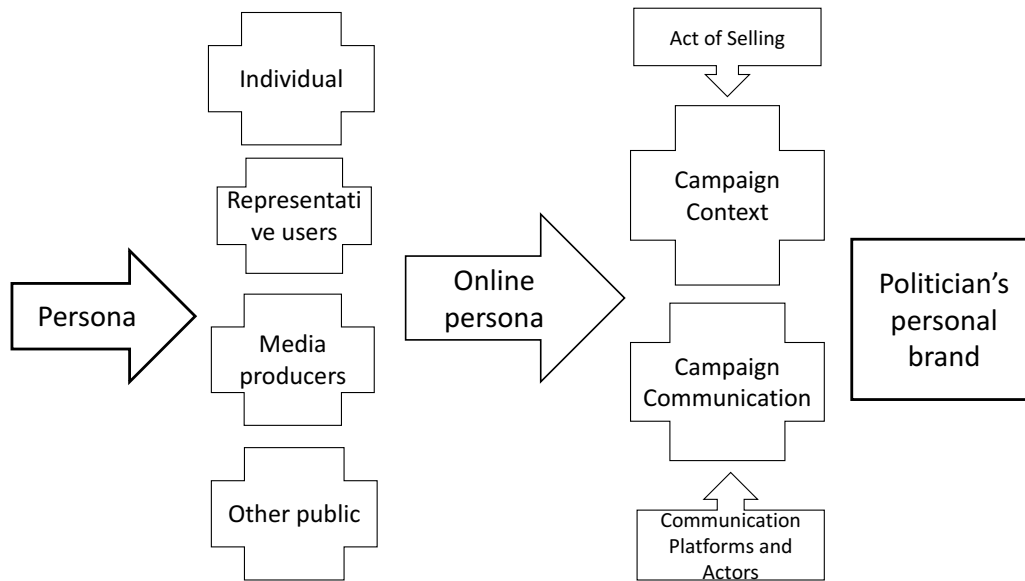


Figure 15. The process of forming a politician's personal brand

Whether we look at identity as a story or as a process, we can identify some key elements that help define personas. Identity has a layer-like nature. It can, to some extent, be re-negotiated, and it is portrayed as a persona distinctively dependent on the community, channel, and the individual in question. The collective adds its interpretation and perceptions of the individual. It also decides whether the individual is interesting at all and gets attention in the collective discussion. The channel defines whether the persona is negotiated in the form of pictures, length of text, style, reach, and audience. The individual decides what they share and can try to some extent to manage their profiles, while their identity, personality, background, character, and interests, in the end, define the possibilities and base from which their persona is negotiated online.

Turkle's (1995) definition of identity as being about everything, what one links to pages, one's interest, and what is visible in their profiles and forums actually describes a persona. This idea is applied in search of politicians' personal brands on Facebook, and what is on the posts and comments is all part of the brand. But it is not about changing persona, as seen in Turkle's (1995) findings with adolescents. Rather it is about highlighting and hiding particular aspects and attributes. This can be done by choosing specific channels for interaction and informing, choosing what to share, managing the public debate, and choosing the availability and access of content to the electorate. In relation to selling ideas or trying to appeal for votes, personal brand construction and its success can partly be evaluated through engagement with the content.

There are two significant factors for the development of the concept of politicians' personal brands. The first is the personalization of politics which has led to the need for politicians to construct and benefit from a strong political brand. The second is the increased use of social media, which, although it has not sparked the idea, has a significant role in deepening and establishing the process and development of constructing personal brands.

Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 200) discuss industrialized agency as another term for self-branding. This requires individuals to consciously and actively construct their power, role, and position in their fields and networks. So far, they do not see personal brand as being incorporated into every profession. For example, doctors and academics have not gone very far with self-branding. However, their suggestion is to study the attention economy and influencers to learn more about self-branding, and they also share the premise of this study about social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, in facilitating personal brand construction.

Concluding from the introduced research, the core definitions used in this study are as follows:

Identity is a solid presentation, the core of an individual, with no consideration of objective interpretation, including all registers of the persona. *Persona* is the public presentation of these, where conscious choices have been made to only include some aspects from mainly professional and private spheres. The concept of *personal brand* to be used later in this study is equivalent to persona, with an added idea of sellable self, modified from Marshall and Henderson's (2016: 2) definition of persona as "a fictive public identity drawn from elements of one's individuality but designed for public use" that is negotiated collectively. In the politician's case, the idea of selling is included, and in the context of campaign communication, it is enforced with the voters thought of as consumers who are buying the candidate (Kumar, Dhamija & Dhamija, 2016). This definition also describes the strategic personal brand construction, and a personal brand is something knowingly constructed to influence a targeted audience.

Some politicians form their brand through professionalism by building a political career where their political knowledge and experience makes them more recognized among the electorate. However, (and as previously mentioned), there are politicians with a background, for example in the entertainment industry, whose political career was born out of being first known for something completely different (Herkman, 2011: 104). This study investigates professional content in relation to explicitly political content like legislation, campaigning, or other political issues. Other non-political content like family, free-time and

entertainment is referred to as private content, while health, love life and other personal issues such as religion are considered as intimate content. However, these are all considered as essential parts of personal brand construction for politicians.

Leading from Marshall, Moore and Barbour's (2020: 190) academic self and the original reviewed literature, the preliminary analysis in this study shows six types of selves in political persona, through which Finnish politicians can be categorized based on their Facebook content. As this applies to the specific election campaign period, the results may vary, and some personas can fade while others are emphasized outside of election campaign periods. These personas can also be intertwined, with some more present in different parts of the campaign than others. For example, towards the end of the campaign, candidates tend to negotiate their personal feelings and close ones more on their posts. Also, some representations of self may become more assertive with particular topics. The representations of political persona and the different types of self are shown in Figure 16. These will be deliberated in my analysis, and I will present the completed final model of brand type representations in my discussion in Chapter 7.

As Figure 16 shows, the informing self remains more ad-like by nature, and there is neutral information on the campaign-trail and possible media appearances, typical to one-way communication that informs the public, often used in social media (see Šimunjak 2018). The listening self promotes dialogue, provides the constituents questions, and encourages them to send in their questions. Here, the candidate also replies to the electorate and is actively present, showing that they follow the public pulse and use it for agenda-setting. The topic-orientated self is similar to the topic politician introduced by Isotalus and Almonkari (2011). This persona communicates topic issues, can present longer, thoroughly argued texts, and discusses policies in social media. They also give wider information on topic issues and present multiple dimensions of politics and decision-making. The personal self negotiates private, even intimate topics on their social media. This can vary in the level of depth of intimacy, but often, i.e., family members or private life matters are negotiated with ease. Feelings are naturally expressed related to the topics that are discussed, and the communication resembles that of a private profile and the comments have a resemblance to those written to friends. The networked self focuses on mobilizing the electorate and showing a connection, for example, through virtual back-patting (see Svensson, 2014) and exploiting the party leader's exposure and brand. The networked self also uses the exposure to recruit volunteers and donors through social media. Also, party agenda promotion is central in the communication, and sometimes the party voice is stronger than the individual politician's voice.

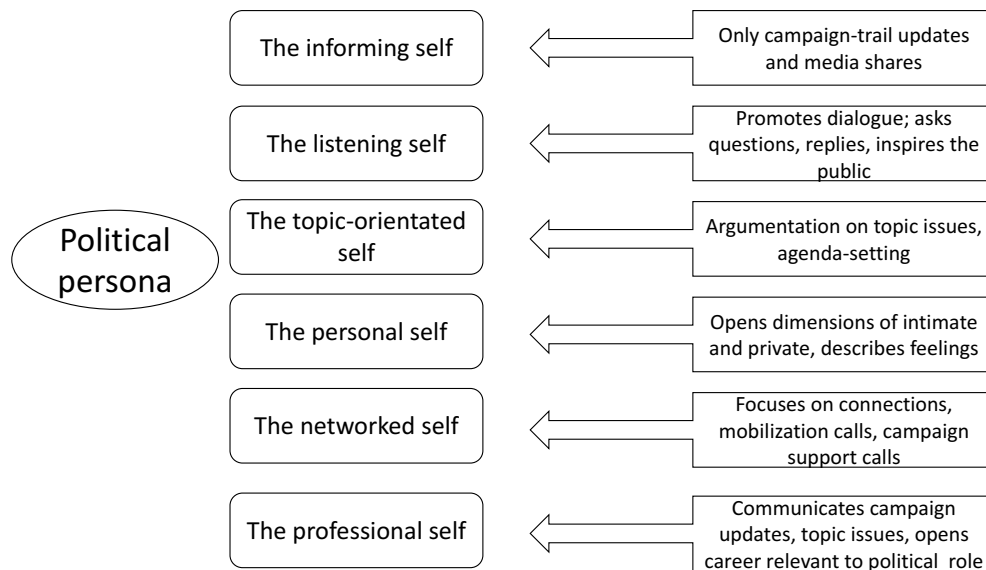


Figure 16. Political persona and different types of self

The professional self communicates dynamically in multiple dimensions. They promote the campaign, but do it on a more personal level communicating their persona and negotiating their credibility through their profession as a background for their political role. Examples might be a business CEO managing budget negotiations, or a former athlete managing sports representation issues. Private issues are only brought up if they relate to topic issues, for example, motherhood as part of understanding family planning and welfare related to families. The private dimension, sometimes even intimate, is used only concerning politics and topic issues, where it benefits the politician in creating an illusion of authenticity, authority, or credibility (Figure 16).

Identity in real life is negotiated through interactions, and online, it is a plethora of interactions. The arena can indeed become global with the possibilities the online world offers. This identity concept is not about pseudonymity, but more about continuous formations and recreation. Turkle's (1995: 10) identity game is about creating alternate personalities. However, the focus of this study is on constructing a personal brand through the persona of existing identity. When discussing persona in this study, it is regarded as separate from pseudonymity or other situations where false identities are constructed. This research considers brands, personas, and identities in relation to real personas – in this case, personas with established recognition – and analyses how they negotiate their personas and how others contribute to that negotiation. However, it needs to be remembered that sometimes a professional persona, especially the one which is publicly presented, can be different, or a more carefully and strategically constructed

representation, from the private person; hence the use of the term persona. A professional persona is constructed for a specific purpose, even for a particular audience. In this study, I am looking at political personas, more specifically candidates, who use their public self-representations to appeal to the electorate.

4 RESEARCHING PERSONAL BRAND CONSTRUCTION ON FACEBOOK

Online discussions have become central in election campaigning because they gather significant exposure and can similarly affect perceptions and views as do campaign advertisements (Diehl, Weeks & Zúñiga, 2015). If Rudd's (2016) argument that the image of an individual politician can be a more substantial factor in voting decisions than the parties' values or stance in policies also applies in Finland, it is significant to understanding personal brands and how they can be constructed and utilized by both candidates and the public. Campaign communication develops continuously, so new research is needed on the topic. Since 2010, social media has been part of the campaigning of all major parties and politicians in Finland, and the number of people following campaigning and news through social media is increasing.

The use of social media by politicians in Finland has mainly been studied with quantitative analysis focusing on Twitter (Comet, 2014; Vainikka & Huhtamäki, 2015). Qualitative research in the field of political communication has been called for (Mokhtar, 2017), and this study addresses that call. The approach of analyzing content and what is actually said has also been done by Larsson (2015a) in regard to Norwegian political communication on Facebook. Thus, I contribute to the research on Finnish political candidates, the public, and their online communication during campaigning. While the internet does not have a significant role in forming political core values, it affects the forming of opinions on individual politicians and topics (Hoff, 2010). Mokhtar (2017) also emphasizes the importance of image and identity in political brand communication, so supporting the original idea of this study. Especially, understanding the communication that takes place between the public and political candidates is important as professional campaigning shifts even more towards social media channels.

I start this chapter by presenting the research problem in section 4.1. The analysis model and methodology are explained in 4.2. In section 4.3, I explain the data collection process and the research method used for the analysis. The deliberation of credibility, validity, and reliability central to this research is described in section 4.4, and the ethical considerations for the study are presented in the last section.

4.1 Analyzing Social Media and Personal Brands

Since my theoretical framework is modified from different lines of thinking and the analysis combines quantitative and qualitative methods with a prominent focus on the latter, they are summarized here in relation to the research questions

and discussed in terms of how each contributes to answering each question. The questions and the route to achieve each aim are presented in Figure 17.

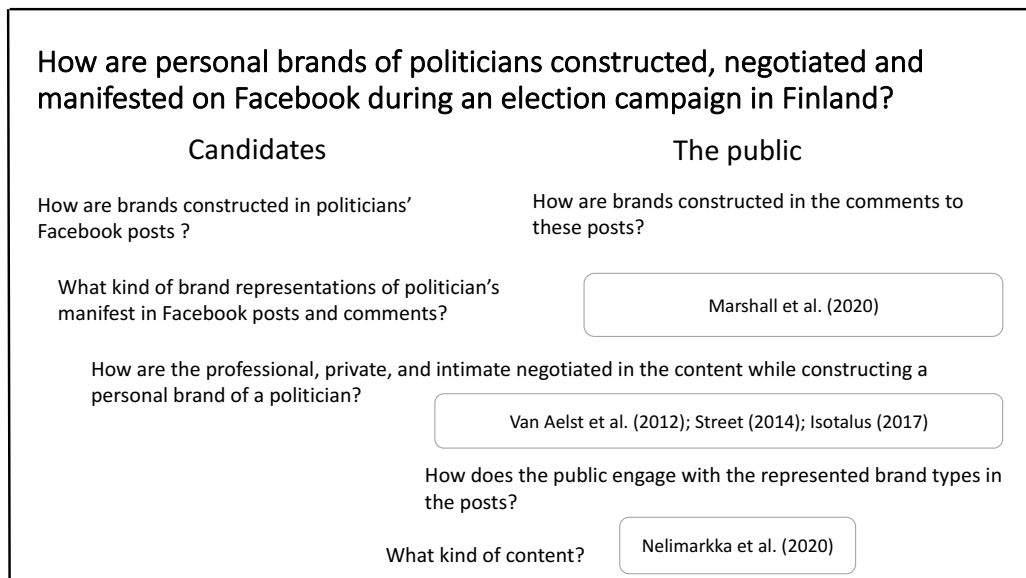


Figure 17. Research Questions

Research questions 1 and 2 concern the posts and comments of politicians' Facebook pages, and how a politician's personal brand is constructed in them by the candidates themselves and the public that is participating in the discussions on the page.

1. How are these brands constructed in politicians' Facebook posts?
2. How are these brands constructed in the comments to these posts?

The more specific questions that guide the analysis and help to define answers for the two main questions are:

- a) What kind of content is produced by politicians on their public page posts?
- b) What kind of content is produced in the comments by the public in the comments on the page?
- c) How does the public engage with the politicians' posts?
- d) What kind of brand representations of politicians manifest in the posts?
- e) What kind of brand representations of a politician manifest in the comments?

- f) How are the dimensions of professional, private, and intimate negotiated in the content?

The analysis consists of four phases. The first phase is the initial data browse, reading the data to gain an overview of whether the chosen analysis units and frames function for the analysis, and what needs to be added to the analysis. After this phase, both frames were accordingly modified. The dual actor model also required deliberation in regard to the chosen operationalization approaches, and this also affected the analysis.

Secondly, after the initial phase, a more careful analysis is carried out regarding the categorization of content. This first analysis was done through quantitative analysis with an operationalization modified from Nelimarkka et al. (2020). This offers a deeper quantitative perspective of how the content of the page is characterized and what it can be used for. It also helps to determine how much personal content in relation to other content, specifically on topic issues, there is in the data for both the candidates' posts and the public's comments. This way, the idea of sharing professional and private can be viewed in relation to the data as a whole.

The third phase is the manual analysis of the content using the modified operationalization from Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer (2012). For this, example texts are collected and the results are presented in chapters 5 and 6 with their analysis. In the background, the idea of Facebook affordances has been considered for both the candidates and the public, which contributes to determining the use and benefits of Facebook in campaign communication and personal brand construction. The manual analysis rounds are repeated to ensure the validity of the study.

Answering these questions maps the route for examining what is happening in Finnish campaign discussions on Facebook, and how politicians' personal brands are discussed in this context. Personal brands are usually not constructed in a void nor as a separate issue. Therefore, to understand them in this context, it is essential to portray their construction in relation to the context as a whole. However, it is also essential to recognize that the public only view parts of the discussion. Therefore the content is analyzed mainly as separate messages and what is expressed in them, instead of as complete comment threads.

The fourth and final discussion in Chapter 7 draws the above stages together, allowing conclusions to be drawn as to how politicians' personal brands are constructed, negotiated, and utilized in Facebook during an election campaign in Finland. The earlier discussed theoretical framework is applied along with the

persona dimensions model from Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020) to present the brand type representations of politicians recognized on Facebook.

4.2 Analysis Models and Methodology

Defining a functioning analysis operationalization for the content of candidates' pages and finding how their personal brand is constructed on the posts and comments during an election campaign is challenging. Partly because there is a gap in the research related to both Finnish political communication on Facebook and brand construction in campaign communication, and also because brand construction, the personal brands of politicians, and also social media develop rapidly. Thus, research is needed where new types of methodologies and a combined approach to fields and methods are applied.

The theoretical framework in this study combines recent ideas on the representation of self and the personalization of politics. These are further modified to provide a model for studying the politicians' brand constructions in Facebook. An important starting point is Marshall, Moore and Barbour's (2015; 2020) work focusing on studying production, dissemination, and public identity exchange. This provides the baseline that celebrities and public personalities all need, in order to manage how they produce, spread and negotiate representations of their persona. The development of persona in this study is discussed through the personalization dimensions presented by Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer (2012), which considers that a politician's personal brand is not constructed in a void, and results from continuous interactions and active meaning-making and giving. This framework is then placed in the context of social media, which provides an ideal stage where interaction is direct, access is not limited, and the information flow is easy and conducted in real-time.

This exploratory study has an approach closely linked to grounded theory where data is considered in various ways, and the analysis starts from the data instead of proving a theory right or wrong (Glaser & Strauss, 1999: 101–116; Lawrence & Tar, 2013). Here, the election discussion is understood as the phenomenon that will be analyzed in-depth, and which contributes to further understanding the concept of a politician's personal brand. The analysis is based on a qualitative close-reading of the Facebook posts and comments, with a supportive quantitative aspect of engagement and content. Applying both qualitative and quantitative content-analysis contributes to understanding the relevance and magnitude of the phenomenon; namely the social media posts and discussion, and the engagement that takes place during election campaigns. This research approach is associated

with the hermeneutic-phenomenological philosophy of science, and the aim is to create a holistic understanding of campaign communication on social media, specifically Facebook.

With this close data-based content analysis, indicators for a politician's brand construction are identified and used for interpreting the data. This empirical analysis shows how the communication on politicians' Facebook pages can be structured, categorized, and analyzed (Krippendorff, 2019: 86–95), and how professional, private, and intimate domains are negotiated. It needs to be remembered that while private life issues like family or hobbies are not explicitly political, then referred to in the politicians' case as professional, they might be precisely that because politicians' brands are constructed through everything they do. This challenge of distinction is interesting, and perhaps needs to be considered more as an opportunity than a problem.

The unit of analysis used in this study is one post, or one comment to a post. These units are then categorized and structured, links between them identified, and possible patterns used to build a theory of the different manifestations of a politician's personal brand. Analyzing isolated social media messages which are networked by nature (Krippendorff, 2019: 35) is challenging. In online discussions, the flow of communication is typically non-rhythmic, topics tend to change within themes, and topics and comments are disregarded (Laaksonen & Matikainen, 2013: 208) or do not necessarily follow argumentation patterns. In this analysis, the categorizing process is the most relevant in answering the research questions and providing the necessary information on the phenomenon without interruption from the researcher (Hakala & Vesa, 2013: 221, 223). Since the researcher cannot predict what kind of elements and text will be produced in an online discussion, it is more fitting to have a data-based content analysis where the categories are defined a posteriori and rising from the data, instead of being set a priori, prior to the analysis phase.

The data-based content analysis leaves an opportunity to follow up and adapt new categorizations of the content that politicians produce or how the public discuss them. In content analysis, the aim is to describe the data and its core content and to bring out the most relevant (Hakala & Vesa, 2013: 218). This way, the chosen analysis method allows the researcher to find new possible leads on the topic. The chosen method resembles an iterative method, which refers to the type of research where an initial hypothesis is formed and tested, then modified and tested again as needed (Yom, 2015). In this way, the research process is cyclic, not linear, and like a spiral that corrects itself.

The theoretical framework was modified using operationalizations and models as an inspiration, and the preliminary model is presented in Figure 16. While the analysis in Nelimarkka et al. (2020) was performed by random sampling on a more extensive data set, the manual content analysis in this study has been carried out on the complete dataset. However, a change in the election year and the pages selected for data acquisition, and a different research focus justify the need for modifications to their original operationalizations and explain some significant differences with earlier research.

Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer (2012) focus on individual politicians in media, and separate personalization into two dimensions: individualization and privatization (presented in Figure 1). Individualization refers to the increased focus on individual politicians at the expense of parties or policies. This is further divided into general visibility and concentrated visibility. General visibility means that the exposure is generally attached to individual politicians, while concentrated visibility describes the exposure being attached to political leaders, such as the prime minister or party leaders. Likewise, privatization has two dimensions. The detailed focus on personal characteristics includes evaluating the politician's personal attributes and characteristics, and the revelation of private life centers around their social relationships, hobbies, or childhood. Applying this framework, Isotalus and Almonkari (2011) identify two categories in Finnish politicians in traditional media: the charmer politician and the topic politician. My study elaborates this division into the communication carried out on Facebook and the concept of personal brand construction.

The operationalization for analyzing the interaction between candidates and constituents in the parliamentary election of 2015 by Nelimarkka et al. (2020) provides a starting point for the data's content analysis categories. Their approach was in the interaction, and their focus was on the conversation chains instead of individual posts and comments like those featured in this study. There can also be changes from the conditions of 2015 in the way that the 2019 election campaign communication takes place on Facebook, so care has been taken to modify the coding as the data is analyzed. Rapid changes in platforms and audiences can further change the kind of content that is produced, so four years can change online campaign communication. A significant modification is the addition of performance evaluation of the politician for television debates because the initial reading through of the data showed the prominent visibility of this type of content where the politicians' appearances on debates are analyzed and commented on for almost every candidate. These sometimes include comments on their rhetorical skills, leadership, or looks, which supports the privatization dimension from Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer (2012), and are essential for the personal brand

construction by the public because they directly communicate aspects of the candidate's persona. These two analysis operationalizations are used for the quantitative analysis, and further developed with a qualitative content analysis based on the political self model presented in Figure 14, and also on the affordances of Facebook.

The exposure and publicity of a political person are approached through Street's (2014) definitions and idea of the phenomenon of a 'celebrity politician'. Politicians and candidates act in two ways. First, they can use their popularity and celebrity status to speak for public opinion, and second, they can establish their claims using elements of celebrity. The other type of celebrity politician identified by Street is a public figure who uses their publicity to promote political views, but does not seek political power or office. The selected candidates for this study are considered under the first type of celebrity politicians, and they are selected because of this. In the study, celebrity is understood similarly to Street (2004), although politicians are not necessarily celebrities in the traditional definition of the word. Street defines celebrities as those who have more comprehensive representation via mass media than the rest of the population. However, an update for this is needed with regard to the inclusion of social media (Figure 13). The politicians chosen in this study have already had many followers on social media and had exposure on mass media at the beginning of the campaign period, either because of their professional status or for other reasons guaranteeing considerable exposure. Therefore, they are seen as possessing a political personal brand that can be identified and characterized. However, no studies are currently available to show how this can be observed in their Facebook communication.

In the study, using Markham's (2011) categorization, the internet is studied both as a tool where it is used to collect and analyze data that develops in one platform, and as a context for the socio-cultural phenomenon. The latter describes the types of use and discussions that take place online. In line with the categorization by Laaksonen, Matikainen and Tikka (2013: 18), this study explores the online world as a combination of a tool as a means to gather data and analyze it; as a source showing the interaction taking place through an online channel; and as an object in terms of the Facebook channel and its public politician profile pages that are being studied. A fourth category, the place, is the Facebook platform itself, where the analyzed posts and comments are collected for this study.

This research approach shares similarities with netnography, which is the term used to describe the ethnographic research carried out on network communities (Isomäki, Lappi & Silvennoinen, 2013, 158; Hine, 2017). However, the critical difference is that in the arenas of research, profile pages are not considered a

community. Instead, they consist of individual commentators who do not necessarily belong to, for example, only opposing or supporting positions as a group. Some users may only produce one comment, while others may follow the forum actively and become participants on the profile page. Also, the followers of these pages have different motives for their following. Some might follow a politician as a journalist, and some might be looking for opposing arguments to their personal political views. Others can be supporters, or, for example, family members or other close ones. Some followers may have simply chosen to like the page or follow it by accident.

Laaksonen, Matikainen and Tikka (2013: 26) state that the online world requires new viewpoints and bold approaches to data collection and analysis. This study aims to respond to their call through a combination of methods, forming a base with manual data-based content analysis, and adding an application of digital methods specifically in relation to data collection, where quantitative analysis supports the qualitative focus in the analysis. This type of manual content analysis on a politician's Facebook page is rare. A recent study by Metz, Kruike-meier and Lecheler (2020) was based on a similar analysis of 435 posts using a similar theoretical framework. However, their study focused on politician's self-personalization, and the "personalization politicians do to themselves" (see McGregor, 2017), whereas this study also includes the role and comments of the public.

As Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 113, 124, 126) conclude, researching persona means exploring the production process, sharing information, and the public presentation of identity. They also suggest looking into prosographic field studies (PFS) to study the development and spread of reputation and status by analyzing both biographical and digital network data. According to them, persona studies requires the development of methods because the field is new, and it relates to several fields of research. This multi-disciplinary approach is also typical of social media research (Laaksonen, Matikainen & Tikka, 2013: 20) and called for in the field of political communication (Strömbäck, 2021). Especially, as the data sets are multiple, their variance sets a challenge for finding methods that do not require extensive resources to develop the field and increase persona research.

Marshall, Moore, and Barbour (2020: 116) suggest that phenomenology, especially IPA (Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis), could help us understand persona construction as a strategically formed public discourse. This study aims at just that, and consideration is also given to the position and background of the researcher as issues that can affect the interpretation. However, my approach is more comprehensive, and data-based content analysis will be developed as a new

persona research method. As an aspect of expert researcher knowledge, I possess previous knowledge of the candidates and have followed media discussions on them, so I have a deeper understanding of the issues referenced in the data than someone else who may view posts and comments as a unique case. Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 116) point out that instead of generalizing findings, it is more important to obtain specific results and interpretations. Thus, I further posit that pre-existing knowledge can strengthen the analysis and contribute to a better understanding of the data.

The text-focused approach to posts and comments poses a challenge when dealing with links, emojis, pictures, and other images (Laaksonen & Matikainen, 2013: 207). This study will exclude links and images, but will consider emojis when they are used as part of a comment, for example, for signifying irony. Comments that only include an emoji, are excluded from the analysis, to avoid possible misinterpretations. Links are also excluded because the discussion is approached through the idea of what the public see immediately in Facebook, without clicking themselves into additional pages, for example, through the content on their feed. Analyzing images would require visual analysis methods, so photos and videos included in the posts and comments are excluded from the analysis. Similarly, comments that cannot be categorized within the coding frame, for example because of foreign language use or unclear interpretation, will be included in the total number of comments, but left out of the qualitative analysis.

When presenting my analysis in chapters 5 and 6, I provide citations from the data. Since the data is in Finnish or Swedish, I translate the examples as literally as possible, including original typing errors such as small letters. The original citations with their comments are presented in Appendices 2 and 3. These citations may include context-specific details which are not explained thoroughly. These explanations are provided when they are necessary for understanding the functions of the posts and comments.

4.3 Data Collection

The data used in this study consists of all of the posts and comments on the selected candidates' Facebook pages placed during the campaign period of 14.3.2019–14.4.2019. This period was chosen because the candidates had to announce their candidacy on the 14th of March 2019 at the latest, and the election day was on the 14th of April 2019. While many candidates had started campaigning earlier, at this time, the campaigning was most active, and all the candidates were clearly

involved in campaigning. In total, the data includes 16,175 Facebook posts and comments.

Table 2 shows the number of votes received by the candidates (Eduskuntavaalit, 2019), and the number of posts, comments and reactions for each candidate in the data. The vote count is included to provide an understanding of how successful each candidate was in the election. The number of posts and comments in the manual analysis differ from the numbers that the collection program *Facepager* produces for the data (Jünger & Keyling, 2019), and this mainly results from moderated content and privacy settings that result in blank result lines when the data is fetched.

Table 2. The data in numbers and vote count for the candidates

Party	Candidate	Votes	Posts	Comments	Reactions
The Left Alliance	Andersson	24542	198	2617	63718
The Christian Democrats	Essayah	12397	94	462	9547
The Green Party	Haavisto	20163	70	245	6925
Movement Now	Harkimo	12963	74	627	10619
SFP	Henriksson	14545	74	388	11072
Finns Party	Huhtasaari	12991	29	1327	17149
NCP	Häkkänen	20234	25	364	7742
NCP	Lepomäki	19292	93	1282	24866
Social Democrats	Lindtman	14541	33	607	14717
Social Democrats	Marin	19088	37	521	9264
NCP	Mykkänen	14226	52	407	4992
NCP	Orpo	10790	37	3843	34431
Finns Party	Peltokangas	13114	41	1353	27733
Social Democrats	Rinne	12110	125	2111	21349
Centre Party	Sipilä	16688	40	2894	34310
Finns Party	Tavio	14957	21	135	2678
Blue Reform	Terho	3118	66	835	4539
NCP	Zyskowicz	12556	46	610	8190
Total		268315	1155	20628	313841

Campaigning keeps both candidates and the public more active and alert on political issues. Campaigns reflect their periods, and present a narrative on politicians, parties, and the electorate through different communicative acts such as television debates, campaign posters, media articles, campaign events, and social media posts and discussions. Previous campaigns cannot be neglected, but each campaign is built on its own agenda, main themes, and representing

individuals and its context. Sometimes, for example, slogans stick and live on, but often parties start fresh and build strategies that learn from the past. While I agree with Railo and Ruohonen (2016: 289–303) that especially for already elected representatives, the campaign period is not separate from the time they are already in the parliament but more an ongoing communication process with the electorate, the focus in the analysis in this study is on the so-called ‘hot’ campaign period, one month preceding the official election day.

The candidates chosen to be included in the data were selected on the basis of two criteria. They were either vote-pullers or party leaders from parties that were currently in the parliament. This meant that the collected data included the relevant, more visible parties, meaning those parties that got enough votes to be elected in the election of 2015. The exception for this is the Blue Reform party led by candidate Terho in the data, as a party that separated from the Finns Party in the middle of the parliament season of 2015-2019. Also, a current parliament member and vote-puller candidate Harkimo from the National Coalition Party started a political movement called Movement Now, and ran as a candidate for that party during the election of 2019.

The data was collected using a program called Facepager, which had the API rights to fetch data from public pages (Jünger & Keyling, 2019). The data consists of ten candidates who got the most votes in the parliamentary election of 2019, and the party leaders for all nine current parliamentary parties. Some of these are the same individuals. The decision to collect the data from the Facebook pages of party leaders was based on the idea that they are often considered as a significant resource in attracting voters (von Schoultz, 2016). Also, Isotalus and Almonkari (2012) note that the personas of political leaders are most important to the media. On the other hand, vote-pullers can be generally be considered to be attractive and well exposed to the public, and successful in their campaign communication based on the significant number of votes they receive.

The information for the candidates in the data presented in Table 3 has been collected from the website of the Finnish parliament, where the CVs and current information for each parliament member are presented. The information has come from the politicians themselves, which explains differences in their background representations. The diversity among the candidates implies that there will be different types of representations of political persona, diverging styles of using Facebook as a platform, and also varied commenting from the public. There are both male and female, fairly young and older people, and a variety in political background, education level, and general background demographics.


Table 3. Background of the candidates

Photo	Candidate	Party	Votes	Year of birth	Gender	Background	National Political career
	Andersson Li	The Left Alliance	24 542	1987	Female	Bachelor of Political Sciences	Parliament member 2015->, Minister 2019->, Party leader
	Essayah Sari	The Christian Democrats	12 397	1967	Female	Former professional athlete, Master of Business, Economist	Parliament member 2003-2007, 2015->, Party leader
	Haavisto Pekka	The Green Party	20 163	1958	Male	Political career	Parliament member 1987-1999, 2007->, Minister 1995-1999, 2013-2014, 2019->, Party leader
	Harkimo Harry (Hjallis)	Movement Now	12 963	1953	Male	Entrepreneur, reality television person	Parliament member 2015->, Party leader (founder)
	Henriksson Anna-Maja	SFP	14 545	1964	Female	Master of Law, Senior lawyer	Parliament member 2007->, Minister 2011->
	Huhtasaari Laura	Finns Party	12 991	1979	Female	Master of Education, Special education teacher	Parliament member 2015->
	Häkkänen Antti	NCP	20 234	1985	Male	Master of Law, Lawyer	Parliament member 2015->, Minister 2017-2019
	Lepomäki Elina	NCP	19 292	1981	Female	Master of Science in Engineering, Master of Business	Parliament member 2014->
	Lindtman Antti	Social Democrats	14 541	1982	Male	Bachelor of Political Sciences	Parliament member 2011->

Photo	Candidate	Party	Votes	Year of birth	Gender	Background	National Political career
	Marin Sanna	Social Democrats	19 088	1985	Female	Master of Administrative Science	Parliament member 2015 ->, Minister 2019
	Mykkänen Kai	NCP	14 226	1979	Male	Master of Political Science, Economist	Parliament member 2015 ->, Minister 2016-2019
	Orpo Petteri	NCP	10 790	1969	Male	Master of Political Science	Parliament member 2007->, Minister 2014-2019
	Peltokangas Mauri	Finns Party	13 114	1966	Male	Entrepreneur	Parliament member 2019->
	Rinne Antti	Social Democrats	12 110	1962	Male	Bachelor of Law	Parliament member 1979 ->
	Sipilä Juha	Centre Party	16 688	1961	Male	Master of Science in Engineering, CEO status	Parliament member 2011->, Prime minister 2015-2019, Party leader 2012->
	Tavio Ville	Finns Party	14 957	1984	Male	Lawyer, entrepreneur	Parliament member 2015 ->
	Terho Sampo	Blue Reform	3 118	1977	Male	Master of Arts	Parliament member 2015-2019, Minister 2017-2019, Party leader
	Zyskowitz Ben	NCP	12 556	1954	Male	Bachelor of Law	Parliament member 1979 ->

Candidate Jussi Halla-aho, the Finns Party leader, only maintains his political persona on Facebook through a private profile. The lack of public page at the time of data collection forced him to be excluded from the data. There are two reasons for the exclusion of the profile feed. First, the API restricts the collection of the data from personal profiles. At the beginning of the process, it was considered that a manual collection would be carried out. However, after careful consideration of social media research ethics, this profile was excluded from the study as individual profiles should be treated as personal data. Also, according to Facebook's terms of use, political activity can only be carried on political pages that are public, and not through personal profiles. Excluding Halla-aho, regardless of whether he is seen as a strong communicator and considered a strong personal brand in the Finnish political scene, will not affect the party presentation, and there are still pages from two other politicians representing The Finns party in the data. However, Halla-aho is presented in Table 4 because he is referred to in the data and discussed widely in the comments. Therefore, he needs to be introduced in the same way as the other candidates.

Table 4. The excluded candidate Jussi Halla-aho

Photo	Candidate	Party	Votes	Year of birth	Gender	Background	National Political career
	Halla-aho Jussi	Finns Party	30 527	1971	Male	Doctor of Philosophy	Parliament member 2011-2015, Party leader

For additional information on the content production side, on April 2020, I sent an e-mail to the party offices or parliamentary assistants of the candidates, asking about the Facebook content production of the candidates during the election of 2019. The replies are presented in Table 5, and those who did not respond are presented in Table 6. Out of 18 candidates in the data, there were replies regarding 10 candidates from either their personal assistants or the party office. They were asked whether it was the candidate themselves, their campaign office or an outside communication agency posting the content and monitoring the comments on the page. The use of these possible post ghostwriters has been called “postwriting” in the UK study of Sabag Ben-Porat and Lehman-Wilzig (2019), finding that several politicians had parliamentary assistants write at least some of their posts on their behalf. However, the replies I received from most of the candidates in this study did not align with the UK study.

I also asked whether there were strategic guidelines of practice on approaching the comments; e.g. whether they are always replied to, never replied to, or replied to in certain cases, and how they were replied to. For some candidates, there was no reply, so the table just shows either a “No reply” statement or the general guidelines stated by the party office or the party website. The replies follow a similar pattern. None of the parties stated to be using exterior communication agencies for their social media content. The candidates were mainly planning their own social media communication, especially on Facebook. Some candidates got help from the party office (and these were mainly party leaders), or they produced their Facebook posts together with their parliamentary assistants. Usually the assistants would proof read, help with the visualization, or do the actual writing even though the content planning and the text was coming from the candidates themselves.

Most parties stated that they recommend interaction on social media and encourage the candidates to reply to all comments, recognizing the limitation for example in time resources when there are a lot comments and the candidate carries the responsibility for their social media on their own. The National Coalition Party stated as their aim to be “the leading interaction party”. Also, the Social Democratic Party have their social media guidelines publicly available on their party website and highlighted the importance of replying to the comments. The Green Party was the only party commenting that the team moderates hate speech and harmful content from their and candidates’ own channels. The Finns Party was the only party distancing the party from the candidate's own content production, stating that each of their candidates “is responsible for their own social media communication”. (Table 5.)

Table 5. Content production of responding candidates

Candidate	Party	Main communicators	Facebook content production	Guidelines	Exterior Agency
Essayah	The Christian Democrats	1 publicity agent for the party, 1 special assistant	Candidate with the assistant, mainly candidate, routine tasks by assistant, sometimes assistant types	Encouraging interaction within time resources, no strategic guidelines set	No
Haavisto	The Green Party	Team (Candidate + volunteers/ party office staff)	Candidate together with the team	Recommendation for active participation on social media conversation, team helps to moderate content so that hate speech and harmful content is removed from own channels	No
Henriksson	Swedish Finnish Party	Candidate + support from assistant/party office	Candidate mainly, party office with campaign (2019 2 videos + 1 ad)	Following comments, recommendation to reply, "not always easy"	No
Häkkinen, Lepomäki, Mykkänen, Zyskowicz	National Coalition Party	Candidate + assistant	Mainly candidates, assistant might help with proof reading or visualization	Communication training guiding to reply to comments if possible (time resources). Aim: to be "the leading interaction party", highlight interaction, show that comments are read and the most important ones get noticed	No information
Orpo	National Coalition Party	Candidate + assistant, support from the party office	Mainly candidates, assistant might help with proof reading or visualization	Communication training, guiding to reply to comments if possible (time resources). Aim: to be "the leading interaction party", highlight interaction, show that comments are read and the most important ones get noticed	As a party no, no information on specific candidates
Marin	Social Democrats	Candidate	Candidate	Recommendation for active participation on social media conversations, highlighting the importance of replying to comments, party has guidelines for social media communication	No
Huhtasaari Pelto-kangas Tavio	Finns Party	Candidate	Candidate	"Each candidate is responsible for their own social media communication."	No information

Table 6. Non-respondent candidates

Candidate	Party	Main communicators	Facebook content production	Guidelines
Sipilä	Centre Party	No reply	No reply	No reply
Terho	Blue Reform	No reply	No reply	No reply
Harkimo	Movement Now	No reply	No reply	No reply
Andersson	The Left Alliance	No reply	No reply	No reply
Rinne Lindtman	Social Democrats	No reply	No reply	Recommendation for active participation on social media conversations, highlighting the importance of replying to comments, party has guidelines for social media communication

Table 6 shows the candidates for whom there is no information on their content production. For the social democratic party, some information was found on their website where the guidelines for the social media of politicians and party are described.

The data was collected on the 27th of April and the 30th of April, 2019. It was first downloaded into .csv-files, after which it was transformed into Excel files. The data was stored on the researcher's personal computer and an external backup hard drive to collect the originals. The data files were secured with a password.

The data consists of 18 candidates introduced in Table 3, their public Facebook profile pages, posts, comments, shares, and reactions. On Facebook, pages and profiles have ids, and these page ids are used to identify the pages as nodes on Facepager. The ids for the public pages that were included in the data are presented in Appendix 1. The collection fetches were made from posts, comments of posts, reactions, and shares for each page. The program calculates reactions automatically for each page (Jünger & Keyling, 2019) and these were used for the quantitative analysis. The different reaction types at the time of collection were "like" (👍), "love" (❤️), "amazement/wow" (😲), "laughter" (😂), "sad face" (😞), and "anger" (😡). Hayes et al. (2016) regard these reactions as single-click cues describing as much of the sender-receiver relationship as other content.

Facepager is an open-source code data fetching program available online on GitHub (Jünger & Keyling, 2019). It can be used to collect data from Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other networking services. It uses the networking site's API and fetches data through that. In Facebook's case, the program has once been restricted from fetching data from September 8th 2019 until December 2019. Then, the active developers of the program convinced Facebook to open its API for Facepager users through a new application process, thus allowing public data to be fetched again with the program. Several researchers and scientific research organizations such as Social Science One are trying to persuade Facebook away from restricting its API and allow data collection for scientific research (Social Science One, 2021). As in this study, their aim is to understand patterns of behavior in social media, thereby contextualizing the phenomena occurring on and because of social media.

Facepager can only be used for public pages on Facebook (Jünger & Keyling, 2019), and the API restricts fetching personal data, such as names and other identification information. Therefore, on Facebook, it is only possible to fetch posts, anonymous comments, and reactions by numbers and text content. This feature excludes methods like network analysis from the research possibilities permitted by Facebook. So far, there is a limited amount of tools for automated Facebook data collection, which is one limiting factor in Facebook research and analysis. However, there is a growing range of digital research methods (Rogers 2019; Rieder, 2020) where different coding languages and applications can be used to collect data from social media channels. But so far, automated data collection from Facebook is limited to Facepager which is open to everyone, and Crowdtangle (2021), which is Facebook's own tool open to academic researchers through an application process.

4.4 Credibility, Validity and Reliability

There are 16,175 posts and comments and reactions to them in the data, so minor changes in the data will not have a significant impact on the results. In order to ensure the repeatability and reliability of this study, the process of data collection has been explained in detail in section 4.3. However, social media posts can be subsequently modified, erased, and added. Hence, the data is only entirely valid for the collection period if assessed from the viewpoint of matching data requirements.

The restrictions of the Facebook algorithm and limitations of collecting data with Facepager are reflected upon in the process (Franzke et al., 2020). While I tested

new methodologies in this study, the overall validity of the study was ensured by employing a critical approach (Laaksonen, Matikainen & Tikka, 2013: 26). This critical approach was also taken when assessing the data, the theoretical framework, and the significance of the findings. These, together with the detailed ethical deliberation presented in the next chapter, have been applied to ensure integrity, authenticity, credibility, and criticality (see Whittemore, Chase and Mandle, 2011).

In this study, the data and analysis are presented with several examples to ensure the transparency of the process. Creativity has been applied in producing novel methodological designs for analysis, and needed modifications have been made to the design through several data analysis rounds (Whittemore, Chase & Mandle 2011). To promote authenticity (Sandelowski, 1986; Bailey, 1996), I explain the relevant media connections and phenomena needed to understand the content of the posts and comments in the examples which are presented with the analysis.

The potential for researcher bias is considered by ensuring that there were no political ties between the researcher and the candidates. I took no part in the discussion nor performed any other communicative actions on the pages, for example activating the politicians with questions. While I followed media coverage on the election during the campaign, I followed no particular candidates more than any others. In this way, as a researcher, I have aimed to approach the data as would any citizen who would see the online discussion. However, during the analysis, I have considered how my background and earlier knowledge might affect my interpretation (Marshall, 1990).

To ensure the validity of the findings, it is critical to recognize the affordances of each platform and how the platform affects and shapes communication (Castells, 2009). For example, Facebook has specific types of reactions for the public to engage with the posts (Venturini et al., 2018). Thus, only a limited expression of engagement is available. In addition to this, I discuss Facebook's monetizing functions, and their possible effect on my research and data. My analysis is grounded in the data, which supports the validity of my interpretation, and the context and its effect on the findings are considered in the research process.

I recognize that campaign communication takes place on various platforms and not just on Facebook (see also Venturini et al., 2018). Nevertheless, the focus in this study is on Facebook and how that particular platform is used by the candidates and the public in constructing politicians' personal brands. The choice to focus on Facebook was made based on the large number of active Facebook users who are eligible to vote, and also the visibility of political commenting on the platform. Thus, there is a perceived relevance of the platform for political

communication in the Finnish context. In the discussions for research development presented in section 7.4.2, I describe how the methodology is transferable to other contexts and how I have operationalized the framework used earlier in other contexts to apply to my own (Pandey & Patnaik, 2014). The data is presented as it was in the collection phase. Any removed parts resulting from altered length or texts that include private individual's names have been marked with four lines (----). This way, I also consider that a sensitive approach is taken towards those who have written the comments in the data, while maintaining the validity of the data (Whittemore, Chase & Mandle 2001).

The representativeness of social media data does not apply to all populations (Franzke et al., 2020), and applies only to those using social media. The limitation of this dimension is considered through two main issues: 1) The focus of the questions is on Facebook, and the study is limited to considering Facebook communication. 2) The data has been collected only from vote-pullers and party leaders, which is considered throughout the analysis process and noted in the final discussion. Importantly, there are no expectations or claims that the collected data would apply to and represent the vast field of campaign communication and large number of candidates. The data has been purposefully selected to answer the research questions, and the representativeness of the data was considered when setting the aim of the study. Hence, the exposure and recognition of the chosen candidates was set as a prerequisite for answering the research questions.

To ensure credibility, I describe my analysis with various representative examples from the data, thus showing how I come to my findings. Also, the quantitative analysis of the data is presented in chapter 7.4, with tables presenting the number of different types of engagement found in the data, so establishing trust in the interpretation of the data by reinforcement (Carboni, 1995). This way, my findings can be assessed and re-deliberated in future studies. The qualitative focus in my method has allowed me to study my topic with depth, and gives specific information on politicians' personal brands on Facebook in the Finnish campaign context. However, the ethical approaches in managing and analyzing online discussion data that includes thousands of users and their texts have been given extensive consideration in accordance with the IRE 3.0 guidelines (Franzke et al., 2020), and are deliberated next.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines suitable for application to this study have been published by the Association of Internet Researchers in 2019. Their IRE 3.0 guideline (the most

recent guideline for internet research ethics) addresses the problem of informed consent, which is an issue in this study since the posting and commenting individuals whose texts are analyzed in the data were not informed about the study prior to or after the data collection. The research framework supports the interest in the texts as a complete dataset instead of individual posts related to their writer (Franzke et al., 2020). Ensuring the anonymity of the discussants supports the considerations of privacy issues. Markham and Buchanan (2017: 201–202) remind us that the rapid development of digital media requires researchers in the field to revisit their ethical considerations and their application of new methods and data to meet the ethical guidelines of research. Also, a degree of flexibility is needed in adjusting the core ethical principles and applying them to digital media research. This has been the guiding principle in my work, and these guidelines have been reconsidered with reference to the decisions taken on data and the research questions, and again with Facebook closing the API after my data collection and reopening it a few months later.

My primary ethical consideration is one that Mancosu and Vergetti (2020) urge researchers to consider with Facebook: that no harm is caused to the individuals producing the texts that are analyzed or made public, and that no sensitive information is shared about individuals. The data needs to be analyzed with consideration of the intimacy and sensitivity of the data, and how public it has been originally meant to be produced (Paasonen, 2013: 51). In the data, the individuals do not generally express any personal information or anything intimate about themselves, except for their opinions on the politicians or political topics. Also, even though the field is in political communication, the study is not politically sensitive in its content (Franzke et al., 2020). According to my reasoning, the topic of the study should not cause controversy, thereby being less likely to cause harm to the researcher since the aim is not to judge political behavior or measure political ideas in any way. Furthermore, the comments are not analyzed in relation to their writers, and their rights regarding the texts are respected by limiting their citation in the analysis. However, partial citing is allowed for necessary research purposes and is not limited by individual copyrights to the texts. Also, the data minimization aspect is respected by choosing a limited amount of candidates and limiting the time frame to a one-month period (Franzke et al., 2020).

As a general ethical consideration, in the EU, the data complies with the legal regulations protecting an individual's data, and in Finland, the applied directive is the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The GDPR came into effect in 2018 (General Data Protection Regulation, 2018). It concerns personal data processes, which is not applicable for this study since no personal data has been collected, except for the names of the candidates in the study. The only mentioned

names in the data were politicians or journalists. Rare mentions to private individuals in the comments were only by first names, so they could not be connected to any individuals. The GDPR does allow the scientific use of anonymized data.

The data is stored on a personal computer, secured with a password, and managed and presented to ensure anonymity (Franzke et al., 2020). Similar data collection is possible for any individual, since it does not require access to software or groups that are restricted. Facepager is available and free to download from a public GitHub repository. However, as its API access has been subject to change, a similar data collection method with Facepager may not always be possible. Consequently, the data used in this study is unique, which is both challenging regarding its ethical considerations, but valuable regarding the unique opportunity it offers for research.

Since the developers of Facepager need to apply for the use of the Facebook API for the software, Facebook checks that the program is in line with its terms of service (Franzke et al., 2020; Jünger & Keyling, 2019). This ensures that the data fetching process complies with the terms of service of the platform, and that only the functions and collection processes that Facebook itself has allowed are operated. Mancosu and Vegetti (2020) also conclude that ethically and legally acceptable Facebook data research must be non-identifiable. Therefore, the research and research questions have been devised so that no such information is necessary for the research (Franzke et al., 2020.) Finding out the name of the person who has written a particular comment would require going through the page comments individually and comparing them to the original comment in the analysis. Technically individual comments could be found through an extensive search with Google or Facebook's own Search feature. However, the probability of this is low. Also, given that the comments are presented mostly in partial examples, this makes the search for any original comments considerably more challenging.

In McKee and Porter's (2009a) application of internet research, this study takes the view that the communication studied is public, and can be viewed as "public observation or public archive work". Zimmer (2018) reminds us that the public availability of data is not enough to justify the ethical considerations of, for example, the study and collection of Facebook content. As Markham and Buchanan (2012) argue, social media data is still the data of human subjects, which requires subjecting the process to specific ethical guidelines. Considering the dimensions of informed consent, my research data is placed low in regard to data ID, degree of interaction, topic sensitivity, subject sensitivity, and is positioned

towards the public end of the spectrum, in which case McKee and Porter (2009b) regard that obtaining direct consent is not likely to be necessary.

The researcher has not been involved in the discussion or content creation, so the data has not been affected by any false alterations or provocation. There is no need to register or join a specific closed internet forum, so the research process can be considered equivalent to studying old newspaper articles of other archival data. However, different laws direct broadcasting media where the editor-in-chief is also responsible for what is published. In social media, moderation can be used to affect available content. Moderation means that the content is selected, sometimes altered, and sometimes erased if it, for example, includes harmful comments or information that cannot be validated. Online, moderation depends on the platform and the page administrators. In 2019, most of the platforms do not moderate the content produced, since they only claim ownership and responsibility for the technological aspects of the platform and place the responsibility for content with the individuals producing the content. The political parties and candidates have different approaches to moderation and the need for it on their pages, and the implications this might have for page content is considered in the analysis. The data collected is public and accessible to those signed in to Facebook with the limitation that it can be edited continuously because it is online. The discrepancy in the number of comments calculated by Facepager and actual lines of texts available for analysis shows that there has been some editing in the comment threads at least through the later removal of some comments.

Laaksonen, Matikainen and Tikka (2013: 21) as well as Markham and Buchanan (2017) point out that social media's continuous development makes it a challenging object of research. However, the development of Facebook has slowed down lately, and new versions and developments have focused more on visual layout and privacy issues, rather than on the core functions of posting and commenting. During the data period of this study in March–April 2019 and data collection in May 2019, no changes were made to the way pages were presented or how posting and commenting was done on Facebook. However, the way people use social media and its different channels changes, so these types of studies, while presenting the opportunity to categorize and understand how people use social media, only allow for considerations reflecting the specific time in question. Therefore, as Turtiainen and Östman (2013: 55) remind us, it is vital to know the context of online conversations in order to be able to analyze them and evaluate their ethical considerations.

Another challenge in the ethical considerations of social media data is the varying approaches taken within academia to ethical boundaries related to social media

data. Deliberation is needed because those who write comments on Facebook do not automatically sign consent for their social media texts to be used for research. Turtiainen and Östman (2013: 49–67) state that online, when writing posts, the individuals do not always understand or remember the public nature of online contexts. However, while this is often the case, especially with younger people, those participating in the political discussions on a politician's public page can be expected to realize that their comments are visible to the public (Franzke et al., 2020). Political discussion is public. Thus it cannot be limited, and it can be researched. In the case of these public pages of politicians, the participants are aware that they are discussing matters on a public page, even though sometimes they are only addressing the owner of the page - the politician in question. To some extent, this can be viewed as consent to treat the text as public. The data source is comprised of public politician profile pages that do not require the joining of a group, which means that all the data contained therein is public. Markham and Buchanan (2017) also discuss this issue concerning public tweets, and take the position that since the tweet writer is aware of their public nature, they can be viewed to have given tacit consent. I apply this similarly to the discussion conducted in public page posts, although this consideration would differ for a closed private Facebook group discussion. Thus, the idea of waiving consent when consent is impossible to obtain (Markham, 2018) is applied, given that there are thousands of anonymous writers of the comments in the collected data, and they are not part of a community through which they could be reached. In this case, the earlier mentioned consideration of doing no harm is seen as essential, and has been foreseeably met.

Franzke et al. (2020) refer to The Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979), and view that science needs to respect people, beneficence, and justice. In this study, even though the individuals posting on the Facebook pages of politicians have not known of the research being conducted and the data being collected, the ethical considerations fill these requirements. The politicians selected for the data were informed of the study when they were asked who produced the content on their Facebook pages. This happened after the campaign period, but before the data collection process commenced. In Finland, politicians are considered as public figures who have less privacy rights, for example when they are discussed publicly. In the study, they are presented in their public role as politicians and their communication is treated as being part of public discussion, so they can be discussed in research without the need for anonymization. But in consideration of the aspects of respect and beneficence of research, the politicians in question are not assessed on their individual abilities to construct personal brands in this study.

There are similar types of research within the field of political communication that can be posed as an ethical guide for evaluating the close analysis of the posts and comments in this study. Rossini et al. (2018) have similarly applied the ethical guidelines by the Association of Internet Researchers in their study of Facebook messages and tweets with content analysis. Another similar dataset in the study of Nelimarkka et al. (2020) was collected from the 2015 electoral campaign and anonymized. Their main argument is that the individual comments are not discussed and the page content is analyzed separately from the users. In this way, the principle of anonymity is fulfilled similar to this study. The focus on text is typical of people researching online contexts (Franzke et al., 2020; White, 2002), and these studies also argue that analyzed online discussions can be considered as public non-sensitive information. Especially, as the forum is public and if the content does not include any sensitive information, the informed consent of the citizens producing the collected data is not seen as ethically necessary (McKee & Porter, 2009). However, because the focus of the study is not on the individuals but rather on the texts and content they produce, their rights for their texts needs to be considered. In this study, since the texts are not used as a whole and are treated as part of the dataset and analyzed in terms of what meanings are negotiated, limited citations can be presented as part of the scientific research.

Similar reasoning for not causing harm to individuals (McKee & Porter, 2009) has also been expressed in the study of Larsson (2015a) on Norwegian politicians' pages on Facebook, and for the selection of data to exclude private profiles. This is reassured by not identifying the discussing private individuals, and seeing that only their texts or choices of topics or words are analyzed. However, while the politicians producing the initiations of discussion are discussed by name, they are represented with their public politician role in the study. Therefore, ethical reporting, neutral consideration, and the scientific emphasis on analyzing the text are carefully focused upon. With these considerations taken in mind, this presented study and the method of data selection can be assessed as filling the current ethical requirements present at the time of study.

5 CANDIDATES CONSTRUCTING PERSONAL BRANDS

In this chapter, the analysis of the posts from the candidates on their public pages is presented by discussing the candidates as actors in the brand construction. The comments of the public and their analysis is shown in the next chapter. I have categorized the posts, and my analysis follows that categorization. The sample tables of the original comments and their translations are in Appendix 2. In Chapter 7, I discuss how the politicians' personal brands manifest in the data, and will present the findings with the affordances for Facebook in section 3.3.2.

In the first section, 5.1, I analyze the content of the posts from a quantitative perspective presenting the percentages of the most visible types of content in the posts. This gives an overview of how candidates communicate on Facebook, and provides the context for brand construction. After this, a thorough manual analysis of all of the posts is performed, together with a presentation of text samples from the posts. This manual analysis is presented in section 5.2 and divided into different categories with a detailed analysis for findings on persona construction and personal branding.

In data-based content analysis, the theoretical framework provides categories where the data can be coded. However, the data can also present a need for new or modified categories, thus directing the analysis and guiding the researcher to consider the data and what it shows. Also, after finalizing the coding framework for analyzing the content, it is possible to look closer at the findings.

In the coding process, the operationalization was developed during the first and second reading of the data. After this, the data was coded in an Excel sheet, and representing example citations for each category were placed in a separate file so that examples could be presented together with the findings. The same post could be coded for several categories, and multiple times, because the posts were both personal and political at the same time. For example, a candidate could be announcing campaign trail updates, but adding a party leader reference, and describing their feelings about having their family with them that day. This post would then be coded as political, with content for campaign-trail update, but also as sharing their personal life and discussing family. The relevant quantitative calculations for percentages of the content were calculated using the Excel formulas and placed in tables to be presented as findings.

My analysis of the candidates' posts is conducted in three steps, following the three operationalizations and models that have inspired my work. The unit of analysis was one whole post. First, the operationalization modified from Nelimarkka et al. (2020) was used to analyze the content of the posts and comments. Understanding

the context of Facebook during campaigns and the type of content through which personal brands are negotiated can be seen in this first step. Second, Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer's (2012) operationalization for personalization in the media was modified to better fit my context in Facebook and the content produced by the candidates and the public. From the model of political selves and their representation, the analysis will produce brand type representations, which are presented in Chapter 7. Last, the posts, comments and the results from the first two analysis rounds were reflected on through the affordances of Facebook presented in Table 1, inspired by Blegind Jensen and Dyrby (2013) in their work on Facebook use by political parties.

5.1 Content in the Posts

In my analysis, the categories arose from a data-based approach, but they follow and represent the categories featured in the study by Nelimarkka et al. (2020). Their study categorized the content of Facebook posts and comments into the categories presented in Table 7: information and opinion sharing, seeking information and opinions, critiquing and arguing, sharing personal information, socio-emotional functions, formal campaigning, and praising and expressing support. To support the analysis on affordances, I added a category of sharing own content, which included sharing a blog, a speech from a debate or event, or other media content related to the candidate themselves.

For information and opinion sharing, the topic issue posts were easy to distinguish. In them, the candidates brought up policies and agenda-setting either by informing, stating an opinion, inquiring among the public, or by discussing and arguing for or against something. Seeking information and opinions types of posts reflected candidates who asked for an example, or what the electorate felt about a new policy plan. Sharing personal information was coded for posts where the candidates described their daily activities or shared something personal about their family; for example, expressing that they went to vote with their spouse was coded sharing personal and intimate. However, it was also coded as political, since at the same time, it could be viewed as a call to vote by setting an example.

Table 7. Post categories and coding

Nelimarkka et al. (2020) categories of posts	Instructions
Information and opinion sharing	Sharing information, arguing and expressing topic issues
Seeking information and opinions	Soliciting opinions and asking for information, requesting the public to share their thoughts
Critiquing and arguing	Expressing critique towards issues, individual or organizations
Sharing personal information	Expressing personal content, describing family, history, health, feelings, personal life
Socio-emotional	Humor, gratitude, apologizing, greetings
Formal campaigning	Campaign trail, mobilizing, calls to vote
Praising and expressing support	Expressing support for candidates, praising political or non-political actors, praising self
Modifications and additions	
Sharing own content	Sharing blogs, other media content, sharing own speeches

The categories presented in Table 7 were also coded with subcategories to get a more detailed description of the content. Thus, for example, the category of information and opinion sharing was also coded for sharing information, stating an opinion, and topic issues. The results for these more detailed categories are presented later in this chapter.

The focus in my analysis on brand construction was on the privatization dimension taken from Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer (2012) because of the presumption that Facebook would invite more self-personalization (Enli, 2015b). Privatization includes personal characteristics and personal life. In addition to these, they present the dimension of individualization which consists of the variables of general visibility and concentrated visibility. The analysis also included these to present findings on how the general visibility and concentrated visibility were utilized and benefitted from. The original operationalization was modified by changing a few categories to make them more suitable for the data, context, and aim.

In the coding instructions of Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer (2012), for general visibility, the total number of references to the politician and the party are counted in newspapers. Since social media posts and comments are typically shorter than news articles, the categorization of each post was based on whether the politician or party or another party or politician from another party was referred to, so I

disregarded any repeated mentions that occurred in one post. Concentrated visibility refers to the amount leaders that were referenced in relation to the total number of references to political actors. Here, only a reference to the party leader or a reference to the candidate in question were categorized. For politicians' characteristics, references were coded for competence, leadership, credibility, rhetorical skills, and the candidate's appearance. For politicians' personal lives, references were made to family, past life or upbringing, leisure time, and love life. I modified these last two categories the most since I felt it was necessary to explore these aspects more deeply, in order to understand the personal brand construction. Therefore, I added coding for family, childhood and hometown, leisure-time and interests, love life, and others aspects including health and religion. Also in the analysis, the coding category of intimate includes family and love life, while past, childhood, hometown, and leisure time are referenced as private life content. References to the candidates' history were only coded for their political characteristic if they were part of their political career, for example, their decisions taken as a minister. These were coded either for competence, leadership, or credibility, depending on the message and what the aim was.

References to the candidate were counted for the posts when they used a clear "I think" or "My view is" type phrase, whereas if they made "My party views" or "The x party proposes" type references, these were not coded as personal or having concentrated visibility because the candidate spoke for the party. For their characteristics, references were coded if the candidates themselves stated a value or highlighted their competence on an issue, for example, through their background. Leisure-time and interests were coded when the candidate posted having spent their free time somewhere or doing something. References to music, culture and sports were also coded for this category.

The post numbers in the manual analysis did not match the post numbers reported by Facepacer and presented in Tables 10 and 11. This shortcoming results from using the program. Despite several collection rounds, some posts and comments came back as blank lines on the Excel spreadsheet, and can result from either privacy settings or moderated content, where erased posts are not collected but result in a blank line. These were disregarded in the manual analysis, resulting in a conflicting total number of posts and comments. However, the large number of posts and comments balance this data imperfection, and did not cause a significant deficit for the analysis.

The most visible post categories, where more than 5 % of the posts where of that category, are presented in Table 8. The decimals have been rounded off the numbers. Categories include sharing information, topic messages, stating opinions

and taking positions, sharing personal information, campaign trail updates, calls to vote, campaign trail in media, and sharing own content.

Table 8. Most visible content on posts

Category	% found in content, n=713
Topic message	50 %
Sharing information	39 %
Stating an opinion or taking a position	34 %
Campaign-trail updates or promotion	32 %
Sharing a hyperlink / own content elsewhere	20 %
Expressing feelings	16 %
Campaign-trail on media	16 %
Call to vote	15 %
Sharing personal information	8 %

As Table 8 shows, 50% of the posts discussed topic issues. This amount supports Isotalus and Almonkari's (2011) findings on most Finnish politicians being represented as "topic politicians". However, some shared personal information, and from all the posts, 8% included references to personal information, but mainly focused on particular candidates. Some shared no personal information on their posts which supports the earlier findings of several Finnish politicians wanting to represent themselves only through topic issues and their political career and decision-making. However, Gerodimos and Justinussen (2015) found in their study on the Obama presidential campaign that the followers engaged more with campaign messages and policy-orientated posts, so focusing on topic issues can benefit the candidates.

The second most visible content (39 %) was sharing information, which was usually combined with the most prominent category since politicians often communicated topic issues by sharing information simultaneously. Thus, candidates were using their visibility to educate the electorate on matters and open the decision-making processes and background for topic issues. The third-largest category of stating an opinion or taking a position, was often combined with the first two most visible categories. However, this category was often coded with a more careful interpretation, and candidates did not necessarily state their opinion firmly. Instead, they wrote about things such as "the party recommending the following legislation", so they often separated these topic issues from their persona. Campaign-trail updates or promotion was present in 32% of the posts,

indicating that the candidates see Facebook as a convenient forum for announcing more real-time updates, and that they use it almost as an information board instead of a discussion thread. As seen in Table 8, nearly a third of all the messages (32%) were announcing appearances at different locations or describing campaign activities during the campaign tour. This supports previous findings on candidates mainly using Facebook for campaign-trail updates and other information sharing activity (Nelimarkka et al., 2020).

Even though not a lot of personal information was visible on the posts, 16% had expressions of feelings in them. These were often produced together with the campaign trail updates or towards the end of the campaign related to expressions of gratitude for the campaign (Table 8). These types of feeling posts seemed spontaneous. Thus, they support the authenticity illusion or the idea that the content appears authentic and genuine (Enli, 2015a). The candidates might have added feelings to make the posts more fitting to the platform, which steers them towards more personal content creation. However, since most candidates claimed to write their own content, it is natural that the posts seemed more spontaneous and included their feelings, especially towards the end of the campaign where posts expressed gratitude for the team and the constituents. These posts also presented what McGregor (2017) discusses as humanizing elements, where the politicians create more authentic presentations, thus getting closer to the electorate. This leads to the decision of raising a brand type representation of the 'humane politician' when they communicate the private and intimate dimensions of their persona.

Table 8 shows that even though social media platforms offer an easy opportunity to share other content, only 20% of the posts shared the candidates' blog posts, tweets, or different types of content that could be found elsewhere. Also, these were focused on particular candidates who were doing mainly this activity on their posts. The limited sharing of their own content indicates that the candidates were not using the affordances of Facebook to their full extent, and therefore there is a lot to develop to benefit fully from the added exposure and visibility that Facebook offers as a platform.

Surprisingly, only 15% of the posts discussed the category that could be regarded as the most significant during the election - the call to vote. These posts were also focused on particular candidates. Even though the main message when campaigning is to sell the idea of voting and the candidate's number, only a few posts included the candidate number or encouraged people to vote. Some calls to vote were also neutral information posts on where and how to vote, instead of direct calls to vote for a particular candidate. This suggests that the candidates

were afraid to sell themselves as candidates on Facebook, and focused more on sharing information on policies and announcing where people could meet them during the campaign. Also, it implies that in their Facebook activity, the candidates focus on the audience who are already familiar with the candidates and their basic information (Table 8). Again, they seemed to be using Facebook merely as a place for making announcements and one-way communication, instead of challenging and engaging constituents for interaction and taking action.

Table 9 shows the less visible content categories that were present in 1-5% of all the posts. These include expressing ideas or suggestions, disagreeing with opponents, greetings, comments on other media presence, and praising non-political actors.

Table 9. Less visible content

Category	% of content, n=713
Disagreeing or expressing rejection to opponents	2 %
Greetings	2 %
Praising a non-political actor	2 %
Expressing and idea, wish, or suggestion	1 %
Comment on other media presence	1 %

Table 9 indicates that even though Strandberg (2008) suggests that social media content is more negative and campaigning there is often about attacking others, the Finnish candidates did not typically present disagreement or reject other candidates. This is also opposite to what Railo et al. (2016: 333) suggest as the possibility of social media raising critical voices towards opponents, and might be linked with the consensus seeking culture seen in Finnish politics, opposite to for example the US where it is typical to see campaigns that even attack opposition candidates. Instead, they only discussed their own or their party's view, and in this way, they were also not promoting any exposure of other candidates, even in a negative tone. Table 9 also shows that candidates only rarely promoted non-political actors during the campaign. Only 2% of the content included these types of mentions, and they mainly included posts where candidates expressed gratitude to their close ones or other non-political actors. The findings also show that candidates were not expressing ideas, wishes, or suggestions during their campaign. Instead, they were communicating ready to be published topics and agendas. This also implies that they were not on Facebook to discuss and negotiate, but rather to inform.

Other categories were only present in less than 1% in all the posts, so may not be considered as significant as the data categorized in Tables 7 and 8. In the next chapter, I will focus on the manual content analysis of the posts.

5.2 Posts as Acts to Negotiate the Brand

The manual content analysis operationalization used in this study is modified from Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer's (2012) coding instructions for analyzing media content and the personalization of politics. The original operationalization was created for analyzing news articles, so some adaptations were needed to apply the frame to social media posts and discussion. The main changes were the addition of references to free-time with reference to hobbies and interest in the category of the personal life of a candidate, and a reference to other, with health and religion. The addition of "Sharing own content" was added to see how candidates strengthened their brand by adding exposure to content on or by them elsewhere, thus enabling what Chadwick (2013) describes as a hybrid media environment where different media content supplement and feed each other. Importantly, a further analysis for all the candidates will help to develop the analysis frame, thereby providing a model for future social media discussion analysis in the context of political campaigns.

Figure 18 shows how the content of the posts was categorized into different types of content, and these are presented in the coming chapters. In the analysis, these different types were represented how a politician's personal brand was negotiated. Different politicians use different styles, and this was also analyzed to produce a model for brand type representations.

The first phase of browsing through the posts for each candidate showed that, unlike expected, it is not only the page owner who posts and initiates discussions and others commenting. After the first phase, the first analysis frame was developed. The content analysis is shown through examples collected from the data. These examples are presented in Appendix 2, and coded separately with A1-A35 in a table which shows the original and the translated citation. Each example is either a representative of typical content in the data or a unique type of post. In this way, a holistic view of the discussion can be presented in the analysis, and no type of content is left out because of the amount of a particular type of content. The posts were treated as discussion initiations as termed in Farina's (2019) outline for Facebook analysis. However, in the analysis, the post is used as the unit of analysis. The comments for it were analyzed separately because the actors in the construction for the personal brand in these two elements are different.

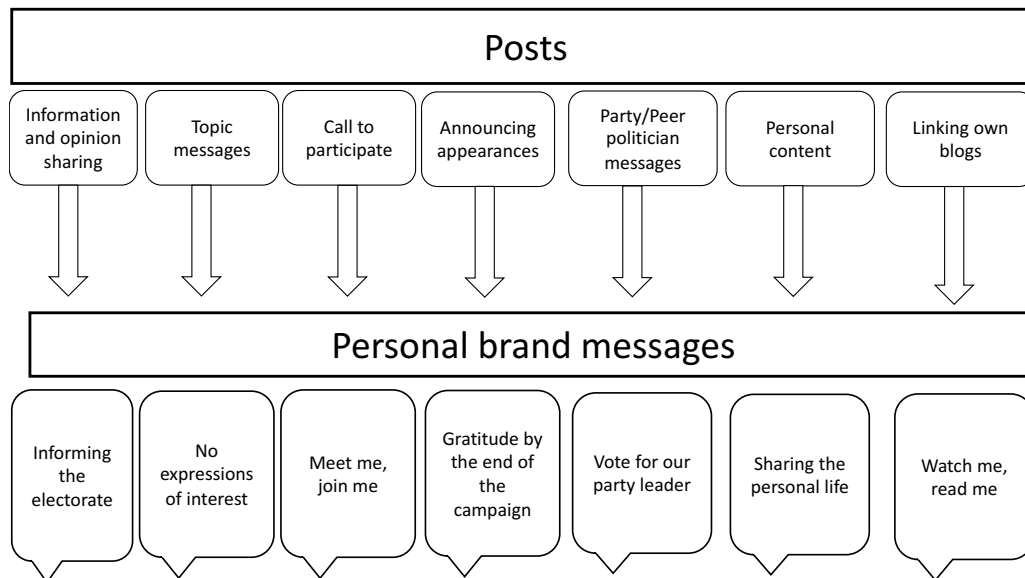


Figure 18. Post types

Since there was no critique or arguments towards issues, individuals or organizations expressed in the posts, this category has been left out from the following chapters describing my qualitative analysis.

5.2.1 Informing the electorate

This information and opinion sharing category included posts where information was shared, and topic issues were discussed by stating opinions or communicating agenda-setting. These types of messages constructed the brand types of the topic politician and the professional politician. The topic politician resembles the type of politician introduced by Isotalus and Almonkari (2011). The variety and amount of these types of messages support their findings that many Finnish politicians were communicating themselves as topic politicians, and it is the most natural representation for them. This shows that the Finnish political communication style to be tightly connected with topic issues and policy messages. Often these were joined with a call to vote, or to announce a television debate or a given interview, and in this way also forming Chadwick's (2013) hybrid media environment, where content is shared and interlinked between different types of media.

One candidate primarily represented the topic politician by discussing topic issues in lengthy posts that can be seen as exceptional on social media, where shorter content less focused on text is preferred. This candidate represented humane content with "stories from the field," which promoted party politics. The content on the post remained strictly professional and issue-centered. It can further be

observed that since this candidate was female, this contradicted Railo and Ruohonen's (2016: 255) conclusion on the election of 2007 that female candidates would portray a more informal image of themselves than male candidates. However, the candidate refrained from revealing private life content which supports earlier findings.

Have a good Against Racism day! Some parties turn people against each other and promote racism so that they would not have to talk about social welfare. To us, equality and the non-discrimination of people are the most important starting points - now and always. Every day we do everything we can so there would be no space for racism and everyone could live their lives without the fear it causes. There is no space for racism and discrimination in our Finland. #YouDecide (Appendix 2, A2.)

As seen in the example, current events were also attached or referred to in the post messages. Attaching topic issues to current events such as the National Days for Minna Canth, Mikael Agricola, or the school children's environment strike benefited the visibility of these topics in the media, and promoted discussion on social media. Increasing the online discussion can give added exposure to the topics discussed. The type of messages attached to national days resembled communication agencies' style of planning a calendar where content can be personalized with special days or events. Here, the affordances of Facebook as a tool became visible, and in this way, the candidates could promote their activities and opinions in a more spontaneous and natural tone instead of marketing their achievements which could cause an adverse reaction or at least less engagement among the electorate (see Gerodimos & Justinussen, 2015).

Another way of discussing topics was by describing specific actions and work-related events that the candidates were part of, and attaching those to the topic messages:

Today we were sitting together with the Green party exercise and sports people thinking about the Green Party aims for sports politics. A top skier Martti Jylhä was describing the activities of the Protect Our Winters Finland organization - which was how to prevent climate change and secure real winter. Great conversation - and the athletes are with us in preventing climate change. (Appendix 2, A3.)

These types of messages were used to negotiate the networked self and the professional self by bringing up professional activities, such as the candidate's current role either as a minister, parliamentary representative, or member of a special committee. I added this type of professional role content to the Van Aelst,

Sheafer and Stanyer (2012) operationalization of privatization. These messages highlighting past and current expertise through the professional role rose from the data in several categories, both in the posts of the politicians and the comments from the public. They also often showed the viral nature of emotional messages (Laaksonen & Pöyry, 2018; Rantasila, 2018), raising more discussion and getting more reactions. The candidates communicated and strengthened their brand through their profession and the activities they were performing in their roles, and the expertise they possessed because of their previous and current roles, thus highlighting the dimension of professional self in their brand.

The topic posts were rarely more extended argumentation on a single topic. Instead, they were collections of ideas around a theme or an announcement of central topics that the party or candidate was focused on during their campaign:

Offering a new frame! A way to remind friends that 1) work must be profitable, 2) Finland must be open and secure, and 3) we need a future without emissions. And most of all, voting is important and all help counts. #tottaKai (Appendix 2, A1.)

Here, the candidate was also reminding people about voting, while stating the key topics and central issues attached to their brand. This type of issue ownership has been discussed by Petrocik (1996), and it was seen with the candidates when they chose only a few topics for discussion; those usually being the key topics that they want to be remembered for and were promoting. In this way, the topics became part of their brand.

Van Dalen et al. (2015) have also reported this type of limited content on topic issues discussed in Facebook in the Danish parliamentary elections of 2011, noting that the Facebook agenda was separate from the media and the public agendas. Skogerbø and Krumsvik (2015) have also found little evidence of agenda-setting on social media, and this limitation supports my findings on candidates using Facebook as a bulletin board, where opinions were rarely asked for or debate encouraged. Instead, the information was merely transmitted and stated.

Party leaders especially communicated their topic messages from a 'party first' perspective, this way describing the party agenda:

The movement among young people is showing that there is hope for humankind. The concerns of the young people must be answered. More carbon sinks are needed. The Center Party challenges Finnish actors to plant an extra 10 million trees of new forest next summer. #environment #forests (Appendix 2, A4.)

Here, they were telling how the party approached the topic and what kind of stance the party was taking. This communication method with a party perspective was typical for party leaders who also communicate these topics to the broadcast media and represent their parties there. In this way, the considerable exposure of party leaders was often used to promote the party's agenda-setting.

5.2.2 No expressions of interest

The category of seeking information and opinions presented few results. From the data, I found rare examples for soliciting opinions and asking for information. This lack of expressions of interest for the constituents' thoughts highlighted the one-way communication reported for the last election by Nelimarkka et al. (2020) that was visible in most candidates' posts. One candidate was able to show their interest by encouraging the public to ask questions:

I believe there currently isn't enough dialogue being held about Finnish politics and the elections in English. This is important for foreigners in Finland to effectively take part in our society. I want to help and enable expats residing in Finland to use #AskKai and ask me about the biggest policy questions they have now that we are only few days from the election Sunday. So please, let me hear 'em and I'll do my best to answer online and in the next video. Every question is important. Remember to vote! ----
(Appendix 2, A5.)

This candidate was often encouraging the public to ask questions on the page and promised to answer them. He also wrote some content in English to serve the English-speaking audience. But even though he promoted questions and dialogue, there were not many comments on the page. Possibly this resulted from the use of English. However, these posts still expressed the promotion of dialogue and a willingness to listen.

5.2.3 Glimpses into the personal life

The posts representing personal content were separated between private and intimate, and are presented in this category of sharing personal information. Generally, there were not many posts on anything personal. Typical examples of personal in the posts included comments on the family dog, the spouse or the children, or something reflecting the candidates' childhood, home, or current living areas. For traditional media, Perna, Niemi and Pitkänen (2009) have described this inclusion of non-political topics as "the expansion of the media

exposure of politics”, and it also applies well to social media content. Other possible content coded for this category concerned health and feelings. It was also noted that those candidates who chose to discuss family and their love life publicly were doing it even more than, for example, presenting leisure-time activities.

There were only a few occasions of mentioning age or anything similar to it in the data. One candidate had a birthday during the campaign:

I am turning 40 years old tomorrow! Let's eat soup together (30.3. at 11-13) at Eetunaukio in Pori. I hope you'll be there. (Appendix 2, A6.)

Even when connected to a campaign event, this kind of intimate invitation to celebrate birthdays together represented an illusion of authenticity (Enli, 2015b), and connected the candidate with their audience on a more personal level. References to the candidate's own background can be considered a typical example of more personal and intimate content as it touches on either childhood or family life. However, references to the past in the data primarily referenced political background or career aspects related to the candidates' current political roles. For example, childhood was referred to when the campaign trail touched home municipalities. This is natural since most of the party leaders and vote-pullers in the study were long-term professional politicians with only a limited or no previous career outside politics.

However, previous career expertise can be employed to promote political activity, and an example was seen of a candidate describing how their previous career expertise was used to build their personal brand:

As a criminal lawyer one must know what a leading question is like. Now you can learn it too – by using the Yle Kioski election candidate selection engine. (Appendix 2, A7.)

Here the candidate brought up their profession while simultaneously criticizing the selection engine of the national broadcast media. By promoting their profession while campaigning, the candidate added the career as part of their credibility as a professional characteristic, making it significant in constructing the professional self. Another candidate was known as a professional athlete before becoming a party leader. However, this candidate did not mention their career in their posts, but, as I will present in the analysis of the comments, the public included references to their former career and valued it as an important part of this candidate's brand.

The posts sharing something intimate were unique cases, so these types of posts and extensions to private persona were more occasional one-time openings than a strategic representation of a persona that would be authentic (Enli, 2015b) and personal.

Several candidates mentioned their dogs and the activities they did with them, usually mentioning exercising with them, posting a photo of them, or including them in the campaign narrative:

- 1) We went to a "hairdresser" with Romeo. One must clean themselves up a bit for the election and onwards. Before (photo) After (photo) (Appendix 2, A8.)
- 2) Happily reunited at the campaign street (last time about an hour ago) This voter seemed to always have an empty food cup. 🐶 Pessi by the way had a lot more fans and people wanting to touch him than me 😊 (Appendix 2, A9.)

Communicating family dogs promoted engagement and created non-controversial content, and also gave a personal feeling to the posts representing a safe choice to negotiate personal life. It can be considered as part of the intimate negotiation, as dogs are regarded as family members. Dogs can be used to connect with the ordinary life of constituents, and almost every third household in Finland has a pet, and about 509 000 households have a dog (Tilastokeskus, 2020). In this way, the candidates could represent themselves as one of the people, comparable to an average citizen with a dog, and connecting with voters on a more personal level. It also gave the impression of authenticity and private, while still keeping the rest of the family private and untouchable - almost like inviting the electorate to their home but only letting them look at the garden. For the election of 2007, Railo and Ruohonen (2016: 255) noted that female politicians communicated more about animals in their posts. But in the data, this study found both male and female candidates discussed the family dogs.

Leisure-time references were few, even though the electorate engaged and commented on the posts positively when they were made. In my operationalization, they communicate private life. The limited amount of leisure-time references could also result from a busy campaign period and the lack of leisure-time activities performed during it, and a more extended analysis period might show more leisure-time content from the candidates. Some candidates noted this busy schedule on their posts:

Today I have “charged the batteries”. Enjoy a walk in the Fäboda Forest and skied 12 km along the so-called hiking trail. A lot of ice and some water. But it nonetheless went surprisingly well. And then you have time to think a lot. Three weeks until elections and many interesting rallies, debates and campaign hits remain. I'm trying to get as much as done possible. To be on top and be able to perform well, you also need some time of your own between. At full energy, I am now looking forward to next week. (Finnish) Wonderful Sunday and probably the last skiing for this winter. The Finnish nature is so beautiful. Lets take care of nature's diversity! (Appendix 2, A10.)

Commenting on the Finnish nature and outdoor activities valued in the Finnish culture was also a way for the candidate to engage with the electorate. While Sampietro and Sánchez-Castillo (2020) found Santiago Abascal portraying sports typical to the Spanish culture as part of his persona, the Finnish political candidates communicated their outdoor activities. For the candidate Sari Essayah, who is known for a career as an Olympic athlete, the public were making references to this athletic career. But otherwise, sports was referred to when communicating about daily walks or a Sunday skiing trip, which again relates well with the Finnish electorate who are used to this exercising outdoor culture as being a typical part of a person's wellbeing. This type of content was also encouraged by television journalist Ripsa Koskinen, who made an interview program where she spends free time with the candidates while interviewing them (MTV, 2021). The data shows examples of how this program encouraged the candidates to show, for example, their craft skills and passion for skiing and fishing. With the candidates who chose to share and discuss their appearances on the program, the posts and comments further communicated private dimensions of their personas.

Similar to the leisure-time program, a radio station Radio Nova asked the candidates to write a letter to their young selves. Sharing these letters increased personal content in the data.

---- I wrote 😊 ***--- You don't know yet but in about 5 years from now, you will sit in law school to study to become a lawyer. You will meet a guy there who will teach you studying techniques. I recommend you listen to him because that will help you to graduate in a year and a half. --- (Appendix 2, A12.)

Some party leaders shared their letters on their page this way, revealing intimate and personal content to their audience. The letters negotiated a very personal self with details from childhood, school years, and family life. In their letters, these negotiations, together with significant turning points of their past careers and

political profession represented the privatization dimension (see Van Aelst, Sheaffer & Stanyer, 2012), but went even further than the original operationalization as childhood memories and the past career represented a major part of the letters. This biographical opening to these leading politicians with a concentrated visibility constructed their brands in various ways, and the networked self, the professional self, and the personal self were all present. The illusion of authenticity described by Enli (2015b) was also created in these posts. However, it was not promoted by social media, and the initiative for posting this type of private life content came from broadcast media. The informing self was also negotiated by sharing media content on the candidate. However, the candidates themselves chose to bring their letters to more exposure by publishing them on their posts on the page, revealing a more personal and intimate side to their expected audience (see also Marwick & boyd, 2017).

Another way of negotiating leisure-time was the promotion of national teams in sports:

Absolutely amazing achievement from the Finnish lions! A finale spot is a great thing! 🍷🇫🇮 (Appendix 2, A11.)

These types of posts portrayed the candidates' interests, showing that they cared about national-level competitions while also attaching them closer to the public and making them seem part of the public. Following certain sports and cultural events included these interests in their brand, thus representing both the professional politician type by adding credibility in these topics, and the humane politician type by showing their private life.

My data showed introductions to candidates' leisure-time which gave some specific details. Sometimes these were relevant with their professional role or could be attached to the role:

Here is my classical composition that participated to the Finland 100 -celebration. (Appendix 2, A13.)

The candidate attached national pride by mentioning the Finland 100-year celebration, and the candidate's creative nature by linking their own musical piece for the constituents to listen to. In this way, both the professional and the humane politician brand types were negotiated.

Some candidates included their spouses or family in their brand construction:

Now it was my husband Roope's turn to be interviewed by Ilta-Sanomat. (Appendix 2, A14.)

While the candidate did not post about their private life in addition to this, they shared an interview of their husband, which added exposure to the story, thus adding the husband to the candidate's brand. The candidates made acknowledged choices on whether they discussed their family or spouse on their pages, and some shared stories and mentioned their family more, while others strictly kept the content focused on policy issues. In regard to family life matters, this division in publicity choices supports the simplified division of politicians by Isotalus and Almonkari (2011) into charmer politicians and topic politicians. Railo (2011: 132, 185) has also noted that personal life references are used to polish public image and popularity in profile articles. For some candidates, their role as a parent or a spouse was central in their communications, and such a natural part of their persona that this part of their private life was included in their representation.

Parenthood was brought up by some candidates, both mothers, and fathers:

- 1) These wonderful daughters make sure to keep their mother in good spirits and “up to date” with everything between heaven and earth. And I for one contribute by “knowing a lot”. How can you mom, know all that stuff, sometimes they wonder. But it's simple, I've lived longer 😊 (Finnish) A week ago I spent some time with both girls. Always as much fun. Girlpower! (Appendix 2, A15.)
- 2) Child at home! A week early, but the best morning wake up. 😊 My 15 year old daughter has been on a school exchange in Spain and I went to pick her up from the school. This is great. The girl got to spend a week with another family in Spain and they took care of her. She went to school, got new friends and learned the language. This is what being European and international is in practice and at its best! 🇫🇮 (Appendix 2, A16.)

In both examples, the candidates were negotiating the personal self through private and intimate persona on their posts; the intimate was brought up when discussing the children and their activities. The candidate was a lot more than their professional role here, and again more relatable to the electorate which includes parents as well. This added private self-disclosure is what Enli and Skogerbø (2013) and Meeks (2017) argue social media to invite. Candidates also included messages on their expertise, and as the second example shows, topic messages together with these posts describing their private life.

Several candidates referred to their roles as parents, even though they kept their loved ones separate from their public posts. Otherwise, such content, especially more intimate content, was less visible in the data. However, one candidate's

content presented a prominently personal and private end of the spectrum in the data, highlighting a more complete range of brand representations. This candidate's personal brand was not only about politics, and several private dimension issues were negotiated alongside the political aspects. Together with the family dog, his family and childhood constituted a substantial part of his personal brand on Facebook during campaigning. Some posts were built so that personal issues (like the daughter's Erasmus experience featured in the excerpt above) were used to promote policy issues, thus representing the professional politician and their private roles such as a pet owner and father, thus developing the private politician. This, together with the party leader perspective, constructed a balanced mix of professional and private politician brand types, seeming both natural and authentic (Enli, 2015b).

Private life was not only negotiated through practical issues, and the private side was also shown by emotion in the messages:


Aamulehti tells that "Sanna Marin was the epiphany of cheerful on Saturday." And why wouldn't I have been, because touring Pirkanmaa, meeting people, and talking with them has been the best. In addition to all that, I get to sleep at home every night and be with my daughter mornings and evenings, when normally I am in Helsinki or touring all around Finland as the vice party leader. Tomorrow we'll be excited for the election turnout. Lets hope for a good result for the Social Democratic Party 🇫🇮 (Appendix 2, A17.)

These posts showed the privatization dimension because the candidate's personal characteristics were presented and described. This example was taken from the last campaign day, and these types of emotional gratitude expressing messages were typical in the data during the last few campaign days. They were also coded for the socio-emotional category described in the next chapter when they expressed gratitude in the message. These emotional posts, which also shared personal life aspects, gained public engagement, creating an approachable impression. Here, the candidate's brand is constructed through personality, describing feelings and expressing emotion, highlighting the authenticity perspective emphasized by Enli (2015b) and the humanizing perspective emphasized by McGregor (2017).

5.2.4 Gratitude by the end of the campaign

Socio-emotional posts included humor, gratitude, apologizing, and greetings. Expressions of gratitude were most prominent in this category, and they were

usually directed to either the “home front,” referring to spouse and family,” to the campaign team, or to the voters:

Campaign work done. I am home :) Feeling good! We have gone all in during the last week. Our campaign and the amazing ‘throwing yourself out there’ from people was more than I could have expected. I am satisfied for the debates, they went just like I planned. With this picture, a big thank you and a hug to all of you. Candidates, home front, close ones, the voters  Let's fight for a good Finland and for every single Finn! Let's be responsible. Against hatred and juxtaposition. Let's hope that tomorrow we get to show that we represent the most! (Appendix 2, A18.)

In these posts, the sense of a personal approach was enforced by emotional descriptions of enjoying the campaign, meeting people, and negotiating private life, especially with intimate content. These posts represented the humane, networking, and professional politician's brand types by combining the private as genuine feelings and also the political role in campaign work. The affective dynamics of social media networks described in earlier studies (see Laaksonen & Pöyry, 2018; Papacharissi, 2015; Rantasila, 2018) were used to engage constituents and to create the illusion of authenticity (Enli, 2015b).

5.2.5 Meet me, join me

This category of formal campaigning included posts announcing campaign-trail updates, mobilizing the constituents, and presenting calls to vote. The campaign trail updates were either information on dates and locations where the candidate could be met, or invitations for discussions with them at the events. Here, the brand types that were negotiated were the networked and the professional politician. The networked politician brand type focused on the campaign trail and visiting the electorate, while for the professional politician, these appearances on the campaign trail were part of the role.

The significant amount of campaign trail updates indicated that the candidates viewed Facebook as helpful in sharing information quickly, and instead of building a long-term strategy by promoting constant interaction between the candidate and the electorate, the platform was rather used as a more spontaneous one-way information bulletin board. Mostly, the updates were promotional, which according to Gerodimos and Justinussen (2015), does not promote engagement. The data in this category supports previous findings on social media being mainly used for disseminating information (Farkas & Schwartz, 2018; Graham et al., 2013; Nelimarkka et al., 2020) instead of interaction. In this way, the

opportunities for dialogue were neglected, and Facebook was treated more like a channel for pouring out information, instead of engaging in discussions with the electorate.

The voice used and ways how the public was addressed were different in the posts. The ways how the candidates called people to see them diverged between different candidates. These differences set the tone of the posts and could either distance or connect the electorate. The most significant differences were in how the public was addressed and tour locations were announced:

I will come to meet you next week in different parts of Pirkanmaa. I hope that we meet 🍷 (Appendix 2, A19.)

This candidate used the you-reference, which emphasized each member of the electorate as an individual and gave the impression of talking to everyone individually through these Facebook posts, instead of making more general announcements. This type of personal approach described more of what is promoted as the possibilities of social media and the direct constituent-candidate connection, thus representing the listening politician brand type. However, these posts indicated that the listening politician is listening on the campaign events, but not on Facebook because there was no interaction with the public regardless of the personal address style. This candidate also got a high number of mainly positive reactions, which could result from this type of approach being used in the posts. The logic of Facebook guides users towards more personal content, and studies have shown that humanizing self promotes authenticity (Enli, 2015a; McGregor, 2017). Yet only a few candidates in the data produced it while promoting their visits. Similar results were found by Nelimarkka et al. (2020) in their study on the 2015 electoral campaign, which suggests that no significant development in sharing personal content has happened between the two latest elections in relation to candidates' Facebook communications. This could be a lack of strategic thinking regarding Facebook, or even suggest that the candidates undermined its importance as a campaign platform when allocating their campaign communication resources, so supporting Nielsen and Vaccari's (2012) conclusion of only a few politicians managing their impressions well on Facebook, and failing in an area that Rogers (2015: 198–207) describes as essential for successful campaigns.

The use of the third-person singular form in posts telling only who is where and when, suggests that someone else was writing the posts instead of the candidates themselves:

Tomorrow is the election day, but today we are still going full steam! BZ is available at 12 at the spring fair of Laru, and in the afternoon we are touring in the Helsinki city center! #BZ2019 (Appendix 2, A20.)

These types of messages tended to distance the electorate and give a less authentic tone for the messages, which is the opposite of Enli's (2013, 2015a) proposal of using at least seemingly authentic messaging that would better connect with the audience. This candidate represented the unique and completely non-private example of the candidates in the data, whose posts mainly discussed the candidate in the third person or passive voice, which indicates that someone else had probably produced the content. After my data collection, in January 2021, the page had been changed. The name indicated the page to be a support group page, and there was a statement that the content was produced by the support team and not the candidate. However, this information was not visible on the page during my initial data collection and analysis phase. Notably, the posts neither discussed any personal content about the candidate; nor were there any references to family or free time, and the past was only referenced through the candidate's political experience. There were no feelings described nor any personal style of writing. So here, the visible brand types were the professional and topic politicians, and it could be argued that these may be seen as cold and unapproachable since the audience was not addressed and the persona remained purely informative. However, this candidate was one of the vote-pullers, supporting Zhao, Lampe and Ellison's (2016) view contesting the correlation between campaign success and social media use. As von Schoultz, Järvi and Mattila (2020: 189–190) argue, each candidate has their own suitable campaign mix, dependent on their voter demographics, current and past reputation as a politician, and their public exposure.

Several hashtags on the post implied that the same message was also used on Instagram, where hashtags are used to connect with topics:

Yesterday morning #myyrmäki (the coolest taking to the street of the campaign in terms of weather...), today we started at 0715 #karjaa ! The spring sun is shining! Now #lohja, then #vihti, #Hyvinkää, #kirkkonummi #kauniainen . Going strong! (Appendix 2, A21.)

Instead of producing the platform specific self-branding described by Scolere, Pruchniewska and Duffy (2018), candidates used the same posts for several platforms; i.e. a post was posted on Instagram and then shared to Twitter and Facebook. By using the same content through different platforms, the considerations of audience or any platform-specific affordances are neglected (see also Zhao, Lampe & Ellison, 2016), and the candidates are stretching the idea of

collapsed context (see boyd 2014: 31–32), or even ignoring it by multiplying their expected audience. Listing several locations in the post emphasized the brand types of networked and professional politicians, as the candidate reminded us that they visited several places and met many people, and were thus working hard for their campaign.

Also, in this category, some candidates focused on more personal content:

Yesterday we were touring the Turku region with heavy labor! When I am at home, I aim to start my day with a jog with Pessi. I also did that this time. --- After this I visited the Centrum Balticum Baltic Sea Seminar as a guest and speaker, from there for a tv interview to lecture in my old exam hall for the parliamentary research event. It was probably the same hall where I performed my entrance exam for the University of Turku. 💎 --- (Appendix 2, A22.)

Here, the candidate represented their persona in various types and gave the impression of a positive and approachable brand, thus presenting what McGregor (2017) calls a humanized self. A more personal and seemingly authentic approach (see Enli, 2015b) was brought by using emojis to add personality and promote engagement with the post. Describing feelings was analyzed as private life aspects included in the privatization dimension. The content was also intimate when they negotiated feelings. This is an example of the personal information that candidates were revealing, thus negotiating the humane politician brand type while discussing their campaign and their role as professional politicians.

In addition to campaign trail updates, calls to vote form typical social media content for political candidates during campaigns (Nelimarkka et al., 2020). There were various approaches to these in the data. The calls to vote were less personal than expected, and the approach was often party first, neutral in tone, and the candidates rarely promoted their candidacy numbers, slogans, or even themselves. This implies that the candidates were trying to reduce the impression of selling and marketing on their posts, and focused on voting in general. The party leaders' concentrated visibility was used to promote all of their own party's candidates, which is supported as a strategy by Garzia's (2014: 80) and von Schoultz's (2016) findings that party leaders' personas affect electoral decisions.

As described, the call to vote posts generally featured a 'party first' message, not necessarily even mentioning the particular candidate:

Preliminary voting has begun. Now it is possible to vote for the continuation of responsible and developing politics for all of Finland. The

Center Party candidates around Finland are ready to commit deeds worthy of Finland. 🍀 (Appendix 2, A23.)

Especially those candidates in the data who were party leaders produced these general calls to vote. In this way, they were not promoting their personas, and instead approached voting from a party first perspective. This served merely to strengthen the party brand, which as argued by Phipps, Brace-Govan and Jevons (2010) as well as Speed, Butler and Collins (2015), is also part of the candidate's personal brand. Party leaders' brands also become intertwined with their party because broadcast media typically presents statements of the parties, and campaigns are often presented in the media as a battle between party leaders (Isotalus, 2017; Poguntke & Webb, 2005). Because of this tight attachment to their party, their role requires the party leaders to represent the networking politician brand type in their communications.

Some candidates also encouraged constituents to engage with their posts by liking and sharing:

We need to carry a responsibility for all generations - also the future ones.
Vote for Antti, like the picture, and share if you agree.
Www.anttihakkanen.fi (Appendix 2, A24.)

The candidate's website information, and the call to like and share were combined with a short topic message about what the candidate represents (Table 9). In this case, a personal characteristic of responsibility was brought out to construct the candidate's brand. A detailed focus on personal characteristics is part of the privatization dimension stemming from Van Aelst, Sheaffer and Stanyer (2012). The limited representations of the humane politician can partly result from a lack of these types of self-descriptions from the candidates, and while these types of encouragement to 'spread the message' were rare in the data, this type of mobilization could gain the candidate and the party more exposure. It is noteworthy that even though the Finns Party has been judged to have succeeded in mobilizing constituents through social media (Niemi, 2013; 2014; Ylä-Anttila, 2020), my data did not show any clear acts of promoting mobilization from the party's candidates.

Self-promoting campaign posts were direct and often included the name, and maybe even a slogan or a personal hashtag. However, the candidacy number was usually missing even in these posts. This implies that the candidates may have neglected to add information because they were writing on their personal public page, and in that way have a personalized message already. However, in so doing, they ignored the possibility of their posts being shown to those who will not visit

their page and see their message because of the Facebook algorithm-determined logic.

The data included some calls to vote with no reference to a party or candidate. In these, the candidate took a more educative perspective, reminding them of the importance of voting instead of making it their own message. Instructions for voting were also given by describing the process, and are typical types of messages in European parliamentary election campaigning in Finland because there is usually a problem of low voting percentages (Nyyssönen & Elo, 2019). However, some messages were written with a style or by using party-specific references so that they also constructed the candidate's own brand simultaneously. The Finns Party candidates explicitly used these type of styled messages:

Be a brave Finn. Vote. (Appendix 2, A25.)

In this example, bravery had a dual meaning. It referred to both the party brand and values, and challenges the electorate to be brave enough to vote for a party that is not among the three largest parties, but which is aiming to get there.

Participation calls were rare in the data, even though Lilleker and Koc-Michalska (2017) and Auter and Fine (2018) argue for mobilization as one of the main benefits of Facebook in political communication, especially for populist parties (Engesser, Fawzi & Larsson, 2017). The support the candidates were seeking was mainly help for delivering campaign material. However, one candidate was asking for financial campaign support, where he declared that the party did not have significant financial donors behind them:

Many people have asked, how to best support the campaign? Campaign work is expensive, the Green Party have no large donors behind them. Even a small financial aid helps. Ten euros will provide 500 brochures, fifty euros some radio time, a hundred part of the magazine ad costs. Come and support the campaign! (Appendix 2, A26.)

As an act of mobilizing, only one candidate promoted a support frame that the electorate could add to their own Facebook profile pictures:

Here is a ready profile picture support frame for those who want it... The support team and I thank you for your support. All support is a step forward! There is still a way to go. Thank you! (Appendix 2, A27.)

This Finns Party candidate presented a unique example of mobilization of supporters on social media, which has also been noted as successful for that party by Railo et al. (2016: 331–332) when analyzing Finnish political parties on social

media. Creating support frames and sharing them on Facebook is free, but surprisingly, the other candidates in the data were not utilizing this tool for their campaign communication.

5.2.6 Watch me, read me

The category of sharing own content was added to the original operationalization by Nelimarkka et al. (2020) because the data included several posts where the candidates shared their own media performances, stories written about them, and their own content such as blogs. This supports Chadwick's (2013) idea of a hybrid media environment with intertwining content between traditional and social media, and has also been described as mediatized interdependency by Ekman and Widholm (2015). In addition to the earlier mentioned media performances where party leaders were invited to share their leisure-time, their appearances on television often included election debates:

Tomorrow is the party day for the Social Democratic Party. I am talking on the Yle morning show starting at 8.10. The Party leader Antti Rinne is going to be questioned at 21.00. We might just have the same direction 🇫🇮 (Appendix 2, A31.)

Announcing their own or others' party television appearances aimed to get more viewers and add engagement, thus enabling the electorate to listen to the candidates during debates, and commenting their responses directly to the candidate. However, the latter only seemed to be a limited effort at genuine interaction since the candidates rarely responded to the comments they got.

Some of these activities were also referred to themselves in the third person and mobilized the audience with hashtags and invitations to participate in the discussion:

The Left Party is the most trustworthy choice for a person who wants to stop the growing social inequality and make sure of finding solutions for climate change. The penultimate party leader debate is going on right now! Support Li on Twitter with a hashtag #thatswhyleftparty and #election2019. You can watch the debate as a live broadcast from here <https://www.mtv.fi/uutiset> (Appendix 2, A32.)

This contradicted posts on the same candidate's page where the content was phrased in the first person form, e.g. "Today I participated". This implies that both the candidate and the team were producing the page content. This example also

showed a strategic approach, in that there was a call to support the candidate on another platform, a call to watch the debate with a direct link, and a short policy statement at the beginning. Also, both the party and the candidate were mentioned separately to promote both brands with the same exposure. But this again presents a challenges of authenticity being illusory (Enli, 2015b) when the public can clearly see that candidates are not producing their own page content. The individualization aspect was portrayed in concentrated visibility (Van Aelst, Sheaffer & Stanyer, 2012), where the significance and exposure of the party leader were also used to communicate the party and the topic. Lev-On and Haleva-Amir (2016) describe Facebook as a content-demanding forum, and argue that more active and dominant political actors have more content to work with on these types of platforms. The example presented supported this argument, and a strategic take and having more resources for communicating on Facebook support the candidate and also engage the electorate.

One of the functions and typical ways used to produce social media content was inter-linking content between different channels. This could be done by, for example, linking a blog, Instagram or Twitter post to Facebook or other channels. Evidence of inter-linking was not prominent in the data, which shows that the candidates failed to utilize the platform's full possibilities. When it was done, it was only done so that the same post was shared on multiple platforms. However, traditional media appearances were shared for added exposure and for benefiting from content produced elsewhere. This way, some candidates created a synergy between traditional and social media, which Karlsen and Enroljas (2016) view as a success factor for political actors.

Sharing links to media coverage on the candidate was a way to add exposure for the stories:

Covered in the Reserviläinen magazine. A credible defense of the homeland is the guarantee of a secure society. (Appendix 2, A33.)

Magazine articles and their viewpoints were also used to construct the candidate's brand if they decided to share the content on their page. However, it is usually only the supporters who take the time to open the link and read the story; therefore, it is also important to share some information on the post. In this example, the military magazine and the promoted story constructed values and past aspects, which were part of private life. This brand also supported one of the main messages of the candidate's party. Therefore, the concentrated visibility of the party leader could be seen to have been utilized for promoting topic issues.

Some candidates described their campaign material or event speeches on Facebook, thus utilizing their visibility. However, these were usually only mentioned, and not, for example, shared in an electronic form which would be another way to benefit from the broad exposure. Some candidates had prepared videos for their campaign marketing, and they shared those on their Facebook page. These videos got comments and positive responses, indicating that Facebook is a good platform for campaign videos. However, not many candidates used this opportunity to produce multimodal content (see Salonen, Kannasto & Paatelainen, *forthcoming*) or at least share it on Facebook.

Linking to party or candidate websites was also surprisingly rare in the data. Similarly, candidacy numbers were missing from the posts. These points indicate that the candidates were neglecting to see these as opportunities to add publicity and remind the electorate of their numbers, slogans, and other central things that require repetition; sometimes, the brand that sticks is the strongest. The quality of content matters, but also the repetition, memorability and recognition are crucial. The lack of website linking might also be because the candidates viewed it as unnecessary since the link was permanently on the 'about' section of the page. However, some utilized their posts effectively by adding links at the end of their post, especially in cases where they wrote and shared blog posts:

I do not approve of a society where only the social welfare office is common to the immigrants and the Finns. More on the blog: <http://samplerho.fi/?p=4199> (Appendix 2, A34.)

These types of short statements just described the candidate's stance, thus constructing the topic politician brand type. In this way, they could argue policies in more depth on their personal platforms, such as in blogs, and engage in discussions there. Possibly this also helped to limit criticism because seeing the blog and commenting required additional effort on the part of the reader to move to another platform. But in these cases, the discussion would appear on the blog and not in my data.

5.2.7 Vote for our party leader

Some minor party promotion was visible in the category of praising and expressing support. My data showed little praising or expressing support for candidates, or political or non-political actors in the posts. Virtual back-patting (see Svensson, 2014) as in the acknowledgment or praise given to other politicians, was rare in the data. This shows that even though the data was collected from the leading politicians' posts, they were not promoting the party or their peer politicians on

their page as much as could have been expected. This could be because, in the Finnish campaign system, the candidates also compete against other candidates from their own party (see Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 296), thus making it less appealing to promote other candidates, even as a party leader. Also, in their study on Facebook interaction, Heiss, Shmuck and Matthes (2018) found decreased engagement when a politician's own party candidates were referenced, so similar results may have been noted by the candidates in earlier campaigns.

Cases where other candidates were praised were found when the vote-puller candidates' posts supported their party leader:

Our party leader Jussi Halla-aho, IS from one debate after another the most calm, reasonable and smart behaving party leader. Everyone else is shouting more and more, panic yellers, with no clear direction. Everyone else wants to fill Finland with cheap labor and security threats. As a Finn Party member it is easy to be and breathe in civilized, genuine patriotic company. Finland needs calm, firm and patriotic nationalistic politics. Join! Vote Finland back! 🇫🇮 (Appendix 2, A30.)

These kinds of supportive posts included descriptions of personal characteristics. However, it was focused on the rhetorical skills and performance required from a politician (see Isotalus & Almonkari, 2012). Thus, the persona representations here were the professional and the networking politician. The networking politician was represented by the candidate expression of their support, and a professional brand type of the party leader was constructed through virtual back-patting (Svensson, 2014). For the Finns Party, the concentrated visibility aspect was prominent. Regardless of the absence of the party leader's own pages from the data, the presence of the party leader was undeniable in the posts and comments of both the other Finn Party candidates, and also the opposing party candidates. This party leader was communicated so often and intensely through descriptions of both professional and private content, that their brand was at least as recognizable as the candidates whose pages were included in the data, and thus became part of the analysis.

Examples were found for candidates promoting themselves and their party through the idea of making someone the prime minister. This showed both support for the party leader, but also a strong trust in their personal brand, possibly even creating the impression of a non-selfish candidate:

The last campaign day is starting from Narinkkatori. Tomorrow, remember to write 222 in the ballot and lets make Petteri Orpo the next prime minister! #BZ2019 #NationalCoalitionParty. (Appendix 2, A28.)

It is necessary to note that this was a candidate whose posts were possibly produced by a campaign team. In this way, the candidate's page was used for promoting both his party and himself on this call to vote, possibly also benefiting from advancing another popular politician.

My analysis showed that most candidates, especially the party leaders, who were members in the current parliament or ministers, expressed their gratitude to former colleagues on their last parliament session:

On Tuesday, it was the last session in the parliament of the parliamentary season. A lot has been going on in the past four years. Work for the Finnish people. Responsibilities have grown. I thank the voters, the parliamentary representatives, the ministers and everyone else for their co-operation. A big thanks to home for their support. I am also running for parliament next season. (Appendix 2, A29.)

These emotional and genuine expressions were negotiating the humane politician along with the networking and professional politician. The aspect of career was emphasized when communicating people's hard work and collaboration, but simultaneously the candidates were expressing their own dedication and emotion when discussing their feelings about the finished season. These types of messages created the impression of a personal connection and the importance of the work the politician does.

The concentrated visibility of the party leader was used to promote the party's candidates. In the data, the party leaders were posting content praising the other candidates of the party:

Started the day right after 5 in the morning. Should be at MTV3 already by 6.30. From there, we have been on the move. An interview with Iltalehti. Nice coffee meeting in Hagalund together with many of our great Uusimaa candidates. Now its time to unwind from today. Tomorrow its Western Uusimaa. (switch to Finnish). Busy day. Two TV debates. I also had time to visit the parliament. The house was pretty empty and quiet. Then to Espoo to meet the voters. We have enormously qualified, nice and excited candidates in Uusimaa. (Appendix 2, A35.)

This type of content mainly constructed the professional and networked politician brand types. However, by using emotional and personal characteristics and describing their feelings on the activities, the candidate also negotiated the humane politician. This way, they produced content that engaged the electorate and presented a more authentic (Enli, 2015b) and humane (McGregor, 2017) self.

The negative messaging and battling with rival candidates presented in the study by Laaksonen et al. (2017) was not visible in the data. However, it did occur in the comment section by the public. This supports my findings on engagement as well. Particularly, the Finnish candidates in my data were not campaigning with negativity or attacks on Facebook, even though Strandberg (2008) has suggested a negative tone for Finnish campaign communication exists on social media.

5.3 Replying to Comments

The replies to comments were analyzed to see if candidates were present and provided answers to the public. As the qualitative analysis of the posts shows, the candidates used their posts mainly for one-way communication with the public. However, it was necessary to see whether they were present and interacting with the public around the issues raised. This could be done by continuing the discussion on the comment stream, or by replying directly to that particular comment.

The replies to the comments are presented in Table 10. The relation figure for each politician is calculated by dividing the number of replies by the total amount of comments. This figure is comparable with the average figure of 0.010022, which is the average of all replies divided by all the comments. For some candidates in the data, their personal or party assistants responded with their own names to the comments. These are marked with an 'x' in the assistant replies column.

As Table 10 shows, there were relatively few replies to comments in the data. Thus, interaction of a conversational nature seems relatively low, based on the data. But regardless of the high number of comments, the candidates only rarely responded them. Four candidates also have 0 in their replies, so their relation figure of comments and replies was 0. For most of the candidates, the replies were expressions of gratitude for the support. However, candidates Andersson, Mykkänen, Sipilä, Henriksson, Marin, and Peltokangas also discussed topic issues in their replies. These did not lead to further discussion and the comments may have continued, but the replies were unique or one-off, so no dialogue was continued. When there was a response to policy issues, the public often expressed their gratitude to candidates who did reply. The candidates Sipilä, Andersson, and Marin, and their assistants corrected comments by adding information or linking to the party programs or reminding the public of politicians involved in particular decision-making processes raised in the comments. Most often, these corrections were made in issues where Finns Party's supporters were accusing the candidates of decisions related to, for example, immigration. According to Benoit's (2007)

functional theory on campaign communication, this type of response would be categorized as defense, which is the least used function in campaigning. He does not view defense as efficient use of time resources; even at its best, the candidate can only mitigate the damage, and at its worst, it can also draw more attention to the original critique. Ultimately, the relatively low number of replies suggests that candidates chose to use their time more efficiently, as Benoit (2007) has suggested.

Table 10. Responding in replies

Politician	Comments	Replies	Relation figure (reply/comments)	Assistant replies
Andersson	2617	14	0.005349637	0
Essayah	462	3	0.006493506	0
Haavisto	245	0	0	0
Harkimo	627	0	0	0
Henriksson	388	2	0.005154639	0
Huhtasaari	1327	15	0.011303693	0
Häkkinen	364	0	0	0
Lepomäki	1282	20	0.015600624	
Lindtman	607	0	0	0
Marin	521	11	0.021113244	0
Mykkänen	407	28	0.068796069	0
Orpo	3843	3	0.00078064	x
Peltokangas	1353	76	0.056171471	0
Rinne	2111	0	0	x
Sipilä	2894	34	0.011748445	0
Tavio	135	2	0.014814815	0
Terho	835	0	0	0
Zyskowicz	610	3	0.004918033	x
Total	20628	211	0.010228815	

Candidate Orpo also had resources for social media, since ministers have personal assistants and he was the party leader for a party that wants to portray itself as an interactive party. This was mentioned by the communication officer of the National Coalition party when I asked how the social media content of the candidates was produced. The party line in communication and additional resources was seen in the candidate's assistants' active responses to the comments. However, these did not engage dialogue, and the public did not usually continue the discussion. Candidate Orpo himself had written three replies, and in one of them he responded to confirm the breed of Pessi, the dog often seen in his campaign and family photos and brought up in the posts.

Candidate Peltokangas had the highest number of replies, although most of these were expressions of gratitude for support. However, it is noteworthy that this relatively high number indicated presence, and that the candidate was attentive to their messages, both reading and responding to them. For the other candidates, replies seemed random, as they were not directed to each post and comment, or patterned in other ways. Together with the limited number of replies, this indicated that politicians did not go through all of the content on their pages, and even if they did participate in the discussions, their replies were random comments given when there was time, instead of taking the time to do it.

In the case of the party Movement Now, candidate Harkimo had already been a parliamentary representative for a season prior to 2019. The new party that he represented in the election was not officially defined as a political party, but more of a "movement of the people." One idea for this movement was more active interaction with the public through online platforms. Accordingly, this candidate's page presented an interesting exception in the data as the movement specifically stated that they use social media for soliciting ideas and expect the public to participate in agenda-setting through it. This would imply that their candidates, especially their leading candidate, would have a specific focus on communicating and constructing their brand on Facebook specifically.

Compared to the other candidates in the data, the candidate was unique in the number of responses to comments. However, these were not posted as replies, but as new comments, so they appeared in the comment thread. While Harkimo was not posting as much as several other candidates in the data, he showed more response activity than other candidates. Thus, the candidate did exploit the two-way communication possibilities of Facebook more than other candidates, which is an opportunity stated by researchers such as Nelimarkka et al. (2020) to have been neglected in the past. The candidate discussed the movement mainly through video content on the page, so text-based posts were few, even though there were many comments. In terms of research practicality, this limited my results since videos were excluded from the scope of the study. A particular observation was that several comments responded with "shared", referring to the movement's idea of mobilizing the electorate to share their content and message. In this, they showed some similarity in the success in mobilization reported by Railo and Ruohonen (2016: 254, 306–307), as well as Kovalala and Pöysä (2017: 257) for the Finns Party in earlier elections. Another strategy of the movement was to recruit recognized candidates to exploit their already established media exposure, hence focusing on the individualization dimension using the concentrated visibility.

5.4 Summarizing the Analysis of the Posts

The candidates utilized the added exposure perspective when attaching topics to current events such as negotiating environment policies when a children's demonstration took place. Here, they could benefit from the media exposure of the event, while simultaneously promoting their own visibility. However, the media focus was forgotten when sharing their own content.

Some candidates made party communication visible on their own page, thus promoting the networked politician, even to the extent that all messages were communicated with a 'party first' angle. Effectively, the candidate was not communicating anything in their own words. For the party leaders, the slogans of parties and their party communication varied. Some candidates, especially party leaders, used party slogans or party communication throughout the data. In this way, the concentrated visibility dimension was used to benefit the party, but it can also be viewed that the candidates were representing their professional and networked brand by connecting themselves with their party brand and the party ideals. Thus, they could benefit from the more prominent exposure and party recognition, instead of just making their own personal brand more known.

A similar connection with the party brand was seen when some candidates separated from individualization, and discussed topics and shared information on their party's point of view. Instead of mentioning their own opinion or activities, everything was communicated through the party or with a collective voice of discussing 'us'. This was especially the case with the party leaders, and in this way, the party leader became the representative of their party, thus molding their personal brand tightly with that of the party, emphasizing the professional and networked politician. Similar effects can be seen in broadcast media, where it is usually the party leader who communicates the political agendas and topic issues of the party during interviews and debates. In the data, their exposure was also used to represent the party ideals and collect votes for the party.

My results mainly support Šimunjak's (2018) study on Croatian politicians, concluding that politicians use social media to distribute information on campaign activities, instead of representing their persona or themselves as individuals or discussing political issues. The number of topic messages found in the data aligns with the results of earlier studies (van Dalen, 2015), and topic issues represent a small portion of the data. The topic messages also support my findings on the idea of these pages being used as a bulletin board, where opinions are rarely asked, or debate encouraged. Instead, information is merely transmitted and stated.

Mainly because of the limited interaction shown by the candidates, the public could voice their opinions in their comments, almost free from correction or response. This way, the public and their comments gained a visible public space where their opinions were heard, not necessarily by the politicians, but by the other public members. Thus, these comments were also used to negotiate politicians' personas. The degree of interaction involved in this negotiation was limited, and there was only the initial post seen as a trigger for the comments that the public wrote. But these affected the candidates' brands because they created an opinion atmosphere, where they emphasized their own specific ideas of individual candidates, and even negotiated topics that were not necessarily brought up in the posts. In the next chapter, I will present my findings for these comments, and I will also analyze the engagement related to the posts in the last section of the chapter.

6 POLITICIANS' PERSONAL BRANDS CONSTRUCTED BY THE PUBLIC

In this chapter, I analyze the comments of the public in relation to the personal brand construction in the politicians' public pages. This presents the public as actors in the brand construction and supports Matheson's (2016) argument that the power of social media is shifting to the active members of the public by making them actors. Politicians are addressing the electorate, i.e. those who can vote in the election. However, Facebook is a public forum, so the discussion on the page is available to the public, meaning everyone who chooses to read and participate. The examples are presented in Appendix 3, coded separately with B1-B61 in a table which shows the original and the translated citations. In Chapter 7, I will discuss the analysis of how the personal brand of the political candidates and its construction is negotiated in the data. Chapter 7 combines the analysis results of posts and comments with the affordances presented by Facebook in section 3.3.2.

My analysis of the comments is conducted similarly to the analysis of the candidates' posts. The only difference is that in these, the public speaks of the candidates, thus evaluating them from outside, while with the posts, it was the candidates themselves who produced the content. The unit of analysis for this chapter is one complete comment. The operationalization from Nelimarkka et al. (2020) was modified and used to analyze the content of the comments. Secondly, the operationalization that Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer (2012) have suggested for analyzing personalization in the media was modified to better fit my Facebook context and the content produced by the public. The representations for personas of politicians inspired by the model of the academic self by Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 190) are analyzed and formulated into brand type representations in Chapter 7 (see Figure 15). Lastly, the comments and the results from the first two analysis rounds were reflected on through the affordances of Facebook (Table 1), inspired by the work of Blegind, Jensen and Dyrby (2013) on the Facebook use of political parties.

In this analysis, the categories were selected using a data-based approach, but they followed and represented the categories also chosen by Nelimarkka et al. (2020). Specifically, they placed the comment content into the following categories: information and opinion sharing, seeking information and opinions, critiquing and arguing, sharing personal information, socio-emotional functions, formal campaigning, and praising and expressing support. As Table 11 shows, I added and removed some categories after a consideration of the data. Since the categories of information and opinion sharing and formal campaigning were not found in the comments and were more relevant in the posts, they were removed from the

analysis of the comments. Also, rising from the data, I added categories for sharing own content and evaluating performances, which were both highly visible in the comments.

Table 11. Comments categories and coding

Nelimarkka et al. (2020) categories of comments	Instructions
Seeking information and opinions	Soliciting opinions and asking for information, requesting the public to share their thoughts
Critiquing and arguing	Expressing critique towards issues, individuals, or organizations
Sharing personal information	Expressing personal content, describing family, history, health, feelings, personal life
Socio-emotional	Humor, gratitude, apologizing, greetings
Praising and expressing support	Expressing support for candidates, praising political or non-political actors, praising self
Modifications and additions	
Sharing own content	Sharing blogs, other media content, sharing own speeches
Evaluation of performances	Evaluating debate performances or other appearances in the media

These categories were also coded for subcategories, in order to get a more detailed description of the content. Thus, for example, the category of formal campaigning was also coded for campaign trail updates, mobilizing, and calls to vote. The results for these more detailed categories are presented in this chapter.

For information and opinion sharing, the topic issue comments were mainly easy to separate. However, sometimes a purely stated "agree" was harder to code, and in these cases the comments were analyzed together with the original post and the other comments in these situations. In this way, it was possible to mostly code each comment appropriate to its purpose, even if only one word was stated. Information and opinion sharing comments typically expressed an opinion on a political matter, presented arguments for or against it, or expressed support or opposition for a topic issue.

The possibility of misinterpretation was so large for pure emojis in the comments that they have been left out of the analysis, even though they could often have been coded for a category. For example, the Finnish flag was often used to express support for the Finns Party candidates.

The original operationalization for personalization from Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer (2012) has four variables; General visibility, concentrated visibility, the characteristics of politicians, and politicians' personal lives. The same variables were used as the main categories for my coding. However, their coding instructions were modified by changing a few categories so as to be more suitable for the data, context, and aim. These were analyzed from a qualitative perspective for each category, and coded with the first operationalization from Nelimarkka et al. (2020).

Since social media comments are typically shorter than news articles, the categorization for each post was whether the politician, party, or another party or politician from another party was referenced. This differs from Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer's (2012) coding instructions for general visibility, where the total number of references to the politician and the party were counted for each newspaper article. Concentrated visibility refers to the amount party leaders were referenced in relation to a total number of references to political actors. Here, only a reference to the candidate's role as a party leader was categorized. The information and opinions category of posts were those where the public asked the candidate for an opinion on a topic issue, or if something will be done on a pressing matter. The general visibility was coded for these when the inquiries explicitly addressed the candidate instead of the party, for example, by using the "you" form in the question unless these were directly addressed to the party leader, which applied to the concentrated visibility category.

References to the candidate were counted for the posts when the public used a clear "you" or "you and your party" phrasing. If they used "your party" or "The x party decided" type of references, these were not coded as personal or having concentrated visibility because the comment addressed the party and was asking for the party's perspective, thereby using the candidate as a messenger. By making these distinctions, these references showed how the communication was performed and with whose voice.

For politicians' characteristics, references were coded for competence, leadership, credibility, rhetorical skills, and the candidate's appearance. Sharing personal information was coded for comments when the public referenced the candidate's family, spouse, home, leisure-time, childhood, or non-political past, such as complimenting them on their craft skills or commenting on their education path. However, they were also coded as political if the comments were joined with a reference to a political characteristic like morals or credibility or their understanding of a policy issue such as parenting or because of their previous career.

For the personal lives of politicians, references to family, past life or upbringing, leisure time, and love life were coded. These last two categories were modified most, so as to understand the personal brand construction and allow a more deeper exploration. I therefore added coding for family, childhood and hometown, leisure-time and interests, love life, and 'other' which included issues of health and religion. For example, a comment might state that the candidate cannot understand what living in the country is because they are "Helsinki-people". References to family or spouse might be, for example, "You are such a good-looking couple". The categories of family, love life, and other issues like health and religion were discussed as intimate in the analysis. At the same time, past, childhood, hometown, and leisure time were referenced as falling in the private life dimension. For the politicians' characteristics, the references were coded if the public stated the candidate's value or highlighted their competence on an issue, for example, through their background. Leisure-time and interests were coded when the public commented on the candidates' choice of free-time activities or their skills in a hobby, for example. Inquiries regarding these were also considered as references to them since they expressed interest. Therefore, these were seen as something that the public wanted to include in the candidate's personal brand.

The same comment could be coded for several categories, and often, comments could be personal and political at the same time. For example, there could be a comment on debate performance and the candidate's past career as an athlete. This would then be coded as political content for evaluating performance, as well as sharing personal life and discussing past careers.

I will first turn to the findings from my quantitative analysis. Section 6.1 presents the results for the content of the comments written by the public from a quantitative perspective, and presents the percentages for the most visible types of content. After this, a thorough manual analysis of all the comments is presented, together with samples from the comments. The last section presents what the data tells us about people's engagement with the candidates and their posts.

6.1 Large Support Expressed in the Content

The categories and their visibility in the 15,462 comments were spread more evenly than the categories seen in the posts. The comment numbers in the manual analysis did not match with the comment numbers reported by Facepager (presented in Table 7). This is a shortcoming of the program, and despite several collection rounds, some of the posts and comments were consistently returned as empty lines in the Excel spreadsheet. These were disregarded in the manual

analysis, hence resulting in a conflicting total number of posts and comments. However, this error was balanced in the data, and since the post and comment numbers are large, it did not have any significant impact on the analysis. The main content categories of the comments are presented in Figure 19. Table 12 presents comment content categories that were included in more than 10 % of all the posts. Decimals have been rounded off from the figures presented in the tables. Table 13 shows the content categories that were present in 5-10% of all the posts. Table 14 presents the categories visible in 1-5% of the posts. The remaining categories were only present in less than 1% of all the posts, so they were not judged to be as significant as the data categorized in Tables 12, 13, and 14.

It is noteworthy that also in the comments, the content was mainly positive. Most (34%) of the content shown in the comments were expressions of support for the candidate. In addition to these was also the support shown with emojis. However, these are not included in the calculations since only the text was analyzed. The second-largest category was topic messages, with 28% of the posts. This shows that even though the public engaged more with posts where personal life was negotiated, they still actively discussed topic issues. This aligns with Gerodimos and Justinussen's (2015) study, where the public engaged more with campaign messages and policy-orientated posts in the Obama campaign. This also follows the pattern seen in the posts, and the majority of comments addressed similar topics. The third-largest category (24%) praised a political actor. The difference of these when compared with the largest category of support was that here, the candidate was being described in addition to support. However, these were not always promises to vote, and some clearly stated that their vote would go to another party or candidate, but, for example, the candidate in question had been excellent in the debate or had good views on a particular issue. Notably, candidate Essayah was often referred to this way in the data.

Regarding Facebook and the 2019 election, the conclusions of Hakala and Vesa (2013: 201, 233) about social media content being separate and different from mainstream media content does not hold, when evaluated against the findings of this study. Most of the themes and discussions in the data followed the mainstream media content, except for some more minor topic issues and some disinformation shares in the comments. This suggests, that as Karlsen and Enjolras (2016) argue, there is in fact a synergy between traditional media and social media in political communication.

Table 12. Most visible content in the comments

Category	% of content, n=15,462
Expressing support for a candidate	34 %
Topic message	28 %
Praising a political actor (candidate/politician)	24 %
Disagreeing or expressing rejection	20 %
Sharing information	14 %
Critiquing a political actor (politician/candidate)	14 %

Strandberg's (2008) evaluation of the negative tone in political campaigning in social media was not supported by the analysis of the posts, but is supported by the analysis of the comments. Even though a positive style is regarded as more appropriate than a negative style in media (Waterloo et al., 2017) and positive comments represented the majority of the comments, the fourth largest category (14%) was expressing critique towards the political actor, in this case, the politician whose posts were commented on. This shows that the public discussion online were more negative in their tone, regardless of the lack of negative tone in the original posts. This prominent negativity indicated that the public discussing matters on the candidates' pages were not always their supporters or followers, so the pages attracted discussion from both sides. Primarily, the Finns Party supporters had spread data on each candidate's page that promoted their own party policies and candidates by criticizing the other party leaders. Table 12 shows that while the candidates received support and expressions of praise in the comments, they also gained a significant amount of criticism. Importantly, it is essential to remember that both the criticism and support received added to the construction of the candidates' brands since the discussion was public.

Table 13 presents the categories visible in 5–10% of the posts. Even though campaign-trail updates were largely visible in the posts, they were only commented on in 7% of the comments. There was an apparent discrepancy in how the candidates and the public used Facebook, and while candidates announced campaign updates, the public was more interested in discussing topic issues and the candidates involved. The opponents of the candidate whose posts were commented on were critiqued in 7% of all the comments. Posts that addressed the candidates appearance on media engaged the public as well, and 6% of the comments were performance evaluations of the politicians participation in television debates. This shows an interesting dimension of Facebook as a forum where the public comment and discuss their feelings and views on these debates. The media typically guides this type of discussion to Twitter, where the viewers are

encouraged to discuss matters in real-time using hashtags. They can even post questions there, which are often presented in the program. But regardless of this, some users move these discussions onto the Facebook comment threads on the candidate's page. However, most of this discussion was on performance evaluations, and while opinions were stated, wishes were often expressed in other categories.

Table 13. Visible content in the comments

Category	% of content, n=15,462
Greetings	10 %
Stating an opinion or taking a position	8 %
Agreeing or expressing acceptance	7 %
Disagreeing or expressing rejection to opponents	7 %
Campaign trail on media	7 %
Performance evaluation	6 %
Expressing an idea, wish, or suggestion	6 %
Asking for information	5 %

Even though relatively small, a significant category of asking for information was featured in 5% of all comments. This supports the idea that while there is little evidence for agenda-setting from political actors (Skogerbø & Krumsvik, 2015), the public also show little interest in it. Even when information was asked for, it was rarely about topic issues. Mostly, people asked whether a candidate would visit a particular location, or what their candidate number was. This is noteworthy because it showed that the candidate's Facebook page did not give this central information easily enough for the public to find, even though they were looking for the information on the page. As the post analysis showed, only a few candidates made an effort to remind the public of their candidate number in their posts.

Several categories were present in 1-5% of the comments (Table 14). Personal information was included in only 4% of the comments, showing that the more personal nature of Facebook communication is not very visible in the comments. The public was not encouraged to comment on the private dimension since it was almost completely lacking in the posts. However, they engaged with it more than with neutral tone or official topic issue posts, which indicates that the public was interested in these private dimension representations. The candidates' views were only rarely asked for, and only 2% of the comments sought an opinion from the candidate. While topic issues were discussed, the public rarely asked for an opinion, which could result from the lack of responses to comments seen in the data. The public might have felt that the effort of asking would be wasted when

they saw no interaction happening on the page. Also, the supporting public already knew their party's and candidate's stance, which would suggest that regardless of the prominent negativity seen in the comments, it was mostly supporters who were commenting on the candidates' pages.

As Table 14 shows, the parties were rarely discussed in the comments. Only in 3% of the content was there an expression of support for the party, while expressions of support for the candidate were the most visible category. This aligns with the idea that on Facebook, the candidates come first and their personas matter most, which Enli (2015b) proposes to be the case for all social media.

Table 14. Less visible content in the comments

Category	% of content, n=15,462
Sharing personal information	4 %
Expressing feelings	4 %
Plain emoji	4 %
Critiquing a non-political actor	3 %
Campaign trail updates or promotion	3 %
Expression of voting	3 %
Expressing support for the party	3 %
Asking for an opinion	2 %
Joking or expressing humor or amusement	2 %
Extending real-life interaction	1 %
Comment on other media presence	1 %
Call to vote	1 %
Support for another party/candidate	1 %

Only 1% of the comments expressed support for other candidates (Table 14). Usually, these were comments about voting for candidate Halla-aho, and this shows that most engagement on the candidate's posts was related to them and would again suggest that it was mostly their supporters who were reading and engaging with those posts. However, there were exceptions. Most of the comments opposing other candidates followed the rhetoric of the Finns Party supporters. This implies that, as stated before about earlier elections, their supporters were also well mobilized in the 2019 election in regard to social media campaign communication for the party and their candidates.

The hostile tone in the comments was also shown in criticism against non-political actors. Particularly, 3% of the comments critiqued different media such as the national broadcasting company Yle or MTV3 and their journalists for being biased during television debates. This fairly large portion of commenting on the media

was also in line with the large portion of debate performance evaluations, and showed that the public had moved to Facebook to discuss television debates. Also, in 1% of the comments critiquing other discussants or the Facebook algorithm function was present. This is what Suominen, Saarikoski and Vaahensalo (2019: 29) refer to as meta-level discussion, and often these types of comments expressed, for example, frustration with seeing "the wrong candidate" on a feed or reading comments that felt irrelevant or poorly presented. But while these show a lack of understanding of the algorithm and engagement functions of Facebook, they also illustrate the need people feel to express their frustration over how political discussion occurs on Facebook.

A limited number of policy initiatives were posted by both the candidates and the public in the data. As an example, the criticism towards Yle manifested in a shared citizen's initiative to remove the mandatory Yle taxation used to finance Yle's activities. these types of initiatives, the campaign time is favorable given the added interest in politics, and gives them more exposure, especially when posted on the leading candidates' pages with concentrated visibility. In the next chapter, I will present findings from the manual analysis of the comments, together with examples from the data.

6.2 Comments as Acts to Negotiate the Brand

Analyzing the comments manually showed that Farina's (2019) application of conversation analysis to Facebook comments did not apply to most of the data. This is because instead of the post-answer-model used when commenting, the comments appeared more as individual posts. They rarely replied to anything that the politicians had posted, and instead they were individual shouts or comments which has also been noted by Schwartz (2015) in relation to Danish politicians Facebook pages' comments. This supports a more direct content analysis approach on the comments instead of studying interaction in the post-comment-pairs seen in the data.

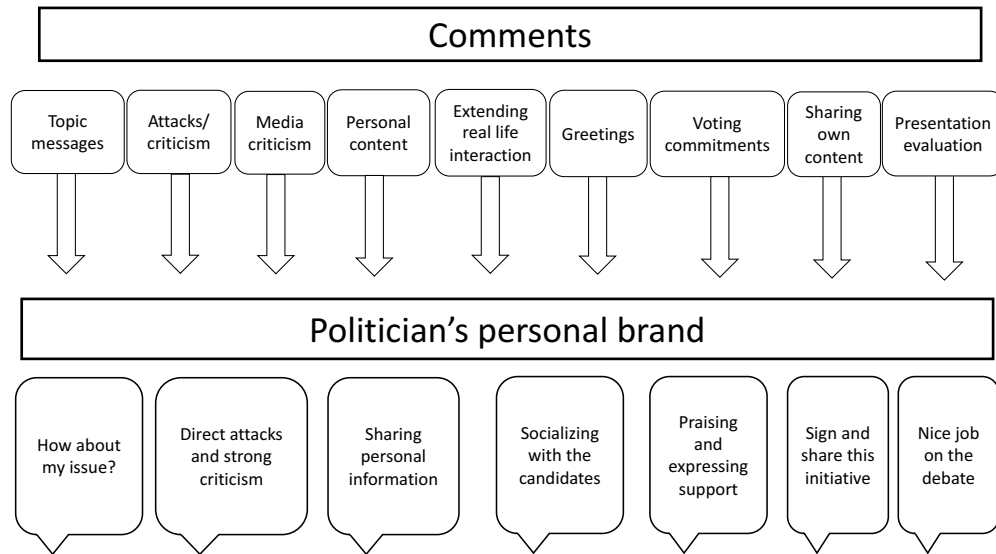


Figure 19. Comment types

Figure 19 shows how the content on the comments was categorized into different types of content and how the manual analysis is presented in this section. These different types are discussed in the analysis, together with how the political personal brand is negotiated in them. Different issues were emphasized depending on the politician, and some content types did not apply to each politician who was considered in the analysis.

6.2.1 How about my issue?

The public used comments for soliciting opinions and asking for information from the candidates. These questions were mainly neutral, and they presented a narrow scope of topics often divergent from the topics that the candidates had communicated in the posts. Most comments were more like individual shoutouts with no connection to the post in question, except in the cases of the announcement of debates and performance evaluations related to the debates. Sometimes they presented specific questions on smaller topics that had not been discussed in the media. The need to cover more topics than were in the media and to solicit opinions from the candidates presented a need for the topic politician introduced by Isotalus and Almonkari (2014). However, it is remarkable how few of these topics and policy questions there were, even when brought up by the public. This limited content on topic issues has also been reported by Van Dalen et al. (2015), and the felt absence of interaction resulting from a lack of replies from candidates could explain the limited number of topic issues brought up in the comments. When compared to analyzing personal performance and references to candidates as personas, any topic discussion was minimal in the data.

Policy questions were often presented neutrally with no attitude towards the candidate:

Hi Ville! Will there be a new tax break for car taxation in the middle of this environmental fuss or is it going to be the other way, and how about fuel taxation? (Appendix 3, B1.)

These comments did not usually argue for or against the candidate. Instead, they looked for their stance or political views for different issues. The issues varied from one candidate to another. However, some topics were either repeated in the same form in all or some feeds, or by several individuals so that they were visible throughout the data. These common topics included immigration, electricity prices and the Caruna case, electric cars, the airport of Malmi, previous economic policies from earlier parliamentary seasons, environment issues, the labor union taxation system, education export, taxation, nurse ratios in health care, Israel questions, selling wine in grocery stores, income flexibility, and social welfare.

The information-seeking shown in the data implied that the public was either looking for answers or for final confirmation to support their voting decision from Facebook. This supports Railo et al.'s (2016: 334) descriptions of many Finnish voters reassessing their positions between elections. In these, the public also showed that they were looking for the brand type of a listening politician. They wanted to question the candidates directly on Facebook and resented those candidates who were absent or who did not reply there. By allowing this conversation and responding to the questions, the candidates could have promoted themselves as listening and communicative politicians who consider the public.

My data showed party positions and government formation as critical issues:

Politics is a team sport, teambuilding and majority decision making. Single parties cannot change or decide a thing alone, even if they had more will than David against Goliath. So Mauri: who would you pick to govern with The Finns party and why? Good luck for the last meters of the campaign! 🤝 (Appendix 3, B2.)

One of the most pressing questions for the public seemed to be forming the government and which parties each candidate would welcome to the process. This highlights the importance of party selection in the Finnish multi-party system (see von Schoultz, 2016: 166) and supports the declining curve of the individual over party importance for voting decisions reported by Isotalo et al. (2019: 16). However, my analysis suggests that based on many similar questions and their

presentation style, most of the questions concerning government formation came from the Finns Party supporters.

My results showed that the public felt voting districts to be problematic, and they could not always vote for their preferred candidate and so turned to them for recommendations:

Elina Lepomäki - Who in the Helsinki district should I vote for to get more supporters of your line of thinking into the parliament? (Appendix 3, B3.)

These types of questions indicated that certain politicians had convinced the public to trust the candidate to tell them who would share similar views and values to themselves. This suggests that, especially by exploiting the concentrated visibility and party leaders' visibility, virtual back-patting (Svensson, 2014) could also work on Facebook as a party strategy. This would apply especially in the parliamentary elections where different districts have their own candidates; albeit while it is usually the capital region whose candidates are more visible in the media and have more recognition. My results suggest that these candidates would have a power of recommendation for supporting candidates in other regions if this were exploited.

Some past decisions and political actions required clarification:

Why was the Caruna sale done? (Appendix 3, B4.)

How about using the ministerial car during the campaign tour? (Appendix 3, B5.)

These comment examples portrayed how candidates' past actions were also considered part of their persona, but through interaction, the candidates were offered possibilities to explain themselves. My data indicated that the public used comments to ask for clarification and to understand issues, even though sometimes these questions were also used to bring up controversial decisions as criticism and to remind other voters. Especially, past policy decisions that the public remembered from the media had become part of the candidates' brand as their footprint for past actions.

Those candidates already having a role in the government needed to carry on their duties as ministers, carry the weight of decisions that were in their close history and not always positive for the public, and they were watched over more closely because of the added exposure they had because of their role. This role was strongly part of their current politician brand employed while they were applying for their next representative term. At the same time, they were getting added exposure which allowed them to voice their agenda to wider audiences and

construct a stronger brand; one example being their already large follower base on social media accounts such as Facebook, and also having the concentrated visibility aspect (see Van Aelst, Sheaffer & Stanyer, 2012).

My results showed that the candidates could construct their brands in a relatively peaceful environment on Facebook. The unique examples of repetition were a few topic issues that were posted to each candidate's page (see example in Appendix 3, B6). These offered the candidate an opportunity to manifest their listening and professional brand types by offering them a chance to show they cared about the questions and to express their opinion. At the same time, the person making a query was seeking wider publicity for their comment (so general visibility), and the focus on individual politicians was exploited (Van Aelst, Sheaffer & Stanyer, 2012).

6.2.2 Direct attacks and strong criticism

While the category of critiquing and arguing yielded few results in the posts, the comments included an abundance of direct attacks and other negativity expressed towards the candidate. These were directed to both the personal and professional politician brand types, and they showed the emotional connection, because the public showed strong emotion towards the candidates. There was also criticism of non-political actors, especially the journalists and media companies that hosted election debates.

Some comments in the data were directly hateful and filled the definition of hate speech:

The affairs of our country will be fine when you Juha Urpilainen, Stubb, Katainen and Sale are placed in front of an execution squad and condemned for treason. (Appendix 3, B7.)

These types of direct threats to a politician's life or threat-denoting comments were fairly frequent, particularly towards the party leaders who had minister roles in the government of 2015. These included attacks on the candidate's private life or characteristics, and notably no assessment of the candidate's professional work or policies was made, and the attacks were directly on the person. Railo and Ruohonen (2016: 232, 240, 256) suggest that private and intimate content can provoke the electorate, but my data indicated that instead, the public used those dimensions of content to try to provoke the candidates. It also implied that the public took politics personally.

These types of attacks were also a good example showing that online, people tend to think that regardless of the public nature of social media posts and comments, they appear to be less worried of any legal considerations or consequences. It also supports Turtiainen and Östman's (2013) statement that the public does not necessarily understand the public nature of online contexts. In many instances, the attacks were direct, with even verbal (written) references to death or physical violence. In terms of brand construction, there were no specific types that these comments constructed, as they attacked each type and highlighted negative perspectives of the candidates and their brands.

The harsh criticism was often in the form of attacks against the persona, in the form of name-calling, references to decisions made, or combinations of both:

I hope head of the party leader term will end from this turncoat liar - one wouldn't believe he is religious. (Appendix 3, B8.)

In this example, both the professional and the humane politician brand types were represented by referencing the candidate's political role, their credibility as a person, and also their faith. By referring to the candidate's faith, the writer was also partly denoting the intimate dimension of the candidate's persona. This reference to private and intimate life dimensions was a typical example of the emotional content and flaming seen in online discussions (Suominen, Saarikoski & Vaahensalo, 2019: 55). As Laaksonen and Pöyry (2018) describe, technology offers the possibility to share privately experienced emotions in public. My data showed that mostly the emotions portrayed among the public during the campaign were mostly frustration and anger for political decisions, which were then turned into malicious personal attacks towards the candidates and their personas:

Pekka, it is completely futile to fish for votes with those speeches. You have proved that you are extremely expensive to Finns moneywise! Aren't you ashamed at all? (Appendix 3, B9.)

These attacks were directed at the professional self of the candidate. While politics is about making compromises and many decisions are affirmed in the parliament, the data indicates that particular decisions have been personified. Media cases are also strongly connected to particular candidates and associated with them. This conveys Petrocik's (1996) idea of 'issue ownership' and shows how some topics are strongly attached to the politician's brand. Especially, past actions and their exposure is fixed to the personas in social media comments, and the personal brand is an archive of all kinds of interactions, and is hard to reconstruct completely.

The harshest criticism in the comments was directed towards the most visible political personas in the current parliament; i.e. the party leaders and current ministers who demonstrated concentrated visibility (Van Aelst, Sheaffer & Stanyer, 2012). Those candidates with the most exposure and linkage to communicated issues, also become vulnerable to taking critique for the decisions that are made. One party leader, Antti Rinne, had been the least popular party leader among voters in 2015 (von Schoultz, 2016: 172), which could explain both the criticism and the low engagement on his page. However, according to NFES, his popularity in fact grew from the 2015 to the 2019 elections (Isotalo et al., 2019: 18). In the same study, Juha Sipilä was among the most popular party leaders which did not correlate with the number of negative comments seen in the data. This supports the idea that, in general, voters have strong opinions on party leaders (von Schoultz, 2016: 165). It also challenges the representativeness of Facebook comments as data for accurately reflecting general opinion.

The discussion participants even protected some candidates and defended their brand by engaging in possible debates on their behalf. The following example shows that some of the public also considered the private life aspect of the candidates, and reminded other participants of it:

The women lions reaching the finals is a great thing. One would think also that Antti can rejoice in it in the midst of the campaign rush, without people giving him shit. <3 (Appendix 3, B10.)

This comment referred to another comment, where the candidate's work motivation was questioned because of their congratulating the Finnish Women's ice hockey team in the post. The comment questioned his focus and whether the candidate was concentrating on their work if they took time to watch ice hockey games. As suggested by Rudd (2016: 164–165), the public thus replaced media as the watchdog in social media when evaluating what and how the candidates should be doing things, and in this case, what kind of things were appropriate for them to post about and spend their time on as candidates. In this way, the public took it upon themselves to assess what was suitable to be communicated by the candidates on Facebook.

Irony was presented in the messages sent to one party leader, suggesting that their appearances are helping another party leader to seem like a better option:

The popularity of the Finns party would increase if you would appear one more time to be seen on television. Do you think you could make this happen Antti? (Appendix 3, B11.)

Irony and humor were explicitly used in personal attacks coming from Finns Party supporters. These attacks made with irony or sarcasm supported the reported centrality of irony and humor in social media communication (see Gal, 2018; Nikunen, 2018; Reyes, Rosso & Buscaldi, 2012;) and found effective for stimulating engagement (Heiss, Schmuck & Matthes, 2018; Hoffman & Young, 2011).

While there were many negative posts against the major parties and candidates, there were almost no direct negative comments towards the candidates representing the Finns Party. It is also noteworthy that for those that were critical towards the Finns Party, it was usually the participants being negative to each other, and not commenting about a particular candidate.

In their attacks, the public attached lying, and the idea of being a turncoat to the candidates. Especially, switching parties attracted this type of criticism:

Sampo and other defectors: Congratulations on being stranded. I unfortunately voted for you in the last election. Now I have seen what kind of a man you are. Luckily you didn't make it. Now you should head to the arms of the employment office ladies and think about a jobseeker activity scheme. You can feel the fate of the regular people with Jari Lindström. (Appendix 3, B12.)

The references to the so-called “aktiivimalli,” (a jobseeker activity scheme established as an attempt to solve the unemployment problem: Kyyrä, Pesola & Uusitalo, 2019) were an example of the need to understand different types of references to culture and current events when looking to understand online discussions. The familiar “turncoat” reference used to describe politicians and their way of changing their policies and ideas was used a lot in the comments attacking this candidate, and is used to signify “flipping sides.” These comments were not only written as replies to his posts, but also added to the comments seen in other candidates' feeds. Switching sides seemed to raise more anger in the public's comments than anything else, and it effectively devalued the morals and credibility of the candidate, and their personal characteristics were often referred to in messages commenting in this way.

The disappointment expressed towards the candidates who had changed their party representation showed how sensitive the public is to significant changes, and also how personal it can be to them. Most of these comments would have fulfilled the legal description for at least defamation of character (Penal Code for Finland 531/2000), if not offences that would merit even more severe charges. However, somehow these are disregarded and seen as tolerable when it comes to politicians

in social media. A similar type of approach is applied to celebrities, where mean, hurtful, and even severe attacks are seen in the comments on their public social media profiles. In these cases, the public harshly attacked humane, professional, and networked politician brand types by judging the candidates' choices, connections, their personal lives, and characteristics. These perceptions live long, and these types of messages were made related to issues from even further back than the previous parliamentary season. This implied that the public expected both honesty and consistency from the candidates. Therefore, as part of their professional politician brand, their political past is relevant and also problematic, as the public does not forget negative aspects very quickly. This also supports considerations around the lasting nature of brands, and even with personal development, the old layers stick (boyd, 2014: 33).

A softer form of criticism was presented sometimes by way of a one-word rejection or with voting statements, and sometimes they included reasoning for the opposition:

The Swedish party does not represent the Swedish speaking Finns anymore. So no. (Appendix 3, B13.)

When explained, the criticism also contributed to the candidate's brand through explanations of, for example, topic issues. The public further allowed the candidate to either react or not, which was also an possibility for forming or influencing the candidate's brand construction. However, these comments were mainly left unanswered by both the candidate and the public. It was further noteworthy that these were directed both for the candidates and for the parties, which implied that some people were making their voting decisions mainly based on the party, while some were looking at who the candidates were as individuals.

The attacks and criticism rarely commented on anything concerning the original posts. For example, several comments included attacks, criticism or negative feelings towards other candidates or parties on the pages of certain politicians. These findings support Picard's (2015) view that the added interest in people and public discussion encouraged by social media has brought public shaming and bullying to these platforms. They also support Marshall (1997: 3), arguing that when celebrity status politicians express themselves in public, they expose themselves to the possibility of being rejected.

In the 2015 electoral campaign study, the public was also seen to be actively producing rejection and expressing critique (Nelimarkka et al., 2020), which the data of this study shows to have continued into the election of 2019. In the comments, the public criticized a perceived lack of competence in certain issues,

the candidate's love life and sexual orientation, and referenced previous party leaders and other party politicians. Nelimarkka et al. (2020) present that previous research suggests Facebook to be less likely to show critical discussion since users would be unlikely to present rejection against the page owners. However, the data proves a completely opposite case, as the negative content seen in the comments was prominent and verbally strong. This supports the idea of the virality of negative emotion (Laaksonen & Pöyry, 2018; Rantasila, 2018) by showing that negativity in the comments leads to more negative commentary. This change from the conditions seen in the election of 2015 could indicate a change in the political discussion and the political atmosphere in Finland in general (which Railo et al., 2016: 333 also predict), but it could also indicate a difference in candidate focus as this study focuses on vote-pullers and party leaders, while Nelimarkka et al. (2020) included all the candidates and looked at a smaller manual sample.

As Suominen, Saarikoski and Vaahensalo (2019) describe, social media discussion is sometimes able to be looked at as meta-level text; i.e. discussion about discussing. The category of critiquing and arguing also included examples of criticism towards others commenting on the posts, towards media and their way of presenting the candidates or parties, and expressing frustration with elections and the campaign posts. A frustration with politics was visible in discussion comments such as:

nonsense nonsense nonsense (Appendix 3, B14.)

Citizens often felt that the politicians were just saying things and not doing anything. These types of comments were a way to bring that frustration out in public. There were also European parliamentary elections in the spring of 2019, and some citizens were becoming tired of elections, which they referred to in the comments. Especially, the data showed resentment towards seeing campaign discussion related to unappealing candidates:

Ugh ... another clown on my FB feed without an invitation 🙄 (Appendix 3, B17.)


An advert for this smiley boy in my feed 😞😞 Fuck no!! Disgusting... (Appendix 3, B19.)

Comments on looks and appearance were rare in the data, which indicated that the public was more focused on other issues such as political topics and performance evaluation. However, they are part of the privatization dimension, and portray a detailed focus on personal characteristics (Van Aelst, Sheafer & Stanyer, 2012). By

referring to the candidate as a clown, there was an attempt to undermine their credibility and express disapproval towards them.

These posts also showed that not everyone understood how the Facebook logic works. Facebook showed random posts on an individual's feed based on the platform algorithms; either their friend had liked, commented or shared the post, or they saw the post because of something else defined by the algorithm.

Another user tried to correct the algorithm and what is showed to them by making the comment:

I am not interested in this page. I am not interested in Li Andersson. Once again Facebook is the father of fake news. I DONT LIKE LI ANDERSSON!!!
 (Appendix 3, B18.)

These repetitions of dislike in the comment did not necessarily work as the comment writer intended. Instead, it invited counter-arguments and gave more views to the post through showing it as an engagement in the form of a comment. However, as stated earlier, there was a limited amount of actual discussion. Instead, the comments were more like individual shouts in the data, supporting the observations of Schwartz (2015) in their study on politicians' Facebook pages. Rather, this type of content showed that unlike the description of Facebook by Nelimarkka et al. (2020), the users also saw content other than that which they have chosen to follow, liked, or otherwise engaged with. Many among the public were unfamiliar with the logic of Facebook and expected to see only the pages that they follow. These types of comments indicate that although some discussion participants were unfamiliar with the platform and its logic, they still engaged in the discussions and followed the campaign communication.

Generally, those who showed criticism also opposed moderation:

I will post this link again, since the other one was deleted. Lets see how many hours until the green open communication culture censures this one.
 (Appendix 3, B20.)

My analysis showed that the public expected Facebook to be the public sphere where they could voice their opinions and discuss matters (Habermas, 1989), and that moderation harmed the democratic ideal because of censorship. This was also supported with the findings where the public expressed frustration regarding the candidates' one-sided communication:

I don't think Antti Rinne even reads these comments ... (Appendix 3, B21.)

Based on my data, the audience was expecting interaction and replies from the candidates, who instead were using their posts only for one-way-communication, and this has also been reported in the studies of Graham et al. (2013) and Farkas and Schwartz (2018). Consequently, this implies that the candidates could benefit from replying and interacting with the public on Facebook and negotiating more of the listening self, instead of just offering the informing self.

The data also showed criticism towards non-political actors, mostly media companies, and especially the National Broadcasting Company Yle:

Yle is the CNN of Finland. And now in America, the mainstream media is in trouble as they were shouting about Russia collusion for two years which has now been proven to be fake news. Yle is similarly the lackey of Finland's elite. (Appendix 3, B15.)

Why did Li Andersson get so much talk time ... bad debate leaders, weak. But Anna-Maja was good when the floor was given (Appendix 3, B16.)

This criticism was caused by different things, such as how journalists gave the floor to the candidates in debates, limited their time to speak, how the journalists approached different candidates with a different attitude, and what kind of candidate selection engines they had produced. The supporters were getting offended on behalf of their candidates, which shows how personal politics can get for the public. At the same time, however, they also gave the candidates positive visibility on Facebook. The criticism presented towards Yle supports the idea of the public sphere (see Habermas, 1989) being created by allowing public opinion formation and allowing multiple actors to participate in Facebook's discussion (see also Casero-Ripollés, 2018).

6.2.3 Sharing personal information

Candidates' private lives and personal characteristics were referenced in the data more by the public in their comments than by candidates in their posts. This indicates an interest in personas in social media, supporting Picard's (2015) earlier findings. The sharing personal category was a significant category for strategic campaign communication because it also promoted positive engagement in the data. In this category, examples of content concerning the candidates' personal lives such as family, history, health and feelings, were portrayed.

Pictures or stories of the candidates' spouses or other family members, and especially their dogs, sparked mainly positive commenting:

Handsome couple. 😊 (Appendix 3, B22.)

Equally cute, dog and master ❤️ (Appendix 3, B23.)

These responses mostly focused on appearance. However, often either the family or couple was described as a whole, so the candidate was not necessarily the object of commenting on appearance. But when they were, this was part of the focus on personal characteristics seen in the frame of Van Aelst, Sheaffer and Stanyer (2012), and negotiated the humane self. My analysis showed that the personal and intimate posts about family invited personal comments referring to appearance and feelings throughout the data. This promoted the candidates' brand as being more approachable, and as being an ordinary person with similar values, family, etc. to the electorate. The public also commented on the appearance of family members when they were mentioned in a post, which might have discouraged the candidates from posting too much about their close ones.

The photos and descriptions of activities with the family dog drew engagement in the form of the public sharing their own dog stories and complimenting the candidate and/or their dog. These types of comments were easy for the public to make since they could still comment without making a political statement, thus revealing publicly whom they were supporting. Also, people connect with animals and easily engage with content such as dog photos online. Based on the amount of positive feedback for these posts seen in the data, it can be considered as a possible strategic choice for a campaign, indicating the type of personal life referred to by Railo (2011) that can be used to polish the public image.

The decisions of party leaders to share their "letter to their younger selves" and other aspects of their personal life sparked more personal responses, where the public was commenting on the content shared in the letters. This showed that sharing personal life references and negotiating the personal self was valued by the public. In particular, they wanted to attach these more personal issues to the candidates' personas and brands. The comments were mostly positive and supportive of the candidates and their life work, but could sometimes comment on appearance or age:

Inspiring engineer. He should keep on fixing Finland. Beard gets grey and wrinkles add on, but with grit you can manage 😊 (Appendix 3, B24.)

This way of negotiating the personal self can benefit the candidate by bringing them closer to their public, making them more authentic (Enli, 2015b) and more ordinary. But as discussed earlier, there were also some attacks. These attacks were personal and harsh, and included language, tone and content which would not

typically be used in face-to-face meetings, and it often seemed as if their writers had neglected the fact that they had their names and faces next to the comment that was made.

This category in the data was coded as private and intimate content, and negotiated the candidate's humane politician self. Personal lives and characteristics were referenced in various ways, and these were individual for each candidate. The variety of representations even for one candidate throughout the data opposes van Dijck's (2013) view of the self as a "standardized tradable product". At least for the Finnish candidates, there was no standard seen in the data, unless the topic politician representation is seen as standard because of its frequent occurrence. This private and intimate content category was also different from the other categories because the comments were more tied to the original posts. Thus, my analysis supported that of Railo and Ruohonen (2016: 232, 240, 256), pointing out that private and intimate content provokes the electorate on social media.

The persona of each candidate had some effect on parts of the content in the comments. The strongest examples of these were seen with candidates who had already been recognized personas before their political careers. These support the idea of the discursive power of celebrities argued by Marshall (1997). One was a former Olympic athlete, and raised several comments that were personal, both referring to sport, making references to their previous athletics career, and also to the candidate's religion which is part of the party brand they represent. For example, the public who wanted to wish the candidate success more often said things like "blessing" instead of "wish you well" or "all the best," which was more common with other candidates. The candidate was thanked for bringing up their faith, and the references to their professional career as an athlete were positive, and their past was often brought up in the data:

The competition mode hit the spot, like in Stuttgart back in the day. On to the finish line and beyond! 🏆🏆 (Appendix 3, B25.)

These private life references to the candidate's past represent both the individualization and privatization perspectives of politics. There was a focus on this persona because of their recognized past, which negotiated the personal self by discussing the private life, the candidate's past, and their personal characteristics. This way, the candidate's persona and expertise were not only considered as having more knowledge about, for example, sports, but the personality is built from the professional sports persona and also the religious persona, which were both treated as lending more credibility and positive personality to the candidate's political role. In this way, both humane and professional politician brand types were represented in the comments.

Some candidates, typically those who were most well-known, raised conflicting impressions, where some loved their persona, and some hated it. These were also usually communicated in ways that negotiated the private lives or characteristics of the candidates:

Master of bullshit (Appendix 3, B26.)

Wow more of these! Straight honest talk without any bullshit. Thank you Hjallis, exemplary <3 (Appendix 3, B27.)

However, these were usually the candidates who got the most exposure and had a more committed base of followers. These candidates also have multi-dimensional personas where they and the public negotiated the personal, professional, networked, listening, and informing politician. At the same time, less attention was given to the topic-orientated politician. This supports the idea Isotalus and Almonkari (2011) describe as ‘charmer politicians’. However, in my analysis, the representations seemed to fall more solidly into these intertwining brand types, hence my decision to distinguish more than two of them, unlike the earlier categories represented by Isotalus and Almonkari (2011).

There were not many references to the candidates' professional roles in the data, except for their past political positions and decisions. This could be because most of the candidates in the data were professional politicians, meaning that their career has always been within politics. If they had a previous career, their possible success or expertise stemming from it was often featured in the comments:

Juha Sipilä has shown how to achieve success also in his personal life. He has also been able to run things for Finland. He is empathetic, but not a fool. Money doesn't grow on trees, someone must earn it. Earned money can be divided to people with wealth transfer. Using debt to make wealth transfer, which previous governments did will make children rejoice for a moment. But when the bill comes due, then people complain about the lack of empathy, when there just is nothing to share. X X, blame previous governments for those shake outs that the Sipilä government had to do, in order to save Finland from the cycle of debt. (Appendix 3, B28.)

In these types of comments, the candidate's personal life and characteristics were used to construct both the humane politician and their credibility and competence in their political role, thus promoting their professional politician brand type representation. These types of representations support Railo's (2011) argument that personal content is always political. These personal life matters and characteristics are tied to the candidate's political role and persona.

One candidate got several references to their appearance, which portrayed typical Finnish female imagery:

🇫🇮Finnish Maiden 🇫🇮Powerful & Strong image (Appendix 3, B29.)

These references to the candidate's values and looks as having the traditional image of a Finnish girl with fair skin, long blond hair, and blue eyes were frequent in the comments to the candidate. This indicated that in this candidate's case, appearance was a significant part of their personal brand. This type of appearance has traditionally been used to signify a Finnish woman and Finland as a whole. The analysis showed that it supported the patriotic values that the candidate and their party stood for. This way, the humane politician was tightly intertwined with the professional politician representation, and the private dimension with a focus on personal characteristics was highlighted (Van Aelst, Sheafer & Stanyer, 2012). Also, the party brand was connected with the candidate through this personification of Finnish maiden imagery.

In the case of female candidates, their appearance was generally more commented on. However, there were also some references to the looks and appearance of some male candidates. These were mainly references to charm and good looks, or offering styling recommendations:

Oh Ben... You are the most charming man in politics!❤️ (Appendix 3, B30.)

Change your look to a more young direction as you are young. SDP has enough old men. With all good intentions🌸😞😞 (Appendix 3, B31.)

One comment referring to the sexual orientation of a candidate represented a rare example of intimate content in the data:

You don't seem to realize that if you take immigrants into your home, you would probably die within the first week because you are gay. But still you recommend it to people Pekka Haavisto. (Appendix 3, B32.)

There were only a few comments like this in the data, which indicated that the topic was not relevant to the public and it was not considered a factor for constructing the personal brand. These might also have been moderated on the pages, yet no evidence of that exists, and other very harsh comments were left on the page, so there was no indication that this would have been the case. However, the number of blank results in data collection suggests that at least some moderation had been carried out among the pages.

Comments on appearance and sexual orientation were part of the intimate negotiation, but there were many more complimenting the intelligence and stamina of candidates. This indicated that there was no special attention paid to the appearance, gender or sexual orientation of the candidates. Rather, the brand was constructed through attributes that build the professional self and the topic issues that the candidates communicated. This supports the earlier findings by Isotalus and Almonkari (2014), where politicians have stated in interviews that they prefer to keep their communication professional, and the data showed that the public mostly kept it that way as well. Thus, even though the public nature of their role blurs the lines of private and professional (see Street, 2004), the candidates could choose to remain on the professional side, and their audience mostly followed the chosen direction in relation to their comment content. However, there were exceptions. Specifically, with their criticism and attacks, the public became personal and negotiated content that did not necessarily follow the candidate's line in dimensions of professional, private, and intimate.

Most references to health in the data were expressions of concern for the candidate's capabilities to take care of themselves with the busy schedule:

Are you sure you are healthy enough for prime minister responsibilities.
There is still a chance to step down without losing face (Appendix 3, B33.)

Health issues were part of the intimate, so with these types of comments, the humane became intertwined with the professional politician brand type. The public also presented doubts on the candidate's ability to carry their role through, regardless of their health issues. These types of references in the comments lead me again to Railo's (2011) idea on personal content being political, and that instead, politics is personal; i.e. the public genuinely cared for their candidates and considered their health issues as something that is also their issue. But that genuine care could also be used as a weapon to attack the candidate and weaken them in the eyes of others.

Those candidates who had brought their family to publicity received comments on their family or on their role as a parent. This also supports Mäkelä's (2018: 174–178) findings on the success of female politicians in combining family and political careers. However, male candidates in the data also received similar commentary, so gender differences in content negotiating family or parenthood were not prominent. In these intimate examples, their family life was often combined with the professional role:

Emma's mom to government young and capable (Appendix 3, B34.)

In this way, the family and the personal role were negotiated as part of the candidate's personal brand. It brought them closer to the public as ordinary and approachable when seen in this role, and not just through the topic issues or their current role as a politician. The comments also showed this approach, where the public commented on the page much in the same way they would comment on their friend's profiles.

6.2.4 Socializing with the candidates

Facebook has become an extension of real life for the public. The category of socio-emotional functions includes humor, gratitude, apologizing, and greetings. In this category, real-life encounters were brought to the comments with descriptions of the meetings and the candidates. The public used these comments as an opportunity to continue their interactions on from personal meetings with the candidates, to express their gratitude for a talk, to share selfies from their encounters, and to meet and interact with the candidates, even when the live meeting did not allow it:

Thank you Ville Tavio for having the citizens interests at heart. 🍌😄🌱 I would have come to shake your hand as a thank you for all the great work in the parliamentary session yesterday but you were occupied at all times. (Appendix 3, B35.)

Social media allows the public to address the candidate directly. These addresses were positive in the data when they referred to meetings with the candidates or expressed the need for discussion, which indicated that these types of sociable comments were likely to come from supporters or at least from individuals who shared similar views. These people wanted to share their encounters, and they usually also commented, for example, on the looks or the likability of candidates they felt when meeting them live. By sharing their encounters, they portrayed the authenticity (Enli, 2015b) aspect of the candidate and also promoted the humane politician brand type.

The importance of the candidate's approach to people and their availability was communicated in the data. The comments expressed how important it was that they met the candidates in real life:

The best part about Ben is that even after campaigning he is reachable in the marketplace and different gatherings, answers questions from the citizens, and listens to their views about matters. Everything he does he does well 👍😊 (Appendix 3, B36.)

This comment highlighted the importance of the listening self and the networked self. The electorate wants their candidate to be approachable and accessible, and not just personal by knowing intimate details about them, but personal by having direct access. My analysis showed that the public needed to meet the candidates in person, which supports what Railo and Ruohonen (2016: 289–293) noted in their candidate interviews about personal meetings being the most prominent campaign tool. The candidates were criticized if they neglected some locations on their campaign trail. However, the comments also showed that personal replies and interaction could replace or at least be comparable to these personal meetings:

Hi! I am a new voter for you and I hope for personal messages on whether it was worth voting for you.... (Appendix 3, B37.)

The presence of several of these comments in the data implied that this form of interaction is needed, and that there was also a need to participate in the discussions on Facebook. Thus, a need was expressed for the listening politician brand type. When candidates had been met in person, these encounters could be re-lived and extended online:

A wild Pirkanmaa round! Thank you for coming. I have to say that earlier when I had only had the media-made impression, it was great to see how genuine and down to earth you are for real. You had the energy to meet all of us in person, that was great. (Appendix 3, B38.)

The public used Facebook to address the candidates directly and called for interaction. These comments show the importance of personas and the need for interaction with them (see also Isotalus & Almonkari, 2011; 2014). Especially, the connection and focus are placed on individuals and their personas, and not on the political parties.

Even though the subcategory of greetings did not give a lot in terms of strategic communication planning or constructing personal branding, the amount of this type of content in the comments was so considerable that it needs to be addressed. The comments were simple "hello" and "thank you" notes for either previous government or parliament work, or the candidate's current campaign. Sometimes a more personal appreciation was added in the comment. However, it is essential to consider how these affect the exposure of candidates' posts through the engagement and the functions of the algorithm. While the public did not necessarily have a lot to comment on for the candidate, they still wanted to engage with their post. A need to be sociable with them could be the reason for this (see also Papacharissi, 2013; Schroeder, 2016). However, my data shows no proof for Strandberg and Borg's (2020: 107) assessment of Facebook as a useful forum for

political influence for constituents seeking a social connection. Rather, this connection was lacking in my data, and there were no replies from the candidates, and interaction between the members of the public in the comments was also rare. However, the public still showed that they were seeking these connections, supporting the idea that Facebook was used for this purpose.

The comments in this category also included most of the emojis seen in the data. These were used, for example, for expressing gratitude with a flower or hello with a smiling emoji, indicating the need for connection with the candidates, even if only by way of a one-click note (see Stark & Crawford, 2015). These comments included greetings for candidates, either adding promises of a vote or some expression about not having voted for them but still wanting to say good luck or to thank them for their work:

Even if I didn't vote for you this time, I wish you all the best. You are a humane and fine politician! As a dance teacher I can say something about flexing. But extreme movements are not required as a point of physical wellbeing. (Appendix 3, B39.)

The importance that the public placed on the humanity of politicians supported McGregor's (2017) idea that humane representations in political communication are more appealing to the public. My analysis highlighted the significance of the past in their brand construction, particularly that the public remembers decisions that have been taken and the results, and that they considered them during this active discussion period during the campaign, and especially in relation to voting. The professional self was constantly shaped by the activities of the politicians in their current role, and this was in line with Larsson (2015), arguing that campaign communication should also be assessed in longitudinal studies outside active campaign periods.

My analysis indicated that the socio-emotional functions in content was relevant because of the significance of engagement on Facebook. These were also used for socializing on Facebook. Social media is used for sociability, and its affordances affect how this sociability is shaped (Schroeder, 2016). In Facebook, this means that comments are used similarly to the types of interactions that could take place in face-to-face encounters in campaign events. However, the attacks seen in the posts in this category were divergent from those interactions. My analysis also showed what Schroeder (2016) depicts as the episodic nature of these comments, meaning that the public chose which posts to comment on or otherwise engage with. This was not incidental, even though the visibility of a particular post can perhaps seem random even if defined by the algorithm. Nevertheless, for the public, the comments and the engagement were a chance to approach the

candidates and to interact with them. Simultaneously, evaluating this engagement could show candidates their popularity and connection with the public.

My analysis showed that the public used cases, examples, and statements made by either the candidates themselves or other politicians to show criticism, and also use irony in their insults. This aligns with Laaksonen and Pöyry's (2018) findings that humor and sarcasm are the main ways used to approach different topics online. Especially, the comments on the Finns Party candidates' pages often included sarcasm, irony, or even jokes:

What did Rinne say when he looked at the polling numbers with Sipilä and Orpo? "It seems we have the same direction" (Appendix 3, B40.)

The joke on the comment was made using the Social Democratic Party slogan and indicating that the Finns Party was now replacing the three bigger parties. Finns Party supporters often built their comments around negative perspectives of the three large parties. Notably, they focused on the politicians leading those parties, which indicated an exploitation of the concentrated visibility aspect seen in the data (Van Aelst, Sheafer & Stanyer, 2012). This indicated that the public had adopted a similar approach to that employed in traditional media, where issues and parties are discussed through their leading politicians.

6.2.5 Praising and expressing support

This category included expressions of support for candidates, political or non-political actors, and also for oneself. My results show that this category mostly included support shown to the candidates. Often this was expressed in the form of promises to vote, but also the comments gave support to candidates who had gained respect but not necessarily the vote from the public:

U have my support 🙏. (Appendix 3, B41.)

If this would be only a persona election I would vote for Sari Essayah, but it isn't! (Appendix 3, B42.)

Same direction here in Jyväskylä <3. (Appendix 3, B43.)

The social democratic party had managed to get their message through with their slogan "we have the same direction", which was often referenced in the data. These types of supportive comments did not construct any specific type of the politician's brand; however, they strengthened the positive and created an impression of solid support when there were many similar comments.

One user commented their appreciation for one candidate's way of mentioning all the candidates and their numbers when posting a call to vote. This showed the audience's appreciation for the networking politician; candidates who presented their persona together with other candidates, instead of just boosting themselves as individual candidates. This presentation of unselfish thinking also contributed to the candidate's personal characteristics, thus negotiating the humane politician.

However, the supportive comments sometimes expressed negativity to other candidates:

If Marin would be running the party instead of Rinne, there wouldn't be any question of the winner in the elections, now it will be a tight race 😊.
(Appendix 3, B44.)

These comments resulted from one candidate substituting for a party leader who was on sick leave. This started a discussion on replacing the party leader. In this discussion, the concentrated visibility, and the importance of the political leader noted earlier by Karvonen (2009: 100–101) and von Schoultz (2016: 166) was emphasized, which also features prominently in the data and was discussed in the category of attacks.

My analysis showed several references to the persona vs. party dilemma in the parliamentary elections, which also revealed the public's problem with the voting districts. These findings depict the importance of personal brand and how much it meant to the candidates and the public, and as Garzia (2014: 80–85) has pointed out, some voters can even switch from one party to another because of an individual candidate. Therefore, personas matter, and the electorate take their selection personally. It also needs to be remembered that several voters in Finland do not vote along party lines, but purely concentrate on voting for individual candidates (see von Schoultz, 2016: 169–173):

For the first time in my life I voted for the National Coalition party 4 years ago. I voted for Elina, because her matter-of-fact argumentation and clear vision convinced me. Now I am even more convinced, and my vote goes to Elina. I am not that convinced by the National Coalition party, but none of the parties are perfectly good and wonderful. (Appendix 3, B45.)

These types of comments highlighted the aspect of general visibility, and the professional, networked and humane politician brand type representations. Here, the focus was on individual politicians as described in the general visibility dimension (Van Aelst, Sheafer & Stanyer, 2012). The individual's party, part of the

networked self, was either regarded or disregarded depending on the voter, and the candidates' personal characteristics and competence were valued.

My analysis supports the results of von Schoultz, Järvi and Mattila (2020: 176–178) that candidate Essayah is personally more popular than her. Particularly, the candidate received positive commentary especially when private dimension elements such as non-professional characteristics, their past role as an athlete, and professional characteristics like rhetorical skills, were assessed.

The division between supporting the party in relation to the candidate was more equal in the comments than in the posts. While the posts were mainly focused on the candidates and individual personas, there was a more equal focus on both the parties and candidates in the comments. This is natural since social media is focused on individuals, and the posts were only analyzed for the candidate's public pages. However, it is noteworthy that the public's discussion did not follow this but included the parties to the discussion.

The importance of the party leader and the concentrated visibility dimension addressed by Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer (2012) came across in several comments, supporting von Schoultz's (2016: 190) conclusions about the party leader's persona significance. The public viewed the position as essential, and through the data, the biggest compliment was to state that someone either is or would make a great party leader and then prime minister. This supported and extended Niemi's (2016) views that the focus on the idea of prime minister election turns the focus to party leaders when the public makes their voting decisions. However, they were also suggesting a great future as a party leader for younger candidates:

Smart, intelligent and pleasant acting Man. Fit for the head of the National Coalition party. Future prime minister and president potential. (Appendix 3, B47.)

My analysis showed that in these comments, the privatization dimension was also referred to, and the candidates' personal characteristics, behavior and intelligence were assessed (see Van Aelst, Sheafer & Stanyer, 2012). These constructed the humane and the professional politician brand types by explaining why the candidate was fit for the role, and their professional self gained credibility.

The choice to include vote-pullers and party leaders in the data ensured that each current parliamentary party is represented in the data, even though Jussi Halla-aho as a vote-puller for the Finns Party was excluded from the study because of the

lack of a public page on Facebook. Nevertheless, that particular candidate was referred to in the data even more than other candidates:

On Sunday JUSSI 🇫🇮 (Appendix 3, B48.)

Especially, the other Finns Party candidates and their pages were used as a forum to express support for the party leader in the comments. The solid supporter base discussed his debate performance, his "superiority", and expressed support for him as the next prime minister throughout the data, in the comments of almost all of the candidates' pages. In this way, the data indicated a substantial exploitation of the concept of concentrated visibility (Van Aelst, Sheaffer & Stanyer, 2012) by the public.

These types of comments were also prominent in the posts of candidates Huhtasaari and Peltokangas. However, the Finns Party supporters communicating support for their party's agenda and candidates often simultaneously expressed rejection and criticism towards other parties and candidates. It was remarkable how much this one party's candidates were also referred to in the comments for other parties' candidates. My analysis shows that their supporters were exploiting the candidate's concentrated visibility, and this mobilization gave added exposure. Similar reasons were assessed as being key factors in the party rising in the parliamentary elections of 2011 among the bigger parties (Niemi, 2014), which usually benefit from more extensive resources in campaign communication (Strandberg, 2016). A similar type of commenting also featured in the category where performance and rhetoric were assessed.

Movement Now's supporters also utilized the concentrated visibility. For example, this comment was found in the major party leaders' pages:

I was just listening to Hjallis Harkimo and Karoliina Kähönen from Movement Now. I have never before been more satisfied with my vote, and I made the right decision. It is great to be in the front group breaking Finnish corrupted democracy. (Appendix 3, B49.)

Some less recognized candidates exploited the individualization dimension and the concentrated visibility of some candidates by promoting themselves and their number on more known candidates' comments. By recognizing those candidates who had visibility, these less recognized candidates could benefit by commenting their own message for the larger audiences on these candidates' pages. However, these messages were not commented on or noticed by the other participants, at least in the comments.

Party-related expressions and phrases were used outside party lines, thereby disturbing the brands by disconnecting their key messages when they were attached to another candidate. Some slogans were also stolen from other parties. The following example includes a phrase introduced by Timo Soini with The Finns Party in the elections of 2011:

Great Antti. Big election victory coming up. So that it will jytkähtää [jytkähtää is a metaphor used in reference to “a big bomb” and also a reference to a slogan used by the previous Finns Party success in election of 2012]!! (Appendix 3, B50.)

This type of intertextuality is typical for social media comments, and references to other media texts and narratives were often made again supporting the hybrid media environment idea by Chadwick (2013). In the data, there were several comments made to all the candidates, where there was an only a single-word statement:

voted. (Appendix 3, B51.)

One-word voting statements could not be interpreted as to whether they expressed support for the candidate. However, the tone and the specific that they were addressed to one particular candidate’s page indicated that the vote would most likely be directed to the candidate in question. Also, it is interesting to ask why the public posted these types of comments. Was it to prompt others to vote? Or could there be some sense of the act of voting becoming more true once it was validated with a comment on social media, as has been discussed in relation to other life events (see Östman, 2015)? Regardless, these types of comments implied a need for interaction with the candidates and again highlighted the importance of the listening politician brand type. They also supported the sociability aspect of Facebook depicted by Schroeder (2016).

Some expressions of support complimented the persona of the candidate, and did not mention voting:

Such a king he is 👍 (Appendix 3, B46.)

These types of comments show that for some among the public, the persona comes first instead of the party. However, no assessment of the person’s abilities was given, and the candidate was simply crowned. Thus, the humane politician brand type was negotiated more than anything else with those candidates who had a strong, distinguished brand and previous recognition, especially if they were

celebrity politicians who were known because of their previous career (see Street, 2004).

A positive orientation towards the candidate was more visible towards the end of the data, in the period just before the election day, while the first part of the collected data showed more criticism and questioning. This could suggest that the members of the public took time, in the beginning, to criticize and question, so constructing a negative brand against candidates they wished to oppose. But towards the end of the campaign, it was mainly supporters who were reacting with the pages. Also, the lack of interaction on the page might have silenced the opposing voices, and if there was no reaction and counter-argument, the comments were left without notice.

6.2.6 Sign and share this initiative

The public were not sharing their own content in the comments. However, some shared citizen initiatives:

How about it - would animal protection also go there in addition to protection of the environment? [link to the initiative] (Appendix 3, B52.)

In this way, the citizens utilized general and concentrated visibility for their cause by trying to gain exposure for the initiative. However, these discussions were not continued in the comments, and my analysis shows that these issues were left with little notice on the page. This also supports the focus on personas seen on the pages, depicted for social media by Picard (2015).

6.2.7 Nice job on the debate

The most prominent and most visible comment category in the data evaluated performance, where appearances on election debates or in other media were discussed. Railo et al. (2016: 331) remind us that communicating through social media in relation to the media performances of politicians adds to the public interest towards politics and increases political knowledge. The references in the evaluations mostly included personal characteristics, thus presenting the private dimension of Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer's (2012) operationalization on personalization. In this category, the comments concerned the candidates and their evaluation, based on television debates, speeches, and their rhetoric in general. This was the major category seen in the data, and it produced the most extended comments.

One natural lead to this was that the candidates mostly posted about their appearances at a particular location or in the media, thus presenting the informing politician brand type. There were responses to the posts, and it seemed that the public needed to comment on their appearance. Particularly, Facebook provided an outlet for doing what earlier only journalists could do: namely to publicly assess and evaluate the candidates.

The comments regarding the debates and speeches only touched on the content by either thanking the candidate for focusing on a particular issue or praising their rhetorical skills and how their speech was written. Otherwise, they commented on the candidate's looks, their way of speaking, or their behavior. Some comments included an argument for or against something that the candidate had said. As stated before, these types of comments rarely negotiated looks, and their focus was merely on the argumentation skills, articulation, and behavior towards the other candidates. The comments in the data on particular debates were so contradictory between the candidates' pages that it seemed that they may have been referring to different debates, since their perceptions and feelings diverged so much from each other. This suggests that the feel for the candidate was mainly born through previous experiences and perceptions, and that current perceptions were formed based on what was already known and felt about the candidate:

Good thinking from Haavisto, but credibility is eroded with the Caruna deal. (Appendix 3, B53.)

In this example, the idea of issue ownership (Petrocik, 1996) showed that the candidate's political past was tightly attached to them. Here, the politician's brand was bound with a single topic that had raised much public criticism. One topic issue can diminish the candidate's credibility and is hard to fix, so the importance placed on the past with politicians' personal brands seen in the data further support's Larsson's (2015) argument for longitudinal studies on election campaigns.

The first type of these comments included general statements about how the debate or performance went. These were either positive, such as "good debate", or negative, like "that was not very impressive", where there was no specific evaluation or justification for the comment. These could express support or rejection towards the candidate, but they were not negotiating anything relating to the candidates' personas. But they also showed the importance of the performance in debates:

Wow, you have done well in the grilling. I respect that a lot!! (Appendix 3, B54.)

In the data, the public broadly used comments to assess and evaluate the candidate's rhetorical skills and performance in debates. This is part of the privatization dimension, specifically with the detailed focus on personal characteristics (Van Aelst, Sheaffer & Stanyer, 2012), because here, the candidate's personal skills and performance are negotiated. This was a combined negotiation of the professional, humane, and listening politician brand types, specifically when some candidates were judged not to listen to the other candidate's turn on the floor or to ignore the topic in question.

My analysis showed a discrepancy between the candidate's communication focus and what the public wanted to comment on. Regardless of the candidate's focus on topic issues in their posts, several comments focused on their appearance:

Wow you are a super package. Super beautiful, sensible, good verbal skills, humane, sensible and clear opinions. You are the best! (Appendix 3, B55.)

Based on my data, candidates' rhetorical skills, credibility, and humane approach were essential for their brand construction. The occasional mentions of the candidate's appearance were often seen as positive comments, even humorous, that were negotiating more the candidate's personality than their fit or looks. Even though they were part of the personal self and private dimension, they were used to strengthen the professional politician brand type, thus constructing the candidate's brand as a successful and credible expert. Even though Facebook is used to present photos and social media has been regarded as being focused on the visual and appearance, there were almost no comments concerning the candidates' styles or outfits. However, the personal characteristics that were raised constructed the candidate's personal brand in several ways; they set the tone, connected with the public, engaged in commenting, presented authenticity (Enli, 2015b), and promoted sticky affective networks (Papacharissi, 2015).

My data indicated that speeches could make a difference for some, and the public valued rhetoric skills:

I cannot say anything else than abilities can be heard and seen: knowledge about matters, the pleasantness of public performance, facial expressions, gestures, sharpness when needed, humor, articulation, narrative of the generation, respect. Signed: first time ever Center party because of Sipilä (Appendix 3, B56.)

Only Sari Essayah and Halla-aho have common courtesy skills like a normal person. Others act like a herd of brainless idiots. Heaven forbid how I am ashamed of the childish behavior of those others. (Appendix 3, B57.)

It was great to listen to a knowledgeable and wholesome speech. Even the reporters were a bit taken back. Determination and integrity are great qualities. Thank you. (Appendix 3, B58.)

These examples show that for some, individual performances on debates mattered, and the candidates could affect a lot with how they managed these situations. Here, the public emphasized both the humane and the professional politician brand types because the private dimension was in focus (Van Aelst, Sheaffer & Stanyer, 2012) and building the credibility of the professional self. It was important for the public that the candidates had rhetorical skills to explain issues at their level, and this was often noted in the data. The above examples also indicate that the public respected candidates who could be seen as ordinary people. Especially, their behavior towards others in debates was highlighted and thus became part of the candidate's brand. Humanity was valued in the brand representations, and personal characteristic references considering the candidate's rhetorical skills and credibility were directed to almost all of the candidates in the data. Some comments evaluated the candidate positively, even stating that the evaluation came from the supporter of another party. This further indicated that the page audience was more extensive than just the candidate's page follower base:

Even though I am a green party voter, I must say that in this debate Sanna Marin shone. You are unbelievably sharp and on point. I hope your party is wise enough to make you the party leader. (Appendix 3, B59.)

Intelligence was often mentioned together with rhetorical skills and performance evaluation. My analysis also showed that the public were also giving instructions when evaluating the candidates. In this way, the public's adoption of the media watchdog position suggested by Rudd (2016: 164–165) was also supported by comments that evaluated the candidates' performances.

With the performance evaluation posts, my analysis showed that the public were co-living the debates and then looking for a parallel platform from Facebook to interact directly with the candidate, and even advise them on what and how they should conduct these performances. This indicated that Facebook was also used for dual screening, and can be compared to earlier findings on Twitter (see Shah et al., 2016; Vaccari, Chadwick & O'Loughlin, 2015).

The data also included criticism for performance:

Hi, here is a Lapland democrat. You have ruined the election for the democrats with your ego and confusing speech skills!! This will happen and it pisses us Lapland democrats off a lot! We here in Lapland want you away

from the role of the head of the party, we want a younger leader. For example Sanna Marin, Antti Lindman or Urpilainen would be better. Antti, if Sanna Marin would have lead this election campaign, the Social Democratic Party would definitely have been the biggest party on 14.4.2019. Antti, you should relinquish the leadership position and give a chance to the younger and braver ones to lead the Social Democratic Party to new ventures. This is the true message to you from the Lapland region! (Appendix 3, B60.)

Here the candidate's rhetorical skills were attacked, so both their professional and humane politician representations were criticized. In the example, the candidate's role as a politician was discussed, but also their personality and personal charisma. This example also supports von Schoultz's (2016: 172) argument that an unpopular party leader can reduce support for the party among voters because the comment implied that there would be more voters if the party leader would be changed. The concentrated visibility was also evident here. The comment indicated that people felt the party leader was solely responsible for the party's support. If the party was not leading in the polls or getting the majority of the votes, then the leader should be changed to boost the party's popularity. Here, even the candidate's age (a private dimension issue) was referred to as an explanation for the need to switch leaders. Another personal characteristic, bravery, was also mentioned, and this type of thinking was evident throughout the data, with many comments expressing that persona was essential for representing and promoting the party.

6.3 Engagement with Candidates

The networking and the professional politician brands engaged with the public through the party brand and topic messages. Especially for the party leaders, the party slogans and references that they used in debates showed as engagement in the data because the public also used them in the comments. These slogans were also spread in the comments where they were connected with the messages, thus showing the public's engagement. Overall, this indicated that these types of short phrases that connect either to the party or the politician get visibility and mobilize supporters when they are well planned and engaging. For example, short and clever messages together with a message that the public shared promoted engagement.

The candidates were using the facilitation aspect of Facebook, primarily through the way it allowed them to direct topic messages and campaign trail updates. Some of them also used the platform to share other media content, thus adding the

exposure of their appearances. The public were able to use the platform to participate in debates, express agreement, comment on candidates' television appearances and other media coverage, express their own opinions, and share information. Also, they encouraged others to vote and participate in campaign events. As a negative point, some used Facebook to spread content that was harmful to the candidates they opposed and issues that they felt strongly about, which were otherwise not getting media exposure.

Mainstream media content is usually considered less authentic than user-generated content, and this idea of symbolic authenticity (Enli, 2015a) builds the power and influence of the posts and comments in the data. Mostly they were and seemed genuine, with spelling mistakes, non-polished ideas, and a spoken Finnish style of writing which, especially in the case of user-written comments, makes them a powerful form of word of mouth marketing.

Based on the data, discussions between the candidates and the public on Facebook during the campaign were seen to be lacking the interactive dynamic. Some interaction occurred among the public, but again remained limited. Some candidates succeeded in creating a follower base through active posting where support and loyalty to them were expressed. But while the posts were getting exposure through engagement, no content went viral or was created to translate into more comprehensive media coverage, even though broadcast media coverage was shared on Facebook and used as content. The candidates also failed in creating transparency because the scope of topics and the discussion style were limited.

The networked politician's importance was most robust with those tightly connected to their party and party brand, and among the public, that shapes their voting decision by considering the party first. A significant part of the support messages in the comments were support messages for the party instead of the person, so the exact opposite of individualization. However, this was also one type of persona representation of party leaders, where they were viewed 'as the party' and communication to the party was directed to them. The comments represented both supporters and those who were firmly against. This highlighted the significance of the exposure that posts get through engagement. Also, those candidates provoking strong opposition were more likely to have their opposing public visit their pages and comment there because of their brand, where name recognition is central.

As stated in previous research, such as Enli's (2015b) work on authenticity online, authenticity – or at least an illusion of authenticity – promoted engagement. This was supported by the data and analysis, where personal, more spontaneous posts were responded to with more reactions and more positive comments. While many

candidates provided campaign-trail photos and real-time reporting on events, only those who described feelings and discussed issues instead of just listing campaign locations promoted a response from the public. The emotional posts that candidates used towards the end of the campaign and especially on the last campaign day were essential to engage the followers and create personalized content. However, my analysis also showed the importance of the individual candidates, instead of only what they produce in the posts, thus emphasizing the importance of personal brands. Furthermore, the data showed that private and intimate content was not the only type of content provoking engagement. But regardless of the lack of personal content in the candidates' posts, they provoked significant engagement from the public. For some candidates, even lengthy topic posts arguing policy issues received reactions and comments where individual stories and opinions were shared in addition to expressions of support or opposition.

Table 15 represents the total number of reactions, and also the number of different reactions for likes, love, wow, laugh, sad and angry, seen for each candidate. The last row presents the total sums of these reactions so that they can be compared for individual candidates. As expected, and as Table 15 shows, some reactions to posts were used more than others. Similar to Kalsnes, Larsson and Enli's (2017) study on Norwegian candidate-citizen interaction on Facebook, the like reaction is the most used in communication. For the other reactions, the sad face and the amazement were used less than reactions expressing love (<3), like, laughter or anger. However, it is remarkable how prominent the love reaction was in the data, implying the users' personal connection with the candidates. The number of love reactions varied from 69 for Tavio, up to 3 556 for Andersson. Furthermore, manual analysis shows what type of posts provoked these reactions. Likes were the dominating expression in engaging with political posts online in Finland, and it is the first and easiest reaction. For example, those unfamiliar with Facebook and other social media only use the like-reaction. This was supported by the number of different reactions used on the page of Zyskowicz, a senior politician in the data, and the number of reactions on the pages of Huhtasaari and Andersson who represent a younger generation of politicians. The followers and those commenting on their pages probably represented different demographics in their social media use and age. The number of likes ranged from 2 227 (Tavio) and 57 559 (Andersson), and these represented a significant portion of the total engagement.

As Table 15 shows, there were different types of reactions attached to the politicians' posts in the Finnish parliamentary election campaign. This indicated that the public were using the platform's affordances when communicating there, and they were engaging with the posts in various ways. It also indicated that

campaign communication was viewed as important on Facebook by the public, and they followed the posts and reacted to them in similar ways to other discussions online. It needs to be remembered that some liked the posts because they want to follow the discussion in the comment thread and this was also mentioned in the comments.

Table 15. Reactions for candidates

Party	Candidate	Reactions	Likes	Love	Wow	Laugh	Sad	Angry
The Left Alliance	Andersson	63,718	57,599	3,556	2,563	512	918	929
The Christian Democrats	Essayah	9,547	9,063	306	48	93	26	11
The Green Party	Haavisto	6,925	6,291	564	27	24	1	18
Movement Now	Harkimo	10,619	9,933	255	130	65	138	98
SFP	Henriksson	11,072	10,676	178	40	48	108	22
Finns Party	Huhtasaari	17,149	14,146	745	189	1,253	156	660
NCP	Häkkinen	7,742	7,501	194	7	36	0	4
NCP	Lepomäki	24,866	24,029	447	60	125	64	141
Social Democrats	Lindtman	14,717	13,747	809	28	51	37	45
Social Democrats	Marin	9,264	8,519	450	41	199	38	17
NCP	Mykkänen	4,992	4,642	188	11	65	38	48
NCP	Orpo	34,431	29,707	1,445	198	2,415	48	618
Finns Party	Peltokangas	27,733	26,290	1,094	103	114	64	68
Social Democrats	Rinne	21,349	19,436	909	84	566	86	268
Centre Party	Sipilä	34,310	31,946	1,030	113	1,019	18	184
Finns Party	Tavio	2,678	2,227	118	13	20	30	270
Blue Reform	Terho	4,539	3,521	69	31	724	19	175
NCP	Zyskowicz	8,190	7,683	232	12	212	3	48
Total		313,841	286,956	12,589	3,698	7,541	1,792	3,624

The number of posts, comments, shares, and reactions for each candidate is presented in Table 16. This gives an overview of each candidate and their engagement on Facebook during the analysis period. These numbers were counted automatically in Facepager in the process of data collection. Votes were collected from the official vote count of Finnish elections.

Based on reactions, Essayah is an interesting example with almost no negative reactions and a prominent positive reaction count. This supports the candidate's character and the brand that her assistant also communicated when I inquired about the content production, namely, the candidate represents the type that does not really get criticism or raise strong opposition or negative feelings. Significantly the candidate's television appearances promoted positive commentary over party

lines, and these show in the number of positive reactions, for example, 9,036 likes with 94 posts.

Table 16. Total engagement for each candidate

Party	Candidate	Posts	Comments	Shares	Reactions	Total engagement
The Left Alliance	Andersson	198	2,617	3,022	63,718	69,555
The Christian Democrats	Essayah	94	462	444	9,547	10,547
The Green Party	Haavisto	70	245	132	6,925	7,372
Movement Now	Harkimo	74	627	6,251	10,619	17,571
SFP	Henriksson	74	388	196	11,072	11,730
Finns Party	Huhtasaari	29	1,327	1,143	17,149	19,648
NCP	Häkkinen	25	364	225	7,742	8,356
NCP	Lepomäki	93	1,282	1,141	24,866	27,382
Social Democrats	Lindtman	33	607	647	14,717	16,004
Social Democrats	Marin	37	521	261	9,264	10,083
NCP	Mykkänen	52	407	438	4,992	5,889
NCP	Orpo	37	3,843	793	34,431	39,104
Finns Party	Peltokangas	41	1,353	2,176	27,733	31,303
Social Democrats	Rinne	125	2,111	43,851	21,349	67,436
Centre Party	Sipilä	40	2,894	1,083	34,310	38,327
Finns Party	Tavio	21	135	573	2,678	3,407
Blue Reform	Terho	66	835	215	4,539	5,655
NCP	Zyskowicz	46	610	405	8,190	9,251
Total		1,155	20,628	62,996	31,3841	39,8620

Haavisto represented a similar case when only analyzing the reactions, and the prominence of positive expressions can signal that for these candidates, only those who share the same views are seeing and reacting to their posts. However, the qualitative analysis showed that the candidate received several negative comments and attacks, specifically criticizing past decision-making on giving up state ownership of the Caruna electricity company. As mentioned before, the Caruna-case personified Haavisto because of the considerable media exposure of the case representing his statements, thus showing 'issue ownership' as depicted for parties by Petrocik (1996).

There were many reactions of sad (918) and angry (929) for candidate Andersson. However, the qualitative analysis showed that these were not reactions to the

candidate, but rather the stories shared in the posts. The candidate used "stories from the field" to communicate policies and topics. With active posting (198 posts), they generated broad engagement in all categories, with an exceptionally large number of reactions (63 718). This aligns with Bronstein, Aharony and Bar-Ilan (2018) who argue that personal stories and female candidates may promote higher levels of engagement.

For candidate Harkimo, the amount of 6,251 shares (almost half of the total shares (12,589) of all candidates' posts) describes the success of using videos as campaign material on Facebook. The candidate communicated mainly with short videos presenting stories related to societal topics and the agenda-setting of the new party. The candidate was already a public person, familiar with media representations, so, as the engagement showed, the chosen content and communication style fit his campaign.

Strandberg (2016) reminds us that individual candidates can succeed without a solid online presence during campaigning. Based on Facebook, Zyskowicz presented an example of this, and regardless of having a low Facebook presence with only 29 posts, the candidate was still among the vote-pullers. However, the number of comments (610) and reactions (8,190) to his posts is relatively high, even though his posts shared no personal content. Unlike candidate Andersson, these findings contradict Bronstein, Aharony and Bar-Ilan's (2018) and Nave, Shifman and Tenenboim-Weinblatt's (2018) findings that personalized content engages the audience. Instead, my findings support Strandberg's (2016) argument that individual candidates can succeed without a solid online presence during campaigning. However, this candidate has had a long political career, so he has visibility and exposure regardless of social media. Overall, the candidate's personal brand is strong, and his voter base is not necessarily looking for him to be on social media in order to vote for him. But whether Strandberg's view holds true for more junior level candidates who are just entering politics needs to be assessed in future campaigns.

The visibility of the party leader often benefits the party and their communication, when campaign messages are delivered through the party leader's channels. Garzia (2014: 80–85) finds that they can substantially affect the electoral decision, which is supported by the prominent engagement with party leaders seen in the data. This can also result from them being in a ministerial position, thus having focused visibility and attracting interest in their social media. When looking at the total engagement as the sum of comments, shares and reactions for each candidate, the vote-pullers were those with lower levels of engagement compared to party leaders. This indicated that the vote-pullers in the data succeeded in drawing

attention and influencing their voters somewhere else than in Facebook. However, there were exceptions to this, and candidates Lepomäki, Harkimo, Lindman, Peltokangas, and Huhtasaari received significant total engagement approximating higher levels than the smaller party leaders and about half the levels of the major party leaders.

The four-party leaders, Sipilä, Rinne, Orpo, and Andersson, were the four candidates who provoked more than 2,000 comments to their posts. They were all highest in regard to total engagement, with only Peltokangas coming close to their level. This suggested that a significant share of the online political discussion on Facebook was running on the majority party leader's public profile. These results align with Strandberg (2016) who states that the major political parties and parliamentary members are most active and control online campaign communication. The electorate looks for information there; they and journalists follow the pages; and this way, the posts there also get an immediate response and visibility. This resulted from the large number of shares their posts had – the more exposure, the more probability of getting comments. To follow and stay updated on these discussions, these online platforms cannot be forgotten. The number of comments did not resemble the number of votes that the candidates received, which indicates that an even more extensive voter base lies outside these discussions. However, with the significant number of reactions ranging from 21, 349 to 63, 718, it can be concluded that these candidates reached a significant audience through their Facebook profiles which benefitted them in both getting votes and getting their messages through to the electorate. (see Table 2; Table 14; Table 15.)

As the qualitative analysis showed, candidates Sipilä and Orpo produced similar content. They also represented the humane politician brand type, which corresponds with the reactions of "love," "wow," and "laugh" that were seen for them. Candidate Rinne had a similar exposure to these candidates, with a total engagement level almost twice as large, but has a lower level of positive reaction engagement. This is explained by the low level of a personal approach in the candidate's posts. He was also criticized in the comments for his evident absence from the platform, and regardless of the high number of comments (2,111), including many questions, there were no replies from the candidate. The posts were also independent of the comments, which indicated that the candidate was not following the comments to see what the public were thinking.

Even though candidate Peltokangas had relatively few posts (41), the analysis showed their active presence in the discussion. They also used the comments to discuss matters with the public and replied to comments. The amount of shares

(2,176) and reactions (27,733) compared to the number of original posts indicates a degree of success in the style chosen for his posts, and also supports the findings on the Finns Party's success in mobilizing their supporters through social media (Niemi, 2014).

The networking and the professional politician brands engaged the public through the party brand and topic messages. Especially for the party leaders, the party slogans and references that they used in debates showed as engagement in the data because the public also used them in the comments. These slogans were also spread in comments where they were connected with the messages, thus showing the public's engagement. This indicated that these types of short phrases that connect either to the party or to the politician get visibility and mobilize supporters when they are well planned and engaging. For example, short and clever messages together with a message that the public shared promoted engagement.

I am horrified by all kinds of persona worship! The Finns Party supporters talk about the master 😞 Halla-aho and Huhtasaari are leading grown men and women like sheep. (Appendix 3, B61.)

Even though this example would suggest that the importance of personas would be minor and even rejected by some of the public, the data showed that personas could and did influence the public in their voting decisions. However, so far only the Finns Party has been successful in constructing personas together with the public, that have distinctive brands that are visible throughout their campaign communication, and even in the channels of competing candidates and parties.

The significance of personalization in media was highlighted in the data, and the concentrated visibility given to leading politicians when reporting on topic issues has long-term effects on the politicians delivering messages or making policy suggestions. The past was prominent when the public assessed the candidates and negotiated their brands, whether it concerned their past actions or past roles in society. On the privatization dimension, a past career can be viewed as private because although it can be a significant factor for the politician's credibility on topic issues, it is still their private past life. However, for some candidates, this career is still in politics. The candidate's past was regarded from two perspectives, considering their previous professional career and the other political decisions they have made or been part of in the past. Certain political decisions were notably personalized in the data; especially the Caruna electricity company sale which was connected with candidate Haavisto, and the immigration politics (especially an assault case in Oulu) which was connected to the politics of candidates Sipilä, Orpo, and Rinne in the comments.

It was evident in the data that the public also influenced politicians' private dimension representations by commenting on their family, leisure time, and past roles (Van Aelst, Sheaffer & Stanyer, 2012). The intimate dimension in the comments was delivered through references to the candidate's family, health, and religion. Regarding health, the references were mainly expressing doubt whether someone had the stamina or a good enough health condition to perform in such a demanding role as, for example, prime minister. These comments were mainly encouraged by and connected to the medical leave taken by candidate Rinne which shows how fragile the careers of politicians can be in the eyes of constituents. For example, a medical absence representing the privatization dimension constructing the private politician brand can be regarded as a sign of weakness and raise doubt towards the politician.

There were also floating voters who were still looking for their candidate, and commenting on it in the data. Some topic questions and opinions were asked, and these were mostly then sent to all or at least most of the candidates in the data. Most questions addressed the election and the government formation. Similarly, campaign-trail activities were enquired about throughout the data. The comments often asked "when are you coming to location x?", and sometimes added comments such as "so I get to challenge you in real life". This implied that a real-life experience of the candidates was also needed to strengthen the relationship and validate the perceptions that the constituents might have of the candidates. Importantly, media exposure was not perceived as enough to make a decision.

The data showed that the politicians had many more than their target audience engaging with their posts and discussing matters on their pages. The target audience could be comprised of those that Nelimarkka et al. (2020) have suggested who have "liked" the page, thereby following it at least in theory. This might become the audience, since online, the audience also goes to where the content of interest is, and the algorithm exposes the page content more for followers than random users. This can be further developed with Rudd's (2016: 166) idea of active media consumers who influence content rather than just passively consume it. This can be seen, for example, in citizen online discussions where the topics switch by the active discussion, transforming, for example, a campaign mobilization call into a discussion on immigration politics. The topics and direction of political communication online are in active users' hands; i.e. those participating in the discussion, rather than those starting the conversations. Typically, some main topics formulate into title topics in elections. The election of 2019 gained most focus through topics such as the environment and immigration. But just as was seen with politicians, also with topics, the concentrated visibility on a specific case

was used to boost a topic issue, and at the same time to brand the related politicians.

7 DISCUSSION

The focus of this study was on the Facebook communication of both Finnish political candidates and the public during the parliamentary election campaign of 2019. The aim was to investigate how politicians' personal brands were constructed, negotiated, and manifested on Facebook during the campaign. Based on my analysis, both the politicians themselves and the public on the politicians' pages participated in this discussion with posts and comments representing different dimensions of the politician's persona and topic issues. These representations of persona, which I discuss as personal brands, were used to add exposure and engagement with the electorate, to interact with them, and to separate candidates from other candidates.

A starting point for this analysis was the concept of personal brand, which offers tools for recognizing what is sellable, lasting and distinguishable in a politician. The data showed that a politician is a fluid role, which the individual wears like a mask when performing their political duties. Politicians can be different in their private environments and their public life, and when negotiating their personas in different situations, they choose the representations they give off and hide. In their brand identities, politicians (and especially leading ones) are also connected with their parties, so it may be challenging for them to distinguish themselves as personal brands that are entirely unique. Thus, in the course of the analysis it turned out that the concept of persona, as discussed by Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020) in their theory of personas as public representations of self and the five dimensions of persona, offered a more valid starting point for describing how politicians are represented in today's complex media environment. The strength of the persona lies in its ability to capture the strategically represented self as defined by Marshall, Moore, and Barbour (2020), and is thus a continuous process of negotiations and stages.

However, this does not mean that we should neglect the idea of personal brands when considering political campaigns and individual politicians' campaign communication. The concept of personal brand corresponds to Kempny and Jawlowska's (2002: 6, 187–192) argument on identity being a consumer product, and "people's source of meaning and experience". The term and idea of personal brand have both developed after their argument, but it perfectly fits with how they viewed identity.

The concept of brand describes "the sellable self" (Marshall, Moore & Barbour, 2020: 225), which van Dijck (2013) calls a "standardized tradable product," and its value is the outcome of the communication process where it is constructed

through identity (Marshall, Moore & Barbour, 2015). However, the analysis showed that politicians could not be standardized, even as members of their party or other collectives. They are individuals who adopt their political roles with diverging approaches. The public often recognize their representations of persona as personal brands, and when connecting with the candidates, the public connect to their brand, which is something more lasting than just their representation at a given moment. Personal brand as a concept grasps something essential of the politician as a role, especially from their side in the communication process. It is something more than just a coincidental result of communicative actions. As a strategic communication play, personal brand should therefore be the result of an acknowledged process of choices, and their campaign communication execution.

The construction of personal brands in this study was analyzed through the personalization dimensions presented by Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer (2012), and the representations of the different selves of political persona inspired by the academic persona from Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020). A vital consideration in the analysis was whether communicative acts of brand construction could be separated from social media campaign communication in the data. I chose to approach this by viewing each communicative action as a function for brand construction, arguing similarly to Petrucă (2016) that all offline and online action contributes to personal brand. This elaborate definition of brand construction formed the basis for my analysis. The findings showed various functions for personal brand construction, partly because of the considered dual model in the process. However, the politicians and the public had both concurring and divergent utilizations for discussing the politicians and their personas.

I discuss my findings in this chapter before concluding with the final thoughts of this research. The multi-disciplinary approach used in the study was performed with data-based content analysis which guided the modifications made to the theoretical framework. It results from a gap identified in research related to both Finnish political communication on Facebook and the brand construction of politicians in campaign communication, and the dynamic, rapidly developing aspects of brand construction, personal brands, and the representations of politicians, and social media. At the same time, it contributes to the idea of a political persona with a dual actor model in its construction, and suggests a model for analyzing the persona in the context of different media representations.

This discussion consists of five sections. First, I introduce the dual model process and discuss how politicians' personal brands were constructed in the data. Second, the brand representations manifested in these posts and comments are discussed. A closer look at the elements of these brand representations is taken in the section

discussing the analysis results on the professional, private and intimate dimensions of the persona representations, and how the public engage with them. The findings on the content in the Facebook discussion are explained in section 7.3.2. From these, the last section focuses on strategic campaign communication. In section 7.4, recommendations for branding on Facebook and for future research on the topic are offered. The chapter concludes with the limitations of the research and the presentation of future considerations for the field.

7.1 Dual Actor Model in Brand Construction

This section describes the dual actor model for the process of brand construction reflecting the Facebook affordances suggested in section 3.3.2. The following research questions are addressed:

1. How are these brands constructed on the posts on politicians' Facebook pages?
2. How are these brands constructed in the comments to these posts?

The focus of this study has been on posts and comments as tools to construct the politicians' personal brands on Facebook. In addition to this, reactions were considered as measurements of engagement with these brands. The posts and comments featured different functions that appeared in the text. In the posts, they formed: **direct representation of self** through descriptions of own actions, activities, network, and sphere of influence; **direct communication of policies** by presenting which values and policy issues are central for the politician, thus presenting their political plans; **announcing appearance, media visibility, and linking own content** which adds exposure of the politician communicating these aspects to a broader public.

In the comments, the following functions were found: **direct representation of persona** through descriptions of the candidate and attacks against the candidate; **representation of party and the candidate's network; commenting and inquiring about topic issues; commenting on the appearances and other media content** about the candidate; **expressing support or opposition** through greetings, voting statements, and agreeing or disagreeing. Additionally, the data showed that for the public, the Facebook comments offered a way to get their voice heard, which corroborated with how Hakala and Vesa (2013: 239) explain motives for online discussions.

My analysis showed that the public are active actors in campaign communication in Facebook. Their interactions contribute to the politician's control over their strategic political communication, as Schwartz (2015) also argues when describing Facebook pages of politicians as a public sphere. Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020) suggest that in social media, individuals affect professional content creation. In boyd's (2014: 48–49) words, "self-presentations are never constructed in a void". Their focus is on the environment and other influencing factors for representation. Yet my analysis showed that this goes even further by supporting Paasonen's (2013: 37) approach on users as active producers of meaning in social media. Instead of just affecting the communication by, for example, steering the posts in a specific direction, the public choose what is visible in the Facebook communication of the candidates. While Rudd (2016: 166) defines the public influencing the content in terms of active media consumers, I found strong support in the data that the public should instead be approached as actors in the process. They generate reactions that affect the Facebook algorithm, and they negotiate meanings through their comments influencing the politicians' personal brands. Moderation, for example, through removing posts, is the only way that politicians can control what content is seen on the page and which representations of them are negotiated in the comments, but if carried out, the public raises criticism. In this way, Carpentier's (2007; 2011) active dimension is realized through the interaction and participation of the audience, in this case, the public, and which gives them power.

The Finnish politicians' Facebook representations implied less curation of content, contrary to Enli's (2015a) suggestion of seemingly authentic and personal, carefully crafted and staged performances on social media. Notably, in cases of attempts to craft these performances of self, the public tended to disrupt them. While politicians have acknowledged processes and strategies of approaching what is publicly represented and what is left out (which Goffman (1959) described in sociology as the front and backstage), they can only control their own posts, and not the online discussion arising from them. Consequently, that can steer the focus and the negotiation of the persona towards new dimensions, and in directions unintended in the original post.

The data showed that social media is not, in fact, all that controlled by the politicians even for their own pages, and that the candidates were only one actor in the dual process. This is opposite from Rahat and Kenig's (2018) views on the personalization of politics, dividing traditional broadcast media into uncontrolled media and social media into controlled media. It also contradicts the ideas of both Broersma and Graham (2012) and Metz, Kruikemeier and Lecheler (2020) that politicians have better control over their social media messages. The indication of

politicians not controlling their content on Facebook supported Sanches-Villar's (2019) idea of the disruptive nature of content production. Especially, some of the control was lost to the public participating in the online discussion. This loss is even strengthened by the Finnish politicians refraining from focusing on acknowledged persona construction and polished media strategies, as revealed in the analysis and aligning with earlier findings from Isotalus and Almonkari (2011). The public was in fact an active actor, with multiple individuals participating in producing content in the comments, compared to individual candidates producing content in the posts.

Public pages can, to some extent, be compared to online communities where people come to discuss a topic of interest. However, when analyzing these comment threads and the meanings negotiated in them, the focus needs to be set on the individual actors and not the idea of a community. Based on the analysis, the comment threads on the politicians' pages resembled the online communities characterized by Suominen, Saarikoski and Vaahensalo (2019), with discussion lacking etiquette, information-seeking participants, and opinion expression. Diverging discussions, the randomization of topics, and even a chaotic approach to discussion were also found in the data, but the aspect of finding communities in the pages was not evident.

On the one hand, the public commented on each other's comments, but their comments were also directed to the candidates where no expectation or care was given to others viewing the comment. No specific forms of communication, aside from some popular culture references or references to news and political decision-making were seen in the data, which separates the pages from the online communities discussed by Laaksonen and Matikainen (2013: 199). Also, unlike communities, the discussion on the pages did not necessarily form around the like-minded (Haasio, 2015: 40; Rheingold, 1993), so the absence of the creation of echo chambers (see Bail et al., 2018) was less likely to support Sørensen's (2016) earlier findings on Danish political discussion on Facebook. Rather, frustration was at times expressed towards other participants and their opinions. However, the comments mainly focused on individual opinions that stated and neglected both the original posts and the other commentators. Thus, these actors were primarily working independently from each other in the construction process.

Most discussions in the data remained superficial, and were not, in fact, discussions as much as individually expressed comments. This analysis aligns with Yardi and boyd (2010), stating that even though people are exposed to broader views on social media, they rarely engage in meaningful discussion and argumentation. Railo and Ruohonen (2016: 309–310) have also reported that

Finnish candidates find it difficult to state opinions or to participate in Facebook discussions. Only one topic separated from this view by promoting several expressions from both the candidates and the public. Environmental issues were discussed on all the candidates' pages, mainly from the opposing perspective. Most of the comments regarding environmental policies are critiquing "the fuss about the environment" and reminding us that "it is not our problem/concern here in Finland, but the other big nations matter". Most of the opposing discussion regarding the environment was sparked by a school children's demonstration organized during the campaign period, for which most candidates expressed their support on their posts, but this provoked several opposing comments. The other side of environmental discussions seen in the data was information sharing, where the issue was discussed through statistical data and fact-based argumentation.

While Nelimarkka et al. (2020) view Facebook as a forum where political discussion does not happen as much as takes place on Twitter, there were indications in the data and the comments that the public expected interaction from the candidates, and expressed a demand for replies. The public were often left with no answer, and hotter, more complicated topics were avoided. However, even in the active comment threads, the public showed no added understanding - instead, they kept an even tighter hold on their views or ignored the conversation after posting their comments. This supported the research stating the polarized nature of social media conversations (Bail et al., 2018).

The analysis also supported Lilleker, Tenscher and Štětka's (2015) view of Facebook as "a catch-all medium". There were divergent voter demographics and views present, suggesting that as Farkas and Schwartz (2018) argue, Facebook is useful for monitoring public opinion. However, with more vocal and well-mobilized masses, some might experience these discussions as filter bubbles and echo chambers. This situation resembles those previously analyzed as being the cause for the Trump campaign's success (Groshek & Koc-Michalska, 2017), where the supporters of one party in particular, promote their ideology and distribute messages so efficiently that it constitutes a seeming community of the like-minded, regardless of the few opposing voices that are present. This idea of mass exemplifies the power that those who keep their voice heard in these public platforms possibly possess.

The findings showed that the politicians' Facebook pages attract diverging socio-economic backgrounds, opinions, societal groups, and interest groups who engaged in discussions. The data supported the earlier reports of Finnish election studies by Strandberg (2016: 105–111) who reports more heterogenic user groups in social media following political communication. Thus, Facebook can offer a

representative forum for researching campaign communication in the Finnish context. As a further consideration, this contradicts Mellon and Prosser's (2017) conclusion that social media users are younger, better educated, and more attentive to political issues leading to a challenge of representation in demographics when analyzing British political contexts in social media.

My analysis suggests that the public did not necessarily "buy" political ideas in Facebook as quickly, based on what they saw and heard from other participants in the discussion. So, the widely reported effect of W-O-M was not supported in the data (Trusov, Bucklin & Pauwels, 2009; Weisfeld-Spolter, Sussan & Gould, 2014). Dutta (2010), Harris and Rae (2011), and Labrecque, Markos and Milne (2011) also suggest that online discussion could affect the ways others in the conversation view the discussed individual in the future. However, in the data, the public approached others in discussion with resentment and doubt, and wide commenting left individual comments with less attention, predominantly when negative attacks were expressed.

The findings showed the limited emotional connection between the candidates and the public. Rather, the emotion is mainly expressed from the public in a negative form as harsh criticism and attacks, instead of affirmation of a committed followership or true interest and interaction with the candidates. Thus, the Finnish politicians seemed to miss creating a positive emotional connection with their audience, which Marshall and Henderson (2016) propose is central when constructing brand identity. Instead, in my context of Finnish campaign communication, the two parties acted independently from each other and yet still constructed these persona negotiations, with interaction remaining in a trigger-response form. However, it can be argued that the public needs to be connected emotionally, in order to participate. These connections could be built through different types of brand representations that appeal to diverse groups of constituents still looking for confirmation for their voting decision, and also a more active presence in the discussion.

7.2 The Finnish Politician – Brand Representations

Most responses from the candidates regarding their content production on Facebook indicated that the candidates planned their posts, so their brand representation could be considered to be their own choice. Those candidates whose campaign offices or assistants replied to the content production inquiry stated that they managed their own Facebook pages. In the data, politicians' personal brands were constructed both in the politicians' posts and in the comments written mainly

by the public. While the former was controlled by the candidates themselves and allowed them to curate their own content and practice impression management, the public had significant power in steering the discussion, pushing their own interpretation forward and choosing where the focus settled.

In this section, I focus on the first two questions addressing the details of politicians' brand construction:

- a) What kind of brand representations of politicians is manifested in the posts?
- b) What kind of brand representations of a politician is manifested in the comments?

The analysis showed no evidence of such online communities as described by McMillin (2020), where political actors would be icons and the public would treat them like fans. Instead, the expectation of them applying for a service profession characterized by Finstad and Isotalus (2005) was visible. In their comments, the public gave advice, expressed expectations, and questioned the candidates. Instead of putting them on a pedestal with admiration, they set them up for assessment and evaluation. Therefore, even as public figures who may be referred to as celebrities, politicians were seen to represent completely different types of roles and personas that need to be researched, and which reflect the unique characteristics of the role. A politician's role cannot be approached as a traditional profession because the public mandate it through votes, and the role can be lost in the election if the politician does not poll enough votes. As a role it is indifferent to working hours, and because of its public nature, at least on the level of national politics, it blurs the lines of the public, professional, and private (Street, 2004).

The brand types found in the analysis separate functions that the political role sets for the politicians. This role means different things to different voters and the politicians themselves, and the data highlights the functions expected from the politicians and executed by them. This way, the findings support Kempny and Jawlowska's (2002: 7) idea of identities organizing meanings and roles organizing functions.

When branding, constructing their brands, and representing them, politicians in the data were doing what Sundén (2003) describes as "typing themselves to being". However, they were not representing false or necessarily better identities, but rather chosen and more polished ones, which is referred to as impression management (Goffman, 1959). Representation of self is about choices and focus, whether it is done by the individual in question or the others discussing the

individual. For the others, this impression management is dependent on their own interpretation and the elements which have caught their attention and interest. This determines what is valuable enough to discuss, and thereby strong enough to connect in their mind as a brand element. Different social media platforms set stages for different logics and functions, and the represented persona is as Miller (2011: 160) describes self: both temporary and continuously forming.

My analysis of the posts showed that candidates had a self-determined digital identity described by Feher (2015), and which Weinstein (2014) describes as the collection of elements chosen to be shared, hidden, and emphasized. However, for some candidates this self-determination was formed within the party identity. For example, the National Coalition Party's aim was to be the interactive party so they had recommended their candidates to be present on social media and to reply to comments. Also, some candidates focused on communicating their party agenda and messages in their posts.

In the analysis, the following six types of brand representations of politicians manifested in both the posts and comments:

- 1) **The informer politician:** uses the platform for one-way communication; they promote campaign-trail and media appearances by sharing links and making announcements about crucial information. The exposure is used to create a bulletin board type presentation on the platform.
- 2) **The listener politician:** promotes a communicative brand and interaction with the public, is approachable, and shows interest in the discussion and topics raised. Solicits public opinion and maintains a channel for questions.
- 3) **The topic politician:** the brand is tightly connected with the party brand and policy issues. Uses the exposure to communicate only on topic issues and decisions that have been made and which lie ahead.
- 4) **The humane politician:** communicates private dimensions of their persona, discusses, for example, leisure-time, their non-political past, and personal characteristics. Shares even intimate topics such as family, health, and religion, and expresses feelings related to other topics.
- 5) **The networker politician:** communicates connections and roles as part of different organizations or co-operatives, recruits volunteers, mobilizes, communicates the party as part of their brand, and promotes collaboration. The networking is two-fold, and one dimension includes the party's professional

network and political role, while the other dimension includes networking with the electorate, and connections with the public and non-professional organizations.

6) **The professional politician:** the core of the brand is professionalism through competence and credibility through the political or past career. Promotes the political role, communicates a dynamic persona, may negotiate private life but only concerning political decisions or role.

Based on my analysis, different brand types can co-exist, and they are intertwined and overlapping for politicians. For brand type representations, the need for opposites which Hall (1990) described as essential for identities, is not required. However, opposites are possible, and they may help to distinguish between politicians. Regardless of differing party positions and backgrounds, the Finnish candidates in the data were not represented by highlighting differences, as Smith (2009) has argued is central to political branding. However, brand type categorization is always a simplification because the identities of the brands constructed are more complicated than that. The data supports Gauntlett's (2008) argument that there is no definitive list for constructing identities which are biographical narratives. This fragmented idea of self applies partly to politicians' personas. As representations of self, they were more selective, not everything was given off, and some things were left backstage (Goffman, 1959). Thus, candidates' representations were divergent, individual, and were not necessarily comparable.

For the Finnish political candidates, on their Facebook posts, the two representations of brand types prominent in the data were the professional politician and the informer politician. However, especially for the party leaders, the networker politician and the humane politician were also visible, possibly because of the focused exposure and added broadcast media stories focused on private matters, thus encouraging more elements of this kind.

Just like in real life, these divergent types of representations also had their unique appeal on Facebook. As González Bengoechea, Fernández Muñoz and García Guardia (2019) argue, parties and politicians vary a lot in their ways of using social media, which also depends on their attitudes towards different platforms. In the context of this study, the politicians are unique, the party guidelines are different, and the supporters and opposers differ in their type and dedication, so explaining the variation in brand representations. For this type of study, generalization inherently means oversimplifying data that describes a rich narrative. However, some conclusions can be made, and different types of approaches were distinguished when analyzing the Facebook posts and comments of the candidates and the public.

My analysis produced more representation types than the earlier distinction between the topic politician and charmer politician by Isotalus and Almonkari (2011). Therefore, six types of political selves inspired by the representation of self of the academic persona (Marshall, Moore & Barbour, 2020: 190) presented in section 4.2 were introduced as brand representations for politicians. As the main theoretical contribution of this study, they offer a model for analyzing public representations of politicians as applied to Facebook. As they are representative types rising from the empirical data, and the interest in the analysis is in producing the types and not in analyzing specific candidates, the example candidates are not presented in connection with these types in the analysis. At the same time, this study helps us to understand how representations of personas and brands are formed. According to Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020), this is essential for those responsible for these representations, in this case, the political candidates, their party offices, and communication agencies. The public also need to understand how these personas are performed and the public's role in these representations. How these manifested in the politicians' personal brands was dependent on the negotiations of the dimensions of professional, private, and intimate in the posts and comments.

7.2.1 Dimensions of professional, private and intimate in brand representations

This section will answer the research questions concerning different dimensions of persona representation in Facebook posts and comments through the dimensions of individualization and privatization introduced by Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer (2012). The affordances modified from Blegind Jensen and Dyrby (2013) and presented in section 3.3.2. are included in the discussion. The more specific question guiding the analysis about the elements of personal brands was:

- c) How are the dimensions of professional, private, and intimate negotiated in the content while constructing a politician's personal brand?

Figure 20 represents which brand types were visible in the intimate, private, and professional dimensions of the analysis. The information-centered dimension was also added into the figure because even though it was not presented in the theoretical framework as a dimension, four brand types relied heavily on topic issues and informing the public on, for example, voting or agenda-setting. The communication focus is shown in the x-axis, where the left side represents one-way communication, and the right side is for interaction and dialogue. The figure shows how the brand types were connected and intertwined. The dimensions were not interconnected with all four dimensions. Instead, they were inter-linked steps

connecting between each step and not as a hybrid. For example, there was usually no connection between intimate or private dimensions and information-centered content. However, when there was professional content, it was possible to see both information-centered and private dimension content in the data. When a private dimension was represented, intimate or professional dimensions could also be seen.

For different brand types, their dimensions and their depth differed. For example, as Figure 20 shows, the professional politician was balanced equally between the private and the professional dimensions, leaning a little more towards focusing on professional and information-centered content. In contrast, the humane politician was more focused on private and intimate dimensions, and less related to information-centered content than any other brand type.

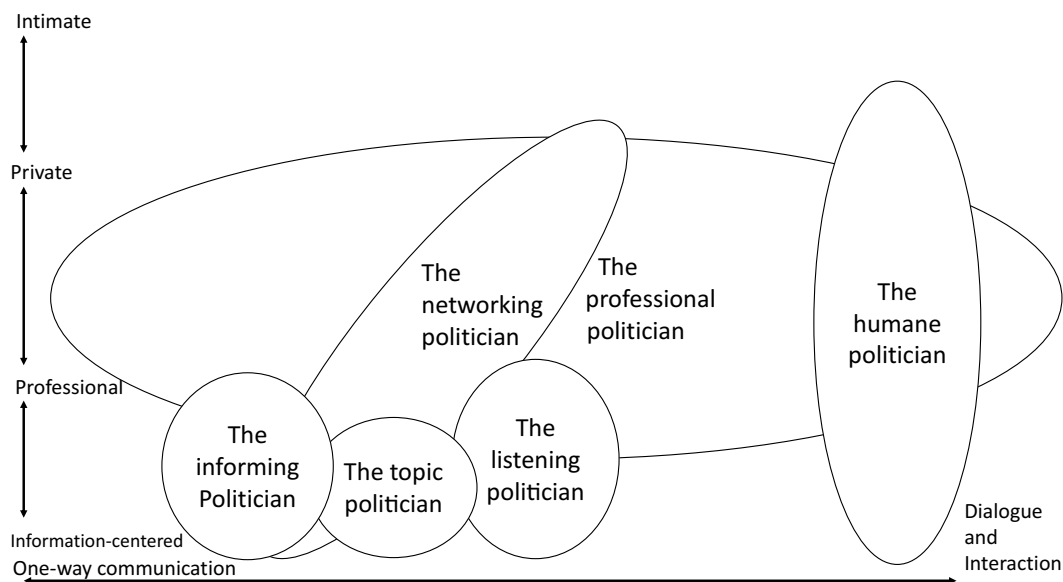


Figure 20. Brand types in dimensions

The different brand types were never represented solely on their own, and usually in the posts and especially in the comments, two or more negotiated brand types could be distinguished. The typical combinations were the professional and the humane politician, the networking and the professional politician, the listening and the professional politician, or the informing and the professional politician. The intertwining types are seen in Figure 20.

The intense focus on political topics supported Cornfield's (2004) argument for a central focus on messages. This focus opposed the importance of personas suggested in theories on the added personalization of politics (Isotalus, 2017: 51; Karvonen, 2009: 95) or as depicted by Ekman and Widholm (2015) as the de-

politicization of politics, and at least for the privatization dimension and the added interest on personal characteristics and personal lives, as discussed in the framework of Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer (2012). The low degree of privatization in the posts showed that the candidates were more focused on topic issues and information sharing than exposing their private persona to the public, thus developing more of the topic politician, informing politician and professional politician brand representations. The limited negotiation of the private contradicted van Dijck's (2013) claim that Facebook facilitates personal self-representation (see also Bennet, 2012; Enli & Skogerbø, 2013; Gerbaudo, Marogno & Alzetta, 2019), as it only did so if the politicians allowed it.

My findings confirmed that even if Facebook as a platform supports a more personalized approach (see Enli, 2015a), in their pages, most of the candidates communicated with an official and neutral tone. They mainly concentrated on agenda-setting and bulletin board type announcements, and sometimes only through party-focused communication. Even though in this study the scope of the candidates was more narrow, the analysis supported the findings of Nelimarkka et al. (2020) on the social media communication seen in the elections of 2015, implying that the way candidates and the public used Facebook during the campaign did not change between the elections of 2015 and 2019. There were, however, some differences. One of these differences results from the public's comments, where private characteristics and matters of the candidate's persona were referred to more by the public, even if the candidates only chose to negotiate topic issues and campaign updates.

While topic issues were used to represent the topic politician, similar to the discussions of Isotalus and Almonkari (2011), some candidates were also positioned towards the privatization dimension when they posted topic issues, thus representing the professional politician. In these cases, they used their hobbies, interests, or previous careers to back up their expertise and add credibility to their knowledge about, for example, cultural policies or business life. My results support Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 26, 54, 79, 126) stating that for politicians, a person's private life could play a part in the public representation of self. Thus, Railo's (2011) argument for journalism on personal content always being political can be considered to be valid also for the page content on Facebook. Based on the data, the candidates did not approach these public pages as their personal profiles, and they chose what kind of content to include there. Notably, their approach indicated that they crafted their representations (see Enli, 2015a) to match the campaign context and their public representations. However, these performances were not the carefully planned representations described by Enli

(2015a), but rather spontaneous updates following a considered frame of topics that may or may not be discussed.

As Kaneva and Klemmer (2016) note, political actors must seem human and authentic, and this could be seen in the personal stories presented in the posts. For example, candidate Haavisto introduced his leisure time activities related to culture, using posts that negotiated language, culture, and appreciation. What the public commented about the private dimension, in the form of, for example, a past celebrity role, manifested as the candidate's brand representation, or part of it, even when the candidates themselves focused on solely assuming the role of a topic politician or professional politician. Previous professional careers were sometimes also intertwined with the candidate's current political role. For example, ministers also represented their former non-political careers in their field of ministry. For example, candidate Häkkänen as a lawyer and at the time of campaigning working as a minister of justice, had a prominent brand around legislation and safety, which was visible in the data. The lack of private content in his posts also supported this type of persona, and there was nothing personal nor private that would undermine the authority and credibility of a judicial professional. Thus, it seemed that the candidate was crafting this presentation to avoid any possible diminishing of their professional credibility.

In their campaign trail updates, some candidates used the privatization aspect by expressing feelings. While Van Aelst, Sheaffer and Stanyer (2012) did not include feelings or emotion in their framework, I added it in my analysis because it frequently occurred in the data and seemed relevant, specifically in terms of the aspect of engagement. In the data, especially towards the end of the campaign, the posts included elaborate emotional descriptions of some candidates' campaign events and their associated feelings. These emotional posts were mostly expressing gratitude on the campaign trail or to the campaign team. These also gave an opportunity to portray warmth and the personal touch of candidates on their campaign, and Enli's (2015b) illusion of authenticity and McGregor's (2017) idea of the humanized self were observed in these posts representing the humane politician.

Some private dimension representations were initiated by broadcast media, especially for the party leaders representing the larger parties. Media focuses on content usually of a private and intimate nature, as content that sells (Karvonen, 2008; Steensen, 2016). One radio station had asked the candidates to write letters to their younger self. They shared these letters in their Facebook posts, revealing private, even intimate dimensions of their personas, thus constructing a humane politician brand. These shares were not only communicated to construct the

professional politician by adding credibility to specific expertise. More, they were authentic representations of the private persona discussing childhood, years as a student, leisure time, and family. Personalization applies even more to traditional media than social media when looking at the content produced by politicians in the data. In the posts, it was the traditional media which had promoted the candidates to offer more intimate representations of themselves. However, it was the politicians' own choice to add to the exposure of the letters by also posting them on Facebook.

Intimate and private content was rare in the data. Similar to Hermans and Vergeer's (2013) study on European parliamentary election candidates, the references to private matters were mostly concerned with family and the home. Parenthood was usually referred to in the references to family. However, family dogs were more prominent in the data than other family members. My analysis supports Langer's (2009) findings that the degree of private concerning the political persona depended on the politician and their personality and communication strategy. While some opened up many aspects of their persona, including their personal lives, close ones and feelings, others kept their communication strictly focused on current topics and their political role. The analysis corroborated the findings of Isotalus and Almonkari (2012; 2014) on politicians' reluctance to view the public nature of their work as including their private lives, and suggests that the Finnish politicians prefer to communicate topic issues and their professional selves to the electorate. Politicians also prefer to be assessed on their professional competence and skills, mainly by political standards.

Because of their frequent occurrence in the data, religion and faith were added to the analysis operationalization of Van Aelst, Sheaffer and Stanyer (2012). This frequency could have been an exception relevant for Finnish campaign communications, or just an exception seen in the elections of 2019. The possible causes for the frequent comments related to religion were two-fold. First, having the Christian Democratic Party in the Parliament and their party leader naturally added to communication about religion within the campaign communications. The religious background of another party leader, Sipilä, who had been visible in the media during his Prime Minister season, added further references to faith. The question of religion and faith is interesting, and my choices in analysis and coding could have affected the results. In the case of Sipilä, his faith was a private matter which was part of the intimate persona. Essayah also represented the Christian Democratic Party, and the candidate's faith was therefore a relevant part of the candidate's persona and political values. Thus, in her case, it could be argued that religion and any content related to it would not have been part of her persona's

private dimension but the professional dimension. However, in the analysis, it was coded as personal and intimate, which resulted in an increased visibility of the representation of the humane politician in the data, and reflected as a greater depth in the private and intimate dimension in the results.

The public represented the humane politician brand type with their comments through negotiations of the privatization dimension of Van Aelst, Sheaffer and Stanyer (2012), which often included the intimate. These included references to the candidate's family, health, and religion. For the candidates whose religion was discussed, the tone in the comments was seemingly positive and colloquial, and there were only singular attacks where their faith was mentioned. The comments related to faith also represented a focus on good ethics. In Finland, higher ethics is expected from politicians in their private life than from average people (Moilanen, 2016), so ethics can be important when negotiated in the politician's personal brand. It is also part of the intimate dimension in the politician's brand representation. However, the public also connected it to the professional politician brand through the qualities of trustworthiness, credibility and good values, which have also been reported as essential elements of politicians' characteristics by Lalancette and Raynauld (2017).

The frequent evaluations of performances in the data support the importance of politicians' rhetorical skills, and aligns with Garzia's (2014: 80) assessment that constituents relate to parties based on their party leaders more than their social or ideological identities. Mainly these were positive to the candidate whose post the public was commenting on, although other candidates received criticism for their behavior or rhetoric, with the exception of Halla-aho and Essayah who were praised for their performances throughout the comments in the data. This exception was significant because, especially with the latter candidates, the comments were often not tied to the party and referred to the candidate's own skills. This was implied in comments where praise to the candidate was expressed simultaneously with stating support for another party or a reluctance to vote for the candidate's party.

The data suggested that in the Finnish context, the online campaign communication was not focused solely on the candidate's appearance, and even when the candidates were complimented on their looks, the other dimensions of their representations were also noticed and raised in the communication. The type of brand elements related to age, looks and appearance were more frequent regarding younger candidates in the data, and they were only negotiated in the comments. This is opposite to the findings of Guzman and Sierra (2009) in Mexico,

where they reported voters being partly influenced by the candidates' physical appearance.

While looks were not generally considered an essential factor, for some candidates, they could provide an additional beneficial attribute through added exposure and the perception people got through interpreting messages with the idea that this particular individual represented their values. Candidate Huhtasaari presented a prominent example of this in the data. Based on the analysis, part of the public viewed the Finns Party candidate as the personification of the party values and ideal, so frequent were the 'Finnish Maiden' references in the comments she received. In this case, the candidate's appearance was branded as a party and value representation with a tight connection presented in the comments. References compared the candidate to the Finnish Maiden, which is a visual reference to Finland as a country. The Finnish Maiden is a strong image (see Rantala, 2014) in terms of references to the candidate's looks and the commitment to her values. The candidate represented the Finns Party, promoting the party's and candidate's "Finland First" rhetoric, where Patria, the homeland ideal, was visible in the values. The same ideology came across with the notable use of the Finnish flag in the comments. Even if the references to the candidate's looks were evident in the data, other comments referred to non-professional characteristics such as intelligence and rhetorical skills when her debate performances were evaluated. This candidate represented a case where the public harnessed the non-professional characteristics and the candidate's appearance to represent the professional politician by connecting the candidate's looks to represent their values through a stereotype of a long-haired blond woman with blue eyes.

Outside party leaders and current ministers wishing to re-enter the Parliament, other well-known candidates usually benefit from their previous public roles, representing what Street (2004) defines as a celebrity politician. Thus, they had general visibility, focusing on particular individuals such as recognized politicians (Van Aelst, Sheaffer & Stanyer, 2012). For example, some candidates already had a prominent brand, like the former athlete Essayah or business mogul Harkimo. These previous roles were often referred to in the comments, which indicated that the public remembered their past actions and activities and attached them to the personal brand of a politician, regardless of whether these were brought up or reminded to the public. However, sometimes this type of professional politician was also constructed through knowledge or credibility, and even non-professional characteristics such as determination which were established using the private dimension, such as having a past of an athlete or visible business person. Thus, with possible private and intimate dimension brand elements already in the public realm, the humane politician became intertwined with the professional politician

brand that was being constructed. However, the former public representation of self remained at least in the eyes of the public.

The similarity in party leaders' representations suggested that they followed certain norms set by their positions. For example, party leaders needed to represent the networked politician through communication about the party. The similarity in representations was even more evident with candidates who were current ministers. Karvonen (2009: 100–101) has discussed the significance of the party leader when choosing between parties. This significance is essential to recognize when both choosing the party leaders and coaching them in communication skills. In the data, almost all of the party leaders discussed their families, former careers and interests alongside political issues. However, the most prominent intimate content for them was related to the shared letter to their younger self discussed earlier. Current ministers already had increased exposure, and their private lives may have also been represented in traditional media. This may have lowered the bar in their negotiating more private dimensions such as family or leisure time as part of the persona also portrayed on their Facebook pages. Their communication resources were also possibly comparable to each other and significantly better than some other candidates in the data, and as party leaders, they had the communication support of their party office and more capital for communication activities. Through the combination of better resources for communication and the added exposure brought by their leading politician roles, the party leaders could produce various brand type representations and combinations, thus appealing to diverging voter demographics. This appeal was seen in the engagement that they earned with their posts.

7.2.2 Engagement

What is seen online, especially when repeated consistently, becomes more real; and the same can be seen with brands. When something gets connected to the brand, and when new things emerge, those layers also stick there. Therefore, it is essential to consider how the public engage with politicians and what tone they use, and not just focus on what politicians themselves say. In this section, the findings are discussed regarding the following research question:

- d) How does the public engage with the represented brand types in the posts?

These results help evaluate what kind of posts engage the public, and which are strategically more relevant and influential for the candidate's personal brand construction, thus supporting their campaign communication. The level of engagement was mainly connected to particular individuals. Therefore, in this

section, my findings are presented more through individual candidates while also providing some general observations rising from the analysis.

The analysis corroborates the view of Isotalus and Almonkari (2014), that in some cases, personas have become more important than political issues. This implied an added interest in the personal life of politicians, which Turner (2004) describes as *celebritization*. In this study, the relevance can be seen as causal from adapting to social media logic by presenting messages through the politician. This is natural because the Facebook pages represented them, and not, for example, their party. First, my results showed a commitment to personal brands by those both opposing and supporting the candidates. It was seen that not only supporters were commenting on the politicians' pages, and that some supportive messages expressed strong agreement or having been impressed by a candidate, but then revealed that they had already selected another candidate or party to vote for. Secondly, even though party lines have been regarded as weak in the latest Finnish election studies (Isotalo et al., 2019: 288, 301–302), the results showed that they were still a significant factor in voting decisions. The personal brands of politicians were neither separate from their party or the party's brand. Instead, a strong recognized personal brand could be an asset to the party, especially if the party leader had one that engaged the public. For example, candidate Halla-aho presented an interesting case because there was strongly concentrated visibility on the party leader and his brand in the data. Notably, it was built entirely by the public and not with the cost of losing focus on the party; the strong presence of party values, main topics, and the party name were communicated together, while still focusing on the party leader and his personal brand.

The brand type of the networked politician was usually represented through networking with other politicians and expert groups. However, for one candidate, Halla-aho, a visible networking politician brand, showed a strong connection with the supporters. This way, the networked politician representation included the layer of connection with the public. Even though the candidate's page was missing in the data, he was referenced most in the comments. This corroborates the findings of Railo and Ruohonen (2016: 254), who present Halla-aho as having built a robust online presence elsewhere through his blog, Twitter, and personal Facebook profile, helping him poll the most votes in the election. The supporter group was so active that it mobilized the public and the messages throughout the data. Their messages worked for the candidate and strengthened the brand through repetition and the perception of solid support within the public.

Similar type of Finns Party supporter movement on social media has been noted in both the elections of 2012 and 2015 (Railo & Ruohonen, 2016). For 2019, the

comments in the data indicated a strong connection with the party leader Halla-aho. But when an individual politician's brand becomes this strong, is it possible for other individuals to rise and represent the party anymore? After all, Halla-aho became the party leader after replacing Timo Soini, who then founded a new party because of opinion differences within the Finns Party (Palonen & Saesma, 2017: 41). While this strong networking can mobilize masses through successful networking, it could also hurt networking within the party and with other visible party candidates. While the engagement by the public was more like a spontaneous reaction to the candidate's posts instead of strategic acts constructing the candidates' personal brands, it could not be regarded as meaningless. The analysis implied a more conscious process of information sharing from the Finns Party supporters who campaigned against all the other parties by taking advantage of the leading politicians' concentrated visibility dimension. Whether consciously or not, the public communicated both good and evil, and they promoted and eroded politicians' brands because of the influential nature of communication.

Comments were often directed to the two new parties, Movement Now and the Blue Reform Party, and the Finns Party candidates support Larsson's (2015b) conclusions that controversial parties get more attention on social media. The public engaged with the candidates' posts with reactions and comments, and these comments were notably negative in tone, promoting even more comments which supports the concept of the virality of emotions in online discussions observed by Laaksonen and Pöyry (2018) and Rantasila (2018). The social media logic and the algorithm functions that circulate emotional content (Fuchs, 2014; Gerbaudo, Marogno & Alzetta, 2019) benefit the more controversial politicians and those who cultivated discussion and provoke reactions. This realized in the data as added engagement for particular candidates, and their exposure increased with the engagement, which benefitted their brands through more visibility.

The analysis showed a positive correlation between emotional style and engagement. Similar results were found in Bobba's (2019) study on populism, where the role of a leader and the emotional style on posts encourage the public to like the posts. A similar idea of emotional content that promotes the circulation of messages (Knuutila & Laaksonen, 2020) was visible in the analysis of the comments. Negative expressions promoted more negative commenting, but also raised opposition when individuals corrected false statements, judged the level of discussion, or defended their candidates. However, these types of defenses were rare, and it was typical that stories about unfair treatment in, for example, health care or attacks provoked similar statements. The engagement of the electorate correlated with the type of content on the posts. While the norm on positive over negative content on social media (Waterloo, 2017) applied to the posts in the data,

it did not seem to correlate with the comments carrying several negative representations of candidates. These defenses portray the kind of political context in social media communication described by Strandberg (2008). Negative tone and content are often produced in political communication online. However, the data also showed a shift to more positive content. Knuutila and Laaksonen's (2020) study also reported a positive tone in the reactions for campaigning in social media. In this study, the comment data included praising campaign feelings and candidates' posts, and complimenting candidates' performances. Similar to Gerbaudo, Marogno and Alzetta's (2019) findings, positive content in the posts also promoted public engagement.

While the quantitative analysis contradicts Grant, Moon and Busby Grant's (2010) findings on the benefits for candidates exploiting interaction possibilities, the data showed some support for their conclusions. The public thanked those candidates who responded to their comments. These comments showed added trust and empathy towards the politicians, which Gerodimos and Justinussen (2015) analyze as resulting from dialogue. Additionally, those candidates who refrained from replying and reacting were criticized for their absence and their lack of interaction. Tromble (2016) claims that a demand for interaction would engage politicians in the discussions, but this did not happen in the data. However, this did not convert to numbers, and the latter candidate group nevertheless gained engagement in the form of comments and reactions. This supports Benoit's (2007) view of resource allocation, and the candidates may spend their campaign time more efficiently than using it for responding to individual comments. Skovsgaard and Van Dalen (2013) have suggested that this applies specifically to those candidates with previous recognition and access to media like those included in this study.

If a politician had a previously well-known persona, representing a celebrity politician (Street, 2004) through a specific role or career; this added exposure also manifested in the comments. Notable examples of this were the shared tone of rhetoric seen in the case of candidate Harkimo, and candidate Essayah's performance stamina being compared to her years as a professional athlete. Harkimo was even accused of having caused his former party to lose votes because he now represented a new movement. But as an exception, the comments directed to him support McMillin's (2020) idea of a politician being idolized, so setting their fans up for disappointment when they make decisions that contradict the fans' expectations. Strong responses in the form of reactions and comments also manifested concerning political roles, previous acts, and decision-making in policy issues. However, these more often raised negative and critical voices among the public, while the private dimension saw primarily positive engagement. Both the

attachment to a recognized persona and public exposure have been recognized as characteristics of successful candidates by von Schoultz, Söderlund and Kestilä-Kekkonen (2020: 184–190). Similarly, Keller and Kleinen-von Königslöw (2018) have also recognized exposure in traditional media, political activity, personal background, and followership in platforms as success factors for candidates. My findings on engagement align with these studies.

My findings show that, contrary to Yarchi and Samuel-Azran's (2017) results seen in the 2015 election campaign in Israel, no significant differences were seen in the variance or amount of different engagement types regarding the gender of the candidate. This indicated that all candidates should consider their campaign communication strategies, and that unlike traditional media representations (Railo, 2011), the gender of the candidate does not matter for expected content or engagement on Facebook in the Finnish context. For example, there were no gender-related comments with a difference in focus for appearance or personal characteristics. The role of party leadership showed in the number of shares, comments and reactions, thus showing the significance and the actualization of concentrated visibility, with attention being drawn to the party leader (Van Aelst, Sheafer & Stanyer, 2012).

My results indicate that the position of the party leader was not the only significant factor for increasing engagement. Candidates with general exposure were also central in promoting party agendas. These benefited the party through strong engagement to vote-puller individuals and their posts. While each candidate had a unique brand and engagement, the Facebook logic works with any strong brands. These include controversial politicians who provoked emotion, or otherwise recognized politicians' brands, for example, those with a long career in politics, drawing attention to them regardless of how they utilized the platform.

Candidates constructing more dimensional brands with both humane and professional brand type representations provoked engagement. In general, the private dimension elements promoted more engagement than any other type of content, supporting the results of Railo and Ruohonen (2016: 232, 240, 256), Heiss, Schmuck and Matthes (2018), and Nave, Shifman and Tenenboim-Weinblatt (2018). This could be compared with what happens in journalism, where magazines sell more copies when publishing private and intimate content (Karvonen, 2008; Alho, 2012; Steensen, 2016). Adding this dimension to more spontaneous posts describing feelings, they generated an illusion of authenticity (see Enli, 2015a) which connected them to the public. The analysis proposed that unlike the arguments of Warnick (2007) and Thumim (2012), the politicians' posts were honest and sometimes spontaneous. This representation of humane

politicians seemed easier to approach, and the effects were seen in the way the public reacted and commented. Particularly, added engagement was seen when the candidates opened these backstage representations to public view (see Goffman, 1959), and the public were also demanding it in their comments. This finding supported previous research that this type of personal content in political communication is more appealing to the public (McGregor, 2017; Metz, Kruikemeier & Lecheler, 2020; Nave, Shifman & Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2018), and that social media logic invites more personal representations of self (Enli, 2015b). Notably, the candidates who were actively producing content, especially those representing the brand type of the humane politician, successfully appealed to the masses.

Based on the results of significantly added engagement for private and especially intimate brand representations towards the end of the campaign, the candidates may have reacted to what Railo and Ruohonen (2016: 311) concluded from their study's interviews; that non-political content got more attention than purely political messages on social media. This way, their content production is about balancing between the private and public. The private content engages, but simultaneously some politicians regard it as falling outside their professional life boundaries. The indications of intimate content promoting positive engagement aligns with Herkman's (2011: 97–98) definition of the intimization of politics. However, politicians themselves seemed to resent this, and the intimate dimension negotiation on Facebook was avoided. This supports the earlier finding of Isotalus and Almonkari (2014) regarding politicians' unwillingness to disclose private issues. However, it needs to be noted that the comments showed no conclusive evidence for the idea that politicians would be 'public prey' and negotiating the intimate content would be expected. Instead, the engagement was there even for candidates who did not open the intimate.

Policy posts and argued topic issues also engaged the public. Unlike the findings of Stetka, Surowiec and Mazák (2018), they did not generate more criticism than campaign-oriented messages. While social media communication guides suggest shorter posts, more extensive topic issue posts gained reactions and engagement in the data. For example, several posts by one candidate were long topic issue posts that shared no personal content or referred to feelings, but they still engaged the public to discuss and react to them. This implies that the personal brand matters and engages the public more than what is posted and how. Gerodimos and Justinussen (2015) also found more engagement for the Obama campaign online with campaign messages and policy-orientated posts, rather than promotional posts.

The analysis partly confirms Lalancette and Raynauld's (2017) study on the public's critical evaluations of politicians' images. The negative comments were not directed as personal attacks on their private lives, but usually on past political actions, thus constructing the professional politician brand type. Public assessment of candidates in social media presents a case of mediatization (Herkman, 2011); and in this way, the public as the audience has adapted to the media's way of assessing and critiquing politicians and bringing their assessments to a broader audience. Intimate representations did not increase negative attacks towards individual politicians. Waterloo et al.'s (2017) conclusions for social media campaigning also apply to Finland, where the campaign communication is mainly positive in tone, even on social media where negative attacks are more frequent than seen in broadcast media. Only some political issues, such as the controversial selling of the Caruna electricity company from government to private ownership, a jobseeker activity scheme to activate the unemployed in the job market, environmental protection discussions, immigration politics, and switching from one party to another or "turning coat" were used to present negative aspects on particular candidates. This showed that except for visible negative reminders about a candidate's political past and policies, the online discussion comments mainly supported and constructed the candidates' personal brands in positive ways. Based on the analysis; unlike Stromer-Galley (2000) proposes, candidates can afford to suffer some criticism on character, integrity and ability, even if they result from inconsistent actions, especially if there are supporting voices and the candidates exhibit an otherwise strong brand.

The data showed that most of the hostile attacks on particular candidates were support messages for another candidate, usually from Finns Party supporters who used past actions to negate another candidate's personal brand. The humane and professional politician brand type representations were seen in the comments as personal attacks on an individual with grotesque style, and included swear words and even direct attacks such as verbalized physical threats. These often referred to the candidate's appearance, past decisions, and even their family life. But these attacks implied that the public were not considering that they were writing on a public page, and that their style might hurt the impression and image they gave of themselves. Similar results have been acquired in previous research. For example, in a study on Twitter, Williams, Burnap, and Sloan (2017) note that participants in social media discussions do not always think that their text online is public. Turtiainen and Östman (2013) also note the same with studying online texts.

Applying Karvonen's (2008) depiction of media as describing and affecting reality also works with Facebook. The data showed engagement with similar topics that engage the audience in discussions offline. In the intimate dimension, parenthood

engaged the public in discussing family issues and policies, or complimenting the candidates' skills in combining family and career. This successful combination is traditionally a respected issue in Finnish society (Mäkelä, 2018: 97), and the data indicated that it is still regarded as so. Thus, the candidates received respect when mentioning their families. As earlier mentioned, some candidates shared letters to their younger selves on their page as a post, engaging the constituents positively through reactions and comments about the information given on the candidates' backgrounds and their writing style.

For one candidate, a privatization dimension announcing a birthday update engaged the public with birthday greetings and several comments referring to the candidate's age and appearance (see also Van Aelst, Sheaffer & Stanyer, 2012). Birthday greetings are personal, and the public connected with the politician through their greetings. Also, references to Finnish nature engaged the public in more intimate and authentic ways, for example, by encouraging them to share their personal stories about nature. Finnish people are keen on pets and nature (see De Paola, Hakoköngäs & Hakanen, 2020), which was seen in the notable levels of engagement with posts discussing these elements, especially the family dogs. Through these posts, the candidates became approachable – like ordinary people –, which increases engagement by making it easier to connect with politicians that seem 'more like us'. In these posts and their comments, politics was partly forgotten. Thus, the communication was personal, presenting McGregor's (2017) ideas of the humanized self, almost like writing to a friend instead of discussing something on a public page dedicated to political communication.

The limited production of private and intimate content indicated that the politicians in Finland held their individual lines and styles; they refused to reveal or add more variety in their personal brand representations, even if it was at the expense of missing the opportunity for further engagement. However, the public also seemed to play along, and engaged even with long policy posts that were far from the tabloid material which has been reported by Heiss, Schmuck and Matthes (2018) on Facebook post engagement. Thus the public did not even present a demand for more private revelations. However, future studies are needed to see if this is valid only during campaign periods, or whether it is a unique political communication feature in Finland.

The data on engagement showed that the politicians appealed to the public on a symbolic, psychological, and rational level (see Davis, 2010: 83), supporting Svensson's (2011) conclusion that engagement on social media is motivated mainly by users' needs for expression, socialization, and communication. The findings also align with Farhan and Omar's (2021) conclusion that branding strategies can

build stronger relationships between political brands and voters. However, the depth and the manifestation of these varied between politicians and their representations. While engagement can be looked at from a solely quantitative perspective, evaluating the engagement numbers from shares, reactions and comments as affordances (see Kalsnes, Larsson & Enli, 2017), this study was exceptional as it has analyzed engagement in more detail, focusing on the qualitative analysis of the content of the posts and comments. This has yielded valuable information on what type of content and which choices of focus helped candidates to engage the public better with their posts. Together with the algorithm, these reactions increased the circulation of the content (Thorson et al., 2021), thus adding to the candidates' exposure and visibility (Casero-Ripollés, 2018).

7.2.3 Added exposure

Through branding, politicians become who they are, and these representations give them power. Again, the public are a significant factor because they add to the exposure and the visibility of the candidates through engagement, and provide meanings in the constant negotiation and representation of self. Kempny and Jawlowska (2002: 360) describe identities as having power in societies because they stretch through all areas of life. However, without exposure, there is no power. The analysis corroborates Skovsgaard and Van Dalen's (2013) findings in a study where they placed Danish politicians into different groups according to their campaign mixes. According to them, traditional media was the primary medium "primarily for candidates who are newsworthy due to their experience and incumbency status". However, these active and dominant politicians also have more content to work with and benefit from communicating on content-demanding forums such as Facebook (Lev-On & Haleva-Amis, 2016). As Taddicken (2013) argues, social media use depends on the relevance the actors involved, and the findings showed that politicians with added exposure might have considered Facebook to be less relevant for their campaign than those who lacked visibility in broadcast media. Based on the data of this study, Facebook offers added visibility, which was also the primary motivation for Danish candidates for using social media in campaigns (Skovsgaard & Van Dalen, 2013), and it can also be used to distribute traditional media material.

The tendency that campaign communication online is controlled by parties with more resources, and that social media has been used merely for distributing material has been reported by Strandberg (2016) and Šimunjak (2018). The analysis of this study supports their findings. The tight connection between the

politician's brand and the party brand was visible in comments expressing opposition to the party. The data also indicated that sometimes, the party leader focus and their concentrated visibility could hurt the party, and notable comments saw people deny their vote from the Social Democrats because of their party leader. Also, several party leader candidates had ministerial roles during the campaign. These roles presented additional hardship for them in the data, supporting Rangarajan, Gelb and Vandaveer's (2017) conclusion that personal branding changes with advancement in one's career. For example, the notable criticism in the data against candidate Rinne opposed the election study's results, and in fact his popularity grew in 2019 compared to the 2015 election (Isotalo et al., 2019: 18), which suggested that the electorate voting for and supporting him were not as present on Facebook. It also indicated that with recognition, there is both popularity and opposition.

The role of party leaders as the leading figures of campaigns recognized by Railo and Ruohonen (2016: 232) was corroborated in my analysis. The concentrated visibility variable was highlighted with current issues that were on the Facebook comments of leading politicians. More media exposure meant that the candidates often had more private dimensions, representing the humane politician. But these more visible candidates also raised more criticism. The unpopularity of the major party leaders, Sipilä, Orpo, and Rinne, reported by von Schoultz, Järvi and Mattila (2020: 174), was supported by the data, and their unpopularity was observed in criticism towards their decision-making, highlighting their past political careers representing the professional politician and the concentrated visibility dimension. These candidates received a large number of comments, but even though there was criticism, there was also support and even personal references indicating the recognition of these candidates. This occurred primarily with the more senior candidates who had had more media exposure and given more private interviews, thus having more private dimensions in their brand.

The commentary directed to candidates representing a party separate from their current parliament party suggested a perception that certain politicians' concentrated visibility was so strong that it could hurt the party if these important personas were no longer party members. This supports Rudd's (2016) conclusion that party leaders can be more important to the voters than their parties. Based on the data, this can also be true for other recognized candidates, and not just party leaders.

One candidate in the data who was already a parliamentary representative, had started a new party. The criticism for these switches in party representation was notable in the data. This decision was treated as a "coat-turning" in the comments

and fractured the candidates' credibility, which comments sometimes referred to as "political suicide". These candidates were attacked for abandoning their former parties, suggesting that they were causing a loss in party votes. This implied that the party brand and the politician's brand were perceived as dual, in that they connected to and complemented each other. This indicates that the public expect loyalty to the party from their politicians, and that as a non-professional characteristic, loyalty is considered an essential quality for a politician. It also highlights the findings of earlier studies concluding that Finns emphasize politicians' honesty (Isotalus & Almonkari, 2012; 2014), and loyalty is often closely linked with that. Lalancette and Raynauld (2017) have also reported the importance of voters' honesty and trustworthiness. Yet coat-turning seems dishonest to the public because politicians change their party representation, thus adapting to a new set of values and political agendas.

The public used the exposure of particular candidates to spread political messages and to promote other candidates. The analysis implied the success in mobilizing the Finns Party's supporters on social media, similar to several studies on previous elections where the party has been reported as having a specifically active participation and supporter group on social media compared to other parties (Grönlund & Wass, 2016; Hatakka, 2011; Maasilta, 2012; Railo et al., 2016: 254). This mobilization was so strong that by utilizing the added exposure of particular candidates such as the major party leaders, they could create a false sense of a like-minded opinion environment. This way, they created an atmosphere where the public opinion seemed to be more supportive of this one-party ideology and its candidates, at least on Facebook, than the voting results finally showed. There were only rare exceptions of anyone commenting negatively on the Finns Party candidates' pages, but several of their supporters commented negatively on the opposing parties' pages. The current major party candidates' pages included comments where these other party candidates were blamed for past decision-making, current conditions, and the Finns Party was promoted as the only voice of reason. My findings showed these types of comments to be spread throughout the data, and that could have made the communication environment seem more positive towards the Finns Party than what polls suggest, possibly affecting those voters who were still undecided.

The analysis corroborates Wass, Isotalo and Limnell's (2020: 371) results on the possibility of online harassment reported by over half of the election candidates in their survey research. It also supports what Marshall (1997: 3) argues for celebrities; with the added exposure, they expose themselves to possible resentment. Based on the data, harassment was more typical among those recognized candidates with more exposure. The harassment appeared as a

systemic activity towards the major party leaders, characterized as an acknowledged process of persona representation from particular discussion participants. The attacks against these politicians were based on policy decisions, especially related to immigration policies and referring to a harassment case in Oulu reported widely in the media. In the case, underaged girls had been sexually harassed in Oulu, and most of those accused of the crime were immigrants. This case became an example topic for the strong public opposition to immigration, and in the data, these politicians were blamed for the case. They were also questioned in the comments about the use of ministerial vehicles on the campaign tour. This implies that campaigning while holding office is challenging. Through social media, the public can easily comment on conflicting matters, and just as tabloids tend to look for sentimental headlines, the public also try to raise social media noise. Therefore, the public approached the candidates similarly to the media's watchdog-role, corroborating Rudd's (2016: 164–165) idea of online media as the watchdog. This way of the public learning and adopting their behavior from media is described by Carpentier (2007: 88) as the second type of participation. Isotalus and Almonkari (2014) suggest that added exposure in the media has increased the number of scandals. Yet the analysis in this study suggests that this has softened because even when the candidates are attacked and the public have raised issues to promote this scandal-type atmosphere, they did not necessarily get the same results.

Both candidates and the public utilized the added exposure of candidates. Together with how they utilized the comments for communicating topics and their opinions on the candidates, their interest and commenting activity showed the importance of concentrated and general visibility in the individualization dimension. Strong brands draw the public's interest to the pages and for reactions, thus providing fruitful ground for reaching a broad audience for either political topics or negotiating the candidate. This way, candidates could use social media both to communicate campaign topics with their already established added exposure that brings the audience to their pages, and also to increase exposure by promoting engagement there.

7.3 Social media as a Campaign Game Changer?

Lilleker, Tenscher and Štětka's (2015) study of European member states calls for "the embedding of new communication platforms within election campaign strategies". My findings show that the selected 18 Finnish candidates used Facebook, and the information distributing function of the platform was well utilized. The 18 candidates were: Li Andersson, Sari Essayah, Pekka Haavisto,

Harry (“Hjallis”) Harkimo, Anna-Maja Henriksson, Laura Huhtasaari, Antti Häkkänen, Elina Lepomäki, Antti Lindtman, Sanna Marin, Kai Mykkänen, Petteri Orpo, Mauri Peltokangas, Antti Rinne, Juha Sipilä, Ville Tavio, Sampo Terho, and Ben Zyskowicz. However, similar to Mattila et al.'s (2020) results, no significant turning point regarding social media campaign communications can be seen to have occurred, even though in their study, candidates viewed Facebook as either most important or very important for their campaign communications. My data showed that as Sørensen (2016) concludes for Danish political discussion, a significant amount of political discussion occurs on Facebook. Facebook's relevance as a campaign platform showed both in the amount and content of these discussions, supporting Muñoz et al.'s (2017) conclusion of Facebook's importance for candidate-citizen interaction, which Coleman (2020) confirms when suggesting that media ecology should be exploited in encouraging political discussion between the actors.

My findings support Skovsgaard and Van Dalen's (2013) conclusion that candidates have adopted social media in their campaign communication mix by not replacing the old, but rather integrating it with previous strategies. Thus, its benefits from the perspective of brand construction, promoting authenticity, and promoting and performing interaction, remained under-utilized. Facebook remained as a bulletin board type platform, mainly used one-way information channel which has also been recognized by Graham et al. (2013) and Nelimarkka et al. (2020). In the data, even if the public were active and communicative, the politicians refrained from interaction. This lack of dialogue could result from them avoiding hot topics which might in Facebook draw controversial attention. Even when the public asked about controversial topics or agenda-setting in general, the candidates refrained from replying. Thus, the analysis showed that the campaigns failed in optimizing the use of digital technologies, which Rogers (2015: 198–207) has considered essential for great campaigns. As Muñoz et al. (2017) argue, more engagement from political actors would promote more engagement from their followers, which was seen in my data of those candidates who replied to their comments. Also, Keller and Kleinen-von Königslöw (2018) have concluded that more Facebook activity from candidates leads to a broader followership and more reactions.

In Facebook campaign communication, the public were seen to approach the humane politician brand type, and more serious campaign discussion was presumably left elsewhere. These personal discussions could be the first entries into creating a connection (as seen in typical face-to-face conversations), but they went no further. This suggested that Facebook could provide a working platform for different representations of self. Specifically, it could be considered a tool for

connecting with the public, and not necessarily for political agenda-setting. Especially if the politicians lack the resources for engaging in dialogue with the public or gaining access to more comprehensive media representations, they could harness their pages for even more vivid brand representations.

The slimness of the Facebook participation of one of the vote-puller candidates, Ben Zyskowitz, compared to his votes showed that Facebook communication was not crucial for the campaign's success. The candidate was a vote-puller, indicating that they had succeeded in their general visibility, regardless of their limited communication on Facebook. It also suggested that this candidate's voter demography was elsewhere, and the candidate did not need Facebook for their campaigning. This was supported by their lack of presence and limited communication on the platform. Therefore, it is not conclusive that Facebook would be a requirement for all candidates, even though social media has been reported as a possible factor for gaining success (Mattila et al., 2020: 82).

Regardless of Facebook's possibilities for direct interaction, my analysis corroborates the continuing centrality and significance of television as the source of political information (see also Moog & Sluyter-Beltrao, 2001: 20–56). The posts announcing television appearances or other media representations provoked commentary, with descriptions and evaluations of the candidates' looks and rhetoric implying both interest and a need to communicate them. These evaluations also constructed the politicians' brands because they were negotiated publicly. Nevertheless, my analysis showed that Facebook had become an important discussion forum in political campaigns, and the public comments reflected societal discussion, supported by research regarding the popularity of the candidates (von Schoultz et al., 2020: 185–190). Even though, when it comes to trust, the Finnish public separates social media from traditional media as a news source by regarding for example Facebook as a fairly untrustworthy source (Matikainen et al., 2020: 97), its possibilities for connecting and interaction between the public and political actors cannot be overlooked.

Stromer-Galley (2000) argues that any new campaign medium allowing more personal contact between candidates and the public should be avoided "in all but extreme cases". The analysis of this study both supports and rejects this view. It is true that allowing more interaction, responding to the public, and communicating directly via Facebook is time-consuming and can expose the candidates to attacks, detailed questioning, and defamations of character. However, it can also add to their exposure, present an opportunity to correct wrong statements and misguided trains of thought, mobilize volunteers and support groups, and allow a personal connection which the analysis implied the public expects.

7.3.1 Under-utilized possibilities

The analysis showed that the candidates were not fully exploiting all of the affordances for Facebook introduced in section 3.3.2, which opposes what Zhao, Lampe and Ellison (2016) argue for candidates managing their communication based on their audience, content, and the affordances of each platform. Their communication showed a limited application of Facebook's possibilities, while the public utilized the Facebook affordances to varying degrees. The candidates remained on a narrower field of affordances and rarely utilized the platform and its possibilities to present an authentic or even seemingly authentic persona (Enli, 2015b), or for practicing two-way communication and interaction *with* the electorate. Also, their use of Facebook had varying levels of success when considering engagement. Even if measuring the success of the communication was not the aim of the study, here I will address it through findings on how much the candidates used the opportunities of Facebook.

For parties' use of political communication, Blegind Jensen and Dyrby (2013) have identified the following affordances related to Facebook: direct communication, promotion of political messages, dialogue, control (editability), authenticity, informality, personality, interaction, and involvement. Their study found that the parties were not exploiting the possibilities for dialogue, timing, authenticity, likability, informality, personality, interaction, or involvement. The 2019 Facebook campaign use of Finnish candidates supports their conclusion, and I now present these results in detail.

Direct communication was actively facilitated by both the candidates and the public. It was done by representing the candidate, their persona, actions and network, and by communicating policy issues. The candidates remained on the information-sharing side of communication, instead of soliciting political opinions or replying to the public. Railo and Ruohonen (2016: 309–310) conclude that in the 2015 elections, candidates mainly used Facebook for campaign-trail updates. The analysis on the 2019 election supports their view, and only a few candidates presented argumentation and political views or interacted with the public by asking opinions or engaging in discussion. Instead, the posts focused on calling people to vote and promoted appearances on media or campaign-trail updates. These represented a bulletin board manner of one-way communication. This implied that while the platform changes and offers added opportunities, the communication strategies are not updated from what has usually been carried out with self-produced campaign material such as campaign leaflets and opinion pieces in newspapers. Possibly, the candidates view Facebook as mainly beneficial for announcing their campaign-trail and media appearances.

In their study, Skovsgaard and Van Dalen (2013) found Danish candidates to value interaction with the voters in social media as important as publishing their views, and more important than reaching the masses. My analysis of the Finnish candidates suggested the opposite, where candidates valued the visibility of their ideas and their reach because even when they posted a lot or attracted engagement, they remained absent and refrained from interaction. The interviews with Finnish politicians conducted by Isotalus and Almonkari (2014) support this view, and the political party leaders resented the requirement of being constantly available to media and the need to present an opinion for everything. The challenge of engaging in Facebook discussions has also been reported by Railo and Ruohonen (2016: 309–310). My data indicated that this had possibly translated into the politicians' Facebook posts where they communicated when they saw fit, instead of replying to the public who acted almost in the same role as broadcast media and journalists in presenting questions and demanding statements. While Facebook would offer an opportunity for real-time, direct interaction with no hierarchy and boundaries of access, the candidates failed to both promote and participate in the interaction. This was a direct result of the almost complete lack of creating interaction and connection. Furthermore, the campaign communication on Facebook in the parliamentary election of 2019 aligned with Nelimarkka et al.'s (2020) findings on the 2015 electoral campaign, where Facebook was used more for campaigning, such as praising and expressing support. The posts showed primarily one-way communication, and the dialogue was visibly limited either because of a strategic choice of avoiding conflict or the lack of busy candidates' resources for managing their Facebook independently.

Direct approaches in the form of policy questions or reaching out to individual candidates were less visible than severe attacks and direct criticism. The prominence of policy questions in the comments supports Karvonen's (2009: 122) findings that political and ideological factors are the main factors when voters choose candidates. The lack of questions may have resulted from the lack of interaction and communication from the candidates: they did not respond to the comments, nor did they produce content that would have promoted interaction. This is similar to Ross, Fountaine and Comrie's (2015) findings on the lack of discussion and responses to comments. Thus, the candidates did not take advantage of social media's potential for dialogue with the citizens (Zamora Medina & Zurutuza Muños, 2014), possibly because they feared the increased scrutiny. Also, Reunanen and Kunelius (2021: 14) have reported that public discussion on social media may influence the willingness of politicians and decision-makers to introduce and discuss controversial topics and agenda-setting.

Regardless of the study's single-platform approach with Facebook, the hybrid media environment described by Chadwick (2013) was evident in the data; other media content was negotiated in Facebook by both the candidates and the public either through shares of content or comments on candidate's appearances on broadcast media. This hypermedia presence posed a strong argument for the hybrid media environment presented by Chadwick (2013) and supports Ekman and Widholm's (2015) findings on politicians being both actors and sources for the media on social media. Social media and traditional media cannot be treated as separate because they are intertwined and supplement each other. Facebook was also seen as a tool for dual screening for the public. The candidates used Facebook for promoting their television appearances on Facebook, which facilitated the public to comment on these appearances. While debates on television usually promote discussion on Twitter through hashtags, the data showed that the public turned to Facebook and shared their perceptions in the comments. For example, the public complimented success and presented topics that they wished the candidates to cover in the debates or asked for additional information on their contribution. This way, even if Twitter is the advised channel for this kind of discussion, the public chose their own preferred channel, which should be something that is considered by the communication staff and broadcast media representatives.

Involvement was shown in the data in the form of participation in the electorate's elections, and messages from the public showed agreement and support. There were statements of having voted for the candidate, and some acted as ambassadors for the candidate they supported. The most visible follower base appearing as a committed ambassador team (despite not being formerly organized) was portrayed by the Finns Party supporters. They actively commented on each candidates' posts, promoting the Finns Party agenda and candidates. This well-mobilized public has previously been presented as a significant part of the party's success in 2015 (Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 306–307) and also fostered similar behavior within the party supporters in the election of 2019. The limited amount of involvement from other parties could be explained by their limited, almost non-existent calls for mobilization. Moreover, the candidates did not facilitate mobilization in their posts, resulting in only one party showing an active, mobilized crowd, campaigning for their candidates in the data. This showed that the majority of candidates did not build genuine movements, which Rogers (2015: 198–2017) views as essential for political campaigns.

A personal interest in people was visible in the data. While Karlsen (2011) suggests that social media communication might be directing messages to those who are already following, the data suggested otherwise. The public inquired about the

opinions of the candidates, communicated changes in their voting choices, and deliberation between candidates and policies, which showed that the candidates could affect a large group of non-decided voters (see Railo et al., 2016: 334). However, some of the necessary information was not easily found from the candidates' pages, since the public also asked for basic information like candidacy numbers and districts.

My analysis shows that based on engagement and the number of comments, similar to Blegind Jensen and Dyrby's (2013) conclusions, there was an active collective participating in and debating political communication on Facebook, but it did not constitute a community in the traditional sense of communities. Through this participation, the public brought new viewpoints, offered competing arguments and topics, and offered new political discussion sources. As in the study by Blegind Jensen and Dyrby (2013), the adverse effects of the public not being heard were also visible in the analysis, and when not heard and replied to, the public yelled louder and broader, adding harmful exposure to the candidates. While this did not necessarily manifest into vote shares in the current election, it might have longer-term effects considering the politicians' personal brands. For example, the extensive exposure of Jussi Halla-aho and his blog posts are still affecting his personal brand and turning into votes both for and against him even ten years later (Hatakka, 2011; Niemi, 2012; Niemi et al., 2017).

What candidates seemed to fail in was achieving a more strategic organic reach and interaction with the public on their profiles, required for promoting engagement. The public were present, but exposure and engagement were minimally promoted with e.g. interesting posts or vivid interaction. Instead, the profile pages were predominantly informational based on the campaign trail and used only occasional personal approaches. This is opposite from what Sørensen (2016) concluded for Danish parliamentary members who showed a relatively high degree of engaging discussions with the public on Facebook. However, he does suggest that this opposite conclusion may result from his study timing being outside the busy campaign season. For Finnish candidates, even content such as their own blogs or other media performances were only rarely shared through Facebook. This leads to a conclusion that the affordances of Facebook were either not familiar to the candidates, or they had been unable to change the way they performed their campaign communication to match with the affordances of Facebook. While there were several tools like polls and support frames that could add interaction with the public and even mobilize them, only one candidate in the data used these. This indicates that the candidates merely communicated in their usual style on the platform, instead of developing their communication strategies and utilizing the platform's possibilities to better advantage. Notably, the content

in the discussions was seen to be controlled not by the candidates, but by the public, primarily since most candidates remained absent and refrained from interaction after their original posts were made.

The data showed a lack of politicians in the discussions, which aligns with Alho's (2004) argument of the political elite not participating in the public sphere (if we consider vote-pullers and party leaders as a political elite). Habermas (1989) defines human interaction as the foundation for a public sphere. But without a dialogue between the public and politicians, to what extent can we value social media or, in the context of my study, Facebook as an additional public sphere? Stromer-Galley (2000) reminds us that closed campaigns, where there is no dialogue, within democratic systems deny public deliberation. The question now remains, as to whether it is enough to just meet the public in campaign events, or should politicians be more present in these forums where part of the public discussion has moved to? If a politician's role is considered to be a service profession, as Finstad and Isotalus (2005) define it, also responding to the public, then their recruiters (i.e. the voters) should be considered essential. This leads to questioning how much longer is it to be left in the hands of the campaign staff and the politicians to decide which forums are correct to present questions in, simply by choosing where they are answered? Possibly this might be when interaction (or rather the lack of it) starts showing in the voting results. However, according to the analysis, this did not occur with the leading candidates chosen for this study.

7.3.2 Facebook content

Facebook was used in the 2019 elections by the politicians in a traditional campaigning way, as a formal bulletin board type information channel, which also steered the way the public viewed and used it for political communication. Based on the data, information was flowing more one-way *to*, instead of interacting *with*, the public. The main content in the posts consisted of topic issues, political agendas, and campaign-trail updates. This aligns with the observations of Nelimarkka et al. (2020) for the elections of 2015.

The research questions regarding the content of the posts and comments were:

- e) What kind of content is produced by politicians on their public page posts?
- f) What kind of content is produced in the comments by the constituents on the page?

This study showed similar results to Nelimarkka et al. (2020) in that, unlike Graham et al. (2013) suggest, party differences did not account for divergence in content production in the posts. However, they were factors in how parties had adopted varied communication strategies and had developed expertise in the matter (Isotalus & Almonkari, 2014). Party lines were nevertheless evident in the comments on different politicians' pages.

While most of the content was topic issues or information sharing, the topics were still narrow in scope. Both Van Dalen et al. (2015) and Skogerbø and Krumsvik (2015) have found little evidence of agenda-setting on Facebook. Alho (2004) has suggested that instead of being a setting for rational-critical debate central for the public sphere (Habermas, 1989), social media represents an arena for advertising. The post content supported a similar conclusion for Facebook. My data aligns with Wahl-Jorgensen (2019) in contesting the public sphere's original idea with the prevalence of emotions seen in online discussion. Also, there was no relevant topic discussion, and the opinion statements and information presented resembled individual shouts in the dark. The overall focus remained on campaign-trail updates, past decisions and grudges against politicians, and performance evaluations based more on rhetoric than on agenda or topic issues. However, the comments also supported the view of Reunanen and Kunelius (2021: 103) on social media discussion allowing the articulation of political opposites, and thus representing the ideal of the public sphere.

The data supported Matheson's (2016) conclusion that the public can use social media to provide material and ideas for agenda-setting. These were stated in topic debates and through personal stories in the comments. For the candidates, these sometimes represented the key topics of their parties or their personal preferences and expertise topics. This way, topic issues were used to represent the brand in agenda-setting, and in these, the topic politician brand type was visible. However, they did not always align with the comments when discussing topic issues. This supports a social media application of the theory of issue ownership (see Petrocik, 1996) being practiced by the candidates themselves. Particular candidates only related to specific issues. Similarly, the public also tied particular topics and policies to specific candidates. For example, in Finland, the Green Party has had ownership for environmental topics, the Social Democrats have been seen as defendants of the welfare state, the National Coalition Party has been viewed as the financial expert (Railo et al., 2016: 325), and the Center Party has been seen dedicated to agricultural topics.

A minor amount of topics were discussed or brought up, which shows that when elections became regarded through specific topics (such as the "immigration

election" or the "environment election"), this also holds true in social media, as has been argued by Laaksonen and Nelimarkka (2018). The focus on particular topics which were also focused upon in traditional media remained strong. Avoiding topic variety and discussing multiple issues might also be a safe strategy for the candidates who need to focus their resources and exposure on a few key issues that are reminded to the electorate. A prominent example of this in the data were several references made to one candidate who was blamed for the jobseeker activity scheme set during the last parliamentary term. Particular candidates were so tightly connected to specific topics or policy issues that the public also attached their brand to them. For example, throughout the data, candidate Haavisto was firmly connected with the sale of the Caruna electricity company, which raised criticism among the public. These indications of issue ownership (Petrocik, 1996) further were seen in the comments, which implies that the idea could also apply to individual candidates and not just parties, through personalization and also as part of brand construction. Additionally, issue ownership in the data was portrayed in a more negative light because the public attached negative topic issues with candidates and parties, as opposed to promoting topics positively, which is what candidates aim to do in agenda-setting.

The amount of negative comments on immigration policies challenged Stier et al.'s (2017) conclusion that political communication has seen only mild tones of the refugee crisis, since many comments return to the topic and its related incidents. Bene (2021) has found that in Hungarian campaign communication for Facebook, particular topics such as immigration trigger engagement, which spreads messages more efficiently. In the campaign in 2019 in Finland, especially on Facebook, immigration issues were prominent, but mainly present in the public's side of communication, suggesting their perceived importance as a value in the candidate's brand construction.

In the comments, another prominent topic was the speculation surrounding the future government. This topic was prominently personal to several who expressed their concerns. The party leaders were often asked who they would start forming the government with, and speculations on "who will play with whom" were common. For example, the Finns Party's supporters were often speculating that "the others are too afraid to include Jussi [Halla-aho]" or that "Jussi [Halla-aho] is too smart to go and play with the others". This showed that government formation was considered as one of the significant issues in the parliamentary election when making a voting decision. The prime ministerial election aspect was also seen in the data, and there were comments stating voting preferences based on the prime minister options: "I would vote for this candidate, but that would mean x would become the prime minister."

Other politicians were rarely discussed by the candidates in the data, supporting the conclusions of Heiss, Schmuck and Matthes (2018). If they were, it was usually done so that candidates sharing the same campaign trail with a party leader were benefiting from their campaign trail updates. The analysis shows no support in the case of Facebook for Laaksonen et al.'s (2017) research suggesting that the candidate-candidate interaction would take the form of negative campaigning. This might result from the choice of including only leading politicians and vote-pullers in this study, but Mattila et al. (2020: 65) also report that there minimal negative opposition was seen between candidates in the campaign communication in the 2019 election. An interesting case was candidates such as Ben Zyskowicz, who built their calls to vote by putting the party leader first by recommending that people vote "to make Orpo the prime minister". This way, the party leader's concentrated visibility was used to benefit other candidates in the party. This indicated that the idea of selling was pushed even further by the candidates, and that they may have considered it more comfortable to advertise another candidate and promote themselves at the same time, instead of just promoting themselves. Simultaneously, a networked politician's brand type was represented by showing their connections within the party and with the leading politicians of the party, such as the party leader.

Waterloo et al. (2017) conclude that positive content is regarded as more appropriate on social media, but the opposite was seen in the Finns Party supporters' expressions. Other parties and their followers followed this suggestion of commenting with a positive tone, but this type of breaking with convention is typical for the Finns Party line, where candidates have been seen to commit several offenses in their public communication.

The candidates focused on campaign trail updates and policy reports in their posts. Mainly due to self-produced content and the large number of campaign-trail announcements (32%), the individualization dimension was centrally featured in the data. This means that focus was placed on the person. The focus on individuals was predictable because of social media logic, and the data was collected from each candidate's public page. As Enli (2015b) proposes, social media logic invites more personal self-representations. Therefore, the posts were most often discussing the individual in question, in regard to where they would be or what they think about a particular topic. Also, some posts shared the candidate's own content or media appearances that had taken place elsewhere, which added to their exposure. However, even if the content was personalized, discussing the candidate as a seemingly authentic representation of self (Enli, 2015a) or allowing backstage access to the individual (Goffman, 1959) was not necessarily facilitated.

Intermedial referencing was prominent in the data, with candidates sharing their media appearances and the public discussing them. Thus, the study supports Larsson's (2016) findings on the close relation of Facebook activity and broadcast media programming seen in his study on Norwegian and Swedish politician's Facebook timelines. Dual screening, switching, and integrating between live broadcast media and social media also functioned on Facebook, even though it is typically referred to and studied in relation to Twitter (Shah et al., 2016; Vaccari, Chadwick & O'Loughlin, 2015). While Twitter is often the comment arena where hashtags are used to participate in discussions related to debates, television shows or current topics, my data showed that people were using Facebook for this type of interaction as well. The public replied to the posts by commenting on those and other candidates' appearances, rhetoric, argumentation, their stance on issues, or to express disappointment towards their behavior. The candidates were promoting their television appearances, newspaper articles, or blog posts through Facebook posts on their page, and individuals participated with their comments. Vaccari and Valeriani (2018) and Railo et al. (2016: 331) argue that there is a positive correlation between dual screening and political participation. Thus, the interest in assessing the candidates on their pages and continuing this possibility in the comments could promote political interest and affect voting decisions. The analysis implied that, at least to some extent, the public drew conclusions and made decisions based on the presentation and performance of the candidates in the debates. By stating those 'out loud' in the comments, they could promote their views publicly.

My analysis supported that the Finnish candidates viewed Facebook as less necessary for their campaign organization because they did not post calls for volunteers. Candidates only utilized the mobilization aspect by announcing campaign-trail updates and encouraging people to join them for discussions notably not online. While success in organizing campaigns in social media has been analyzed in the American context (Karlsen, 2011), Danish candidates regard it as less necessary as a function (Skovsgaard & Van Dalen, 2013). Similarly, for the UK 2015 elections, a limited degree of empowerment for campaign supporters was found on Twitter (Jensen, 2017). There were almost no campaign staff recruitment calls, and only one fundraising call was seen in the data. Only two candidates made individual posts concerning funding and recruiting staff for distributing campaign material. This indicated that the candidates mobilized their staff through other channels and failed to benefit from the possibilities for this on Facebook. Thus, my analysis opposed Strandberg's (2013) suggestion and Matheson's (2016) statement that politicians use social media for calling for participation and mobilizing, thus networking in a faster and more temporary manner. This part of the networked politician was also missing in my data, and

networking was only shown through connections with other politicians and the party, and not with the public.

Regardless of the narrow scope of topics, the majority of the posts communicated topic issues. This argued against van Dijck's (2013) idea that Facebook would have shifted the focus of communication towards storytelling and narrative self-presentation, and while there is that too, much of the data remains focused on issues and announcing information. This aligns with Karlsen's (2011) analysis on the Norwegian party-centered context, according to which social media does not necessarily increase individualization in campaigns. The content produced was rarely personal, and there was a particular focus on party and campaign activities when communicating with the posts. But even this was more random, and seemingly performed only when and while there was time instead of being a strategic curation of self-representation and campaign messaging. Karlsen (2011) does suggest that more individualization could occur with an added focus on promoting candidacy on Facebook. However, the data implied that the candidates controlled this in their posts, and while some used their pages to communicate party agendas and party campaigns, the affordances the platform offers for new possibilities for self-promotion were rarely used. My analysis showed what Karlsen (2011) predicted; the increased use of social media enables divergent campaign communication implementations. This divergence has also been reported by Obholzer and Daniel (2016). Particularly, the platform, candidate, party, and voter demographic dependent nature of social media campaign communication which results in divergent styles in the use of platforms for individual parties and candidates, is one thing research in the field agrees with.

7.3.3 Strategic campaign communication

The analysis did not indicate whether Finnish politicians used Facebook for political communication in the way that Kioussis and Strömbäck (2015: 384) define: as a process where communication is used to reach carefully set aims. Strategic campaign communication refers to planning the campaign, securing the communication, and refining the actions so that the aim (winning the election) is reached (Stromer-Galley, 2000). The chosen method and data did not disclose the politicians' or the public's aims – only their communication outcome. Based on that; as the study by Zamora Medina and Zurutuza Muñoz (2014) concludes for Spain, the data showed that each candidate in Finland used social media platforms, in this case, Facebook, very differently and either had distinctive campaigns and strategies for them, or showed no strategy at all. The analysis further opposes Enli's (2015b) description of professional politicians as skillful

performers who have been trained in their communication. Instead, the communication of Finnish politicians on Facebook suggests a less skillful and more spontaneous approach, showing that they are not even close to being purposefully branded candidates, defined by Kaneva and Klammer (2016) as *brandidates* who speak to their electorate with carefully crafted interactive messages and humanized personal stories that create brand narratives. The analysis implied a lack of strategic content management from the politicians. However, because the research design did not include analyzing the strategy in communications, this study can only provide general points that indicate strategic choices in the campaign of 2019, and offer recommendations for possible strategic choices for the future, based on the analysis. However, Herkman (2011: 108–115) emphasizes the need for strategic communication by politicians, as media and journalists become more professional.

The analysis showed that considering the different representations of persona can be valuable for politicians. Regarding Twitter, Zamora Medina and Zurutuza Muños (2014) conclude that the Spanish politicians have not understood that Twitter as a tool focuses rather on the persona than on the political institution. My findings showed a similar approach taken by the Finnish candidates with Facebook. The data presented an argument as to whether there is any strategic take on how Finnish candidates used Facebook for their campaign communications. The analysis highlighted the importance of the politicians' communication skills for strategic communication, similar to the earlier findings of Isotalus and Almonkari (2012). The data also showed that the public were looking for the right candidate from information they gained on Facebook. Thus influencing and engaging them effectively on Facebook can be significant for individual candidates.

Rogers (2015: 198–207) defines consistent narrative, building genuine movements, storytelling and creative flair, and a collaborative approach to media as critical characteristics for a great campaign. The analysis showed that this collaborative approach needs to be deliberated when considering the public as actors in brand construction in social media. However, the analysis indicated that Finnish politicians are not performing great campaigns on Facebook by Rogers's (2015) standards. The storytelling and creative flair were not found in the posts; neither was the constant narrative, except for topic politician brand type representations. These were consistent throughout the data, and there were no steps outside the representation, which discussed only topic issues and developed no other persona representations.

Negotiations of private or intimate personae were few, and only to be found among some candidates. Similar to Isotalus and Almonkari's (2012, 2014) studies, Finnish candidates preferred to keep their private issues private, in order to protect their personas and personal lives. These representations also seemed more spontaneous and appeared mostly towards the end of the campaign, which might result from feeling closer to the public after a long campaign tour or as an attempt to appeal to the last minute decision-making process with a more authentic and genuine seeming approach. This reshaping of persona through changing actions and what is being shared has also been recognized by Moje and Luke (2009) and Enli and Skogerbø (2013), while Beck, Giddens and Lash (2009) called it constantly revisioning the negotiated self. Nevertheless, these types of "seeming visits" in social media are the opposite of the continuous effort that strategic communication requires (Blegind Jensen & Dyrby, 2013). This way, negotiating the private politician brand type on Facebook did not seem like a strategic act of brand building, but rather a humane style of producing social media content resulting from the candidates planning (or not planning) and executing their own Facebook communications.

Even though Rudd (2016: 165) reminds us that content production online is not necessarily done by candidates themselves, there was an indication of this only for one candidate. None of the candidates whose replies about content production responsibility were received in the data used an outside agency for their Facebook communications. This implies that the seeming lack of strategy in the candidates' content production results from the non-professional communication planning and execution, and possibly a lack of resources. However, it is also possible that those candidates who did not manage their own content did not want to answer my question about it.

As an exception, when inquiring about the party's role in the candidate's communication, the Finns Party responded that there was no party strategy for social media and communication, and they are the candidate's own responsibility. This showed in the analysis for all of the Finns Party candidates, where their posts were unique from each other. It was evident that the party guided no strategic communication style or strategy. This non-strategic take on the Finns Party candidates' pages was so consistent that it actually worked as a strategic narrative. The mobilization of Finns Party supporters is a campaign strategy that has been successful before (Hatakka, 2011; Niemi, 2013, 2014), and was also supported by my analysis. They commented on the posts of more visible candidates, either by supporting the party leader Halla-aho or raising direct accusations towards the leading party leaders (Sipilä, Rinne, and Orpo) in regard to the Oulu attacks case and current immigration politics. The data implied that these supporters were also

those who criticized the "environment fuss" more widely. This active, non-officially lead, and well-mobilized group showed their communication power and influence in the data; they were visible everywhere. Thus, their causes gained exposure through candidates having concentrated visibility, and their messages were repetitive and gained more comments and reactions.

The public utilized the publicity and concentrated visibility of the leading candidates by, for example, posting citizens' initiatives on their comments. This way, they were creating information, and at the same time acquiring understanding through active discussion. This could also apply to those who followed a variety of candidates, because the content varied between politicians. For the politicians, it is essential to understand that as Railo et al. (2016: 334) have reported, the constituents that were seeking information were still undecided on their voting decisions. Therefore, communication online is essential, and Facebook posts and messages are an essential part of the campaign strategy, not just "an obligatory evil" to be taken care of when time allows. Some participants communicated in the data that they had specifically gone to the candidate's page to search for information and to learn their views, and many also announced that they were still looking for their candidate. The public discussed societal issues through stories taken from their lives, which drew attention to them and connected with the public. This implied that they were even more skillful in exploiting the affordances of the platform than the candidates, however, they were also more free in terms of how and what they posted.

The politicians were more limited with their personal brand choices. My data indicated that even though the large parties (and especially party leaders and vote-pullers) are in the position to recognize campaign communications as being more professional and social media's role as significant, their content production did not seem to reflect this. With professional campaign communication, communication planning and strategies are essential (Blegind Jensen & Dyrby, 2013; Herkman, 2011: 108–115; Lilleker, Tenscher & Štětka, 2015), but the data showed that the strategies for utilizing the affordances of Facebook were not yet refined. The evident lack of replies and dialogue in the data indicated that the candidates had not reserved resources for carrying out effective Facebook communication, and the pages were merely used for information distribution. These results support the findings of Heiss, Schmuck and Matthes (2018) in Austria for the positive correlation between the politician's profile attention and the lack of responses from them in their comments. Either the dialogue was not valued or was even viewed as potentially causing damage, and this occurred because resources for participating in the discussion and responding to comments were not used. It is noteworthy that in the current study, the public showed calls for the listening

politician and the networking politician who would interact with them on Facebook. However, with the exception of two candidates, the politicians remained absent and limited their communication to one-way information provision.

My analysis showed no support for the Finnish candidates' strategic use of Facebook, if it is considered similar to Kreiss's (2014) analysis of Obama's campaign communication on social media, where the campaign and the candidate's messages were widely spread both in digital and broadcast media. This manifested through the different political brand types which were either visible or missing in the data. For example, while the public communicated their need for a politician's specific representation, their demand was not always met. Instead, the candidates curated their content by representing only those brands or elements of brands that they had initially planned or were spontaneously creating when producing their posts. These representations were not following what the public were requesting, promoting or attacking, but were produced rather as controlled content, regardless of comments or other reactions. Also, the content posted followed the candidate's individual choices, and not the discussion on their comment threads.

As Valera-Ordaz and Sørensen (2019) state, with social media, and especially Facebook, the infrastructure for engaging in discussion exists between candidates and constituents, but it is much underutilized. In practical terms, creating transparency only partly succeeded, and the main problem was the lack of replies coming from the candidates. Topic issues were often communicated (even if narrow in scope), arguments were presented, and the campaign trail was updated and communicated clearly. However, previous research has shown that politicians mainly use social media to disseminate information, instead of using its affordances for dialogue (López-Meri, Marcos-García & Casero-Ripollés, 2017). Instead of following the functioning logic of Facebook which highlights personal content, personalization, the illusion of authenticity (Enli, 2015b), and interaction, the politicians chose to use the platform similar to their campaign leaflets and newspaper advertisements; as a public bulletin board where information was shared, and not discussed. This could result from time resource-allocation, and interaction would require time to respond. It also opens the candidate up to criticism since, as Suominen, Saarikoski and Vaahensalo (2019) present, some electorates want to inflame issues instead of discussing them. Laaksonen and Pöyry (2018) have noted that in the case of scandals on Twitter, there is a strategy of silence to be seen (Stieglitz, Milad & Potthoff, 2018) where individuals and organizations who are the objects of the scandal do not principally participate in discussions using the hashtags. This presents a similar strategic behavior to that

adopted by the politicians seen in my data; if they were attacked or questioned, they remained silent and ignored the comments.

The posts' content showed partly strategic consideration regarding what the candidates did not want to post or discuss on their pages, but mostly no strategic consideration regarding the type of posts that would benefit the candidates. In this way, the candidates failed to consider how the platform's logic works and what type of content would engage the constituents, thus giving them more organic exposure. This could have made their pages and posts more visible because of added engagement in the form of reactions, shares, and comments. By considering the issue of conflict-avoidance and revealing too much of their persona, the candidates may have hurt their personal brand by seeming cold and distant, and purely professional. However, this appeals to some of the electorate because, in Finland, it has also been found appealing to be seen as a topic politician (Isotalus & Almonkari, 2011; Isotalus, 2017: 73). This has also been found to be Finnish politicians' own preference (Isotalus & Almonkari, 2011, 2012), which implies that the Finnish vote-puller and party leader politicians applied similar approaches in campaign communications as seen in previous elections, where no dynamic shift or development in strategies of communicating the personal brand can be seen in the data presenting the outcomes of their communication. Whether or not similar communication styles continue to work on Facebook remains to be seen. However, the engagement data showed the opposite, regardless of a few exceptions among the candidates.

On Facebook posts, the narrow scope of discussed topics can create a false image, and many (especially controversial) issues were left out. At the same time, this showed less differentiation central to political brands (Pich & Armannsdottir, 2014) between the candidates. In the comments, the public raised topics and questioned the candidates independently from the original posts, and these topics were repetitive, similar to Maasilta's (2012) conclusions on online discussions in the parliamentary campaign in 2011. The comments of the Finns Party supporters promoted their party leader and anti-immigration policies throughout the data, thus creating a perception of general opinion. When the public raised issues, they rarely got replies. Thus, any dialogue or genuine interaction between the candidates and the public remained non-existent, even though Kim and Chen (2016) assess that the interactive features in social media promote democracy because they provide a public forum for expressing and assessing politics and political actors. This highlighted the absence of the listening politician, and constructed a single-layered networking politician with no interaction with the public. The results further supported Maasilta's (2012: 109) analysis on blogs, where the comments expressed frustration if the candidates did not participate in

the discussion; indicating that the public wanted their politicians present and responsive. Stromer-Galley (2000) concluded in her study that websites' interactive features were neglected in political campaigns by the operational side because of potentially losing control and adding ambiguity to the campaign content. Based on the analysis, the same applies to Facebook, contradicting Metz, Kruikemeier and Lecheler (2020) who claim politicians have more control of their narrative on social media.

The analysis showed that the more content produced by the public, the less voice the candidates had in terms of what was discussed and in which tone, and which topics got visibility. Stromer-Galley's (2000) conclusions on the lack of interaction on candidate websites are connected to my analysis; the interaction requires time, and it does not necessarily contribute to winning the election. Particularly, television and face-to-face meetings were valued as a more beneficial allocation of time and resources. Losing control of the content and communication was another finding in Stromer-Galley's (2000) interviews. The concern with interaction was the loss of ambiguity, and in dialogue, the politicians must present precise statements and explanations of their vision and agendas, which may cost them votes. Also, the dialogue remains in a written form. Thus, it can be shared and copied. Therefore, the politicians need to deliberate on their responsibility for what they communicate, especially in their social media content. The analysis showed that the Finnish candidates refrained from replying to specific policy questions, and their policy statements were ambiguous. It is possible that in this way, they could avoid later accusations of coat-turning and explain softer policies when they need to compromise their political roles.

In the data, no matter what the original posts were, the comments on them were affected by the candidate's previous career, actions, and general exposure. The representations depended on how these were interpreted by the public, especially those deciding to engage in the discussion. Therefore, impression management has to happen continuously on all platforms, and strategic decisions have to be made on the person's public nature (Goffman, 1959; Šimunjak, 2018). While these choices challenge the individuals concerned (Zhao, Lampe & Ellison, 2016), they are crucial, and their importance will continue to grow as new platforms and new voting generations enter the campaign fields.

7.4 Recommendations

As my analysis progressed, I could recognize patterns and topics that could improve and develop campaign communication for both politicians and the public.

In this section, I will discuss those findings concerning branding suggestions for politicians, and present ideas for future research developments related to my topic.

Even though the politicians' personal brands appeared to be unique, and to some extent, non-comparable, it is possible to present findings that, together with earlier research, give ideas and development suggestions on how the politicians could benefit from Facebook and what they should consider in terms of their campaign communication on the platform. These are presented in sub-section 7.4.1. In 7.4.2, I describe how I would develop my theoretical framework for future research. Research topics and areas are also considered to continue exploring with political brands on social media.

I finalize the discussion by considering some limitations related to my research setting and analysis, describing what should be taken account when studying online platforms and the discussions that take place in them.

7.4.1 Branding for politicians

Railo and Ruohonen (2016: 312) conclude from their interviews with politicians that some candidates do not consider social media as part of the politician's or candidate's "real" work, and for some, it is something that is done if there is any time left over. The resource-intensive nature of self-branding in social media described by Scolere, Pruchniewska and Duffy (2018) can explain the various approaches candidates take to campaign communication in social media. Some see it as essential for reaching the electorate and for managing their impressions, while others see it as an 'extra' and update only the most important aspects, which during the campaign might be simple campaign trail updates (as seen in my analysis). However, as Petrucă (2016) argues, to get visibility for a personal brand, activity is needed. Thus, politicians need to participate and to produce content if they want to actually benefit from Facebook and not just 'be there'. This critical role of activity has also been reported by Keller and Kleinen-von Königslöw (2018), concluding that the politicians could build more significant digital followership through activity, which would contribute to their success.

My analysis aligned with work by Plasser and Plasser (2002), Rudd (2016), and Isotalus (2017) on the personalization of politics, adding pressure on party leaders and individual politicians. Based on my data, party leaders as individuals appear more appealing than their parties, even when they put their party first in their communications and fade their persona into the background, for example by focusing on the party message in their posts. With the added personal focus through their pages; comparable to the personalization of politics, the data showed

that party leaders were often connected to their party's brand. Similarly, their parties' brands were attached to them, which showed in using party slogans, comments criticizing party policies, and in questioning them about the party's agenda-setting or government formation plans. Thus, for some party leaders, their party was prominently visible on their pages, instead of themselves as a persona. This has led to the growing importance of the party leader's brand and its distinction, highlighting the need for a strategic approach to manage it. The requirement of brand authenticity for party leaders has also been reported by Speed, Butler and Collins (2015). Furthermore, the concentrated visibility, the focus on leading politicians, and exploiting their exposure (Van Aelst, Sheafer & Stanyer, 2012) could be better utilized by promoting party candidates. However, this reflects the individual competitive setting seen in Finnish elections, where the candidates campaign even against other candidates from their party.

My data indicated the possible role of Facebook in convincing floating and undecided voters. Railo et al. (2016: 334) also conclude that many Finnish voters reassess their position between elections. As Strandberg and Borg (2020: 107) argue, Facebook is a useful forum for political influence on constituents looking for social connections in social media. The comments of the public implied that they intentionally sought information like voting districts, candidate numbers, or campaign trail locations on the candidates' Facebook pages. These comments showed that some candidates also partly failed in the task of facilitating voting, and even basic and necessary information was not visible on their page and not communicated well enough to the public during the campaign. The public also tried to connect with the candidates, and communicated their disappointment when this did not happen. Therefore, candidates should follow the communication on the comments more closely, and participate in discussions provoked by their posts. It is especially important to be reactive when criticism is raised and information is requested. Voting numbers should be included in the cover photo and communicated on the posts, but only a few posts mentioned a candidate's number. Also, only a few candidates actively reminded the electorate about voting, and calling people to vote is a more important message than advertising television appearances that were often communicated multiple times.

The analysis supports Karvonen's (2009: 95) views that the increased focus on individuals can influence political power structures and voting decisions. Several comments asked the candidate for advice on who to vote for when looking for "someone with similar values", because they could not vote for this particular candidate in their voting district. This implied a strong trust towards candidates, and showed that they had power in recommending other candidates from their party. This way, the public viewed them as influencers, and if they could not vote

for them, they could ask for their personal view on suitable candidates. In this way, the general visibility of candidates could also be used for promoting other candidates.

The candidates and those planning campaign communications should notice the apparent demand for the listening politician and the lack of representations for this, as part of their communication strategy. The listening self could be represented by developing communications, based on what is being discussed in the comments. Therefore, the candidates could listen to the comments and see if there are key issues and questions that they should address. This would also help them to see which attributes the public find positive in their persona and communicate those more, together with the most engaging content, on their Facebook pages. However, the first step would be to respond and interact with the public presenting questions and doubts in their comments. While the target demographics of the candidates also need to be assessed before drawing overly strict conclusions, the data indicated the importance of content from an engagement perspective.

By considering where the electorate, especially their voter demography, discusses issues, the candidates and their communication teams could allocate resources more effectively. This way, the candidates could be more present where communication is happening and engage in interaction; so promoting the listening politician that the electorate showed they were expecting in the data. The candidates further need to remember that strategic communication should not be constructed in a void, and like Gerodimos and Justinussen (2015) state, the public needs to be listened to, and only then can a successful campaign communication strategy be planned.

Through a carefully created connection between the public and candidates, the reactions on Facebook offer a more organic reach. Candidates should consider and aim to benefit from Facebook communication and the algorithm that favors those with more engagement. As Kaneva and Klemmer (2016) conclude, candidates with brands should appeal to their audience emotionally, so as to meet the affective needs of the voters. This way, they could grow their exposure through engagement, and gain visibility not only for themselves, but also for the topic issues and policies they promote. The candidates also failed to share their campaign material in an electronic form. Thus, social media could be used to publish and distribute campaign material that would advocate sustainability policies and also promote the exposure of strategically produced content. As an added consideration, the personal brand of a politician only gets stronger through exposure and wider acknowledgment, and this could also stimulate engagement.

The paramount significance given to the past indicated in the analysis aligned with Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2015) in regard to the political persona being negotiated through meanings dependent on the bio constructed from the life and career of a person. The public commented on past decision-making and the projected brands of candidates using their past in their comments, which indicates that the past matters. Thus, candidates should highlight positive past decision-making and career aspects, explain any actions criticized in their posts, and reply to comments to a reasonable extent. The public also presented personal stories or communicated stories they had heard of, negotiated topic issues, and expressed opinions that indicated a demand for the listening politician; in particular, they wanted to see that they and their worries were heard. The expressions of support in the comments endorsed the candidate and created a positive environment, where the candidate's personal brand promoted acceptance. The data was conflicting and only partly aligned with Knuutila and Laaksonen's (2020) conclusion that Finnish political communication is relatively positive on social media. However, the posts showed support to Mattila et al. (2020: 65) who also reported almost no negative candidate-candidate campaigning. Instead, there were negative attacks on the comments, aligning with Hakala and Vesa (2013: 234) who note the prominent critique extended towards officials in online conversations. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that these attacks towards parties and topic issues were mainly produced by the supporters of one party, which has also been seen to focus on this type of negative campaigning on social media in previous elections (Niemi, 2013; Ylä-Anttila, 2020).

Metz, Kruikemeier and Lecheler (2020) conclude that with the personal approach, "softer self-personalization styles can be beneficial tools in politicians' impression management". Lee and Oh (2014) have also analyzed message personalization yielding a positive Twitter communications response. This should be added to the candidates' strategies because the engagement in the data also implied similar results. It could also polish the politician's image by portraying personal life (Railo, 2011) and humanizing them (McGregor, 2017). However, the analysis highlights that candidates maintained professional content, limiting their posts prominently to topical issues and campaign-trail updates. Metz, Kruikemeier and Lecheler (2020) encountered a similar problem in their data, where the politicians mainly used professional self-personalization which was the least engaging form of content to the audience. Private content was shared the least, even though it inspired the most engagement. This creates a discrepancy in the expectations and the offering of political campaign communication. The public expected a more personal approach, yet the candidates refrained from meeting their expectations. Thus, candidates miss an opportunity for more extensive engagement unless they

change their communication style to forms that the electorate seems to respond better to.

Most candidates remained professional in their communication style, by communicating mainly on topic issues and sharing no personal content. This indicated that there is space to develop campaign communications in this area, and the candidates should explore the use of styles and varying content on their posts, in order to promote more appeal and engagement. It could also further develop their impression management, and some candidates were overly careful about sharing or addressing anything too personal or too private.

In the data, there was no indication of the public trying to build a network, and almost all of them voiced their own opinions, writing their comments with almost no references to others in the discussion and no attempt at community building. The rare comments that did show interaction with others were those that mobilized; the public called each other to vote or "make x the prime minister." They also commented about moderation in the data, which indicates that at least some candidates controlled their pages by deleting comments, which is one way to maintain control of their narrative (Metz, Kruikemeier & Lecheler, 2020). However, this annoyed the public and prompted criticism, indicating that some level of control was in fact leaking to the public.

The analysis showed that the public placed undeniable importance on the rhetoric and presentation skills of politicians, especially if they were party leaders. Hatakka, Niemi and Välimäki (2017) have also reported that individual speakers can strategically manage party communication impressions with their rhetorical talent. While rhetorical skills are not necessarily actively utilized in social media communication, the platforms can add exposure to other media performances, thus adding to the candidate's visibility and the visibility of other activities. The most appealing political persona is built through solid rhetoric and presentation. The rhetorical performance appeared as one of the key factors used in evaluating and making decisions between election candidates, based on the data. This suggests that the candidates should put an even stronger emphasis on their public performance, and perhaps use communication coaches to improve their communication skills in relation to their presentation and public interaction, as also suggested by Isotalus and Almonkari (2014). It also supports Davis's (2010: 83) idea of charisma and personal qualities as significant factors for the popularity of a politician.

My analysis showed some support for the conclusions of Strömbäck and Kiousis (2014) and Enli (2017) in social media use, noting the success of non-professional candidates whose communication is neither strategic nor politically correct. Two

candidates addressed the public using direct videos and informal rhetoric, openly criticizing current politics and the state. However, they both provoked engagement and collected visible support in the comments. Especially, the videos were shared, and their rhetoric was repeated in the comments. One of these candidates represented the Finns Party, whose use of social media has also previously been reported as successful and as divergent from the main parties (Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 306–307). The other candidate represented a new movement that he had founded. This supported the idea that candidates representing parties other than the main parties or who are just entering the political field can and will communicate more freely on social media, which serves them in terms of promoting engagement and getting attention.

Especially for the younger candidates, as suggested by Paulgaard (2001) and Shvets, Luzyanina and Maximova (2001), neglecting the physical body's significance in their representations of self was not possible. Even though the appearance of the candidates did not constitute a notable brand element, there were some references to it in the data, especially if the posts included a photo. This type of engagement occurred especially in the case of younger candidates. Also, the use of campaign videos and sharing them on the posts promoted engagement. Overall, this shows that the candidates could promote more engagement by using photos and videos, thus increasing their connection with the electorate.

Karlsen and Enjolras (2016) argue that politicians must learn to create a synergy between traditional and social media, which could be established with the use of supplementary content and sharing content between media. Politicians can benefit from this hybrid media environment (see Chadwick, 2013). Yet it is noteworthy that the candidate's shared content such as blog texts, did not facilitate any comprehensive discussion, possibly because the blogs offer their platforms for comments, and Facebook posts were only used for linking the electorate to these pages. Also, not many blogs or news articles were linked to the candidates' posts. Facebook allows sharing one's own content and provides more exposure to it. The limited incidence of this implied that the candidates were neglecting this affordance, thus missing out on an opportunity to share their other content and gain more exposure for articles written about them.

There were several indications in the data that social media commentary aligns with the parliamentary election research performed through surveys on the election of 2019 by von Schoultz, Järvi and Mattila (2020: 176–185) in how the electorate viewed the candidates. This corroborates findings of Hakala and Vesa (2013: 218), arguing that analyzing the comments can provide similar information to survey research. This could be utilized by analyzing comments even during the

campaign, so allowing almost real-time information to be gathered for planning and executing the campaign if resources are allocated for it.

7.4.2 Development and call for research

The study by von Schoultz, Järvi and Mattila (2020: 176–178) states that in the 2019 Finnish parliamentary election, the most popular party leaders were Essayah, Andersson, Haavisto, and Henriksson. In my data, the comments these candidates received supported this statement, and they gained mostly positive responses from constituents, with the exception of one negative topic issue prominently attached to candidate Haavisto. This indicated that social media commentary also aligns with the survey responses given by the public. Similar to the support presented by the data for the popularity of Essayah, the unpopularity reported by von Schoultz, Järvi and Mattila (2020: 178) for candidate Terho was also notable in the comments. Particularly, he was one of the two candidates who changed their party representation from their previous parliamentary season for 2019, and this unpopularity was also evident in the communication regarding him in the comments. This implied that Facebook communication could produce similar results to survey research on campaigns, which has also been suggested by Hakala and Vesa (2013: 218).

My data showed that political disputes, direct comments on personas, and frustration over society and media were expressed in comments. Studying Facebook can thus provide information on how politics and political actors are discussed and approached among the public. When comparing the data to research conclusions regarding Twitter, the differing role of Facebook in terms of audience and campaign communication is evident. While internationally, politics is widely discussed on Twitter, in Finland, it is mainly the elite, the more educated and those specifically working within marketing, journalism or politics who are the most active on Twitter (Vainikka & Huhtamäki, 2015). As Orth et al. (2020) conclude, Facebook is valuable for studying trending social issues, and elections campaigns also attain this relevance. Therefore, the Finnish Facebook discussion carried out in groups or the comment threads of public pages resembles what is seen on global Twitter, thus making Facebook a relevant forum for political communication in Finland. In this way, in Finland, Facebook offers a significant arena for political discussion, and a tool for users to construct their personal brands. However, Facebook also places those using it as a tool in a vulnerable position, since discussions are flammable. Specifically, they quickly get exposure, and are impossible to manage, even with professional content curation.

The analysis showed that Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer's (2012) framework required modification when applied to social media data analysis. When using this framework for analyzing social media content, I recommend adding the sections of sharing own content and broadcast media appearances. This is a variable for the individualization dimension, since the candidates used their content and shared their media appearances on their pages for the purpose of added exposure. However, their shares did not consistently focus on them as individuals, and they tended to share party communication and articles discussing their key policies. This intertwining of the party and candidate-specific communications should be elaborated on in research as the personalization of politics increases. However, the two aspects may become even more difficult to separate in the person-centered platforms seen in social media and tabloids.

Because of the emotional content seen in the posts, generally directed towards the campaign atmosphere and the team, I also suggest adding emotion and feelings to the analysis frame of Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer (2012) for social media content. This could be used to assess the negative emotions seen in the harsh criticism and attacks that the public expresses in the comments. The candidates do not necessarily need to create witty or innovative posts as suggested by Rinne (2011), and emotional and intimate content also gained response from the public. This type of content can therefore be used to engage with the public, and the data showed engagement when the candidates expressed feelings and emotion in their posts. Even though this has not been analyzed in traditional media regarding personalization, it clearly has an essential role in social media.

Another possible focus for studying social media in campaigns would be to analyze the impact of interaction. The context and the chosen methods in this study could not show a correlation between the discussion, the persona representations, engagement, and the voting results. However, this type of research is called for, as social media's significance in campaign communication increases, and more strategic ways to use it are introduced. Also, the analysis focused on the leading candidates who are heavily present in any media and who have established representations and personas. Therefore research among candidates just building their political career could offer varying views on the use and significance of Facebook and other social media, when the variable of added exposure from other media would be less significant.

It is acknowledged that this study's engagement perspective could be analyzed using the VARP-analysis introduced by Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 216). This includes analyzing value, agency, reputation, and prestige for brand construction in social media. For Facebook, if VARP-analysis is used, the textual

and visual content needs to be evaluated more than only in terms of engagement in numbers. This would have required a different type of analysis and research setting, so it fell outside the scope of this study where the focus was on the text and the qualitative perspective. However, a VARP-analysis of brands constructed and manifested on Facebook could contribute to brand construction's strategic perspective in campaign communication, for example by using interviews or surveys to analyze reputation from the exterior brand identity setting.

Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 207) call for a deeper understanding of personas' production, and their use for "our personal and collective interests and directions". Similarly, I stress that in the middle of the trendy discussions of making oneself a 'brand' in political communication, it is essential to understand representations of politicians' personas and their effect on current politics, individual voting choices and decisions. While floating voters may determine which party and candidates take control, the chosen candidates determine what our society looks like in the future. Regardless of the decreased interest in personas in Finland reported by FNES (Isotalo et al., 2019: 16), the logic of social media platforms such as Facebook invites growing interest in personas, and helps those candidates who are controversial, less worried about distinguishing between private and public, and who possess the capability to negotiate their personas in a meaningful manner. That is why I call for future studies that will continue the work of Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020) and also my own, in order to understand persona and its production process for other roles significant in society.

7.5 Considerations

Laaksonen, Matikainen and Tikka (2013: 25) stress the importance of an individual researcher understanding and applying new forms of collecting and analyzing data. My aim to analyze the content of the candidates' Facebook pages and determine how politicians' personal brands were constructed on the posts and in the comments during an election campaign required applying new methodologies, and also the courage to combine fields and research methods. This study has developed new research ideas for social media campaign communication presented in the previous section, utilized current skills in methodology and data collection, and identified the need to find and learn new skills, specifically ones that allow researchers to utilize digital methods for collecting and analyzing large data sets. The work has showed that while a study intersecting multiple fields can be a demanding process, it also provides valuable information in a society of intertwined media functions and collective actions. The analysis was performed

manually with the whole dataset, regardless of the growing interest in digital methods.

This study contributes to what Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 129) refer to as persona literacy; i.e. understanding the public self's formation and presentation online. As with any research, this study does not come without limitations. These consist of aspects concerning the choices made regarding the data, the single-platform, and the single-election context of the study. However, in this way, my study and its qualitative approach take on a less studied platform, and contribute specifically to the Finnish campaign context on Facebook and allow us to further understand the public's role in online campaign communication. Research on political communication in social media firstly focused on Twitter, and most researchers avoided Facebook partly because of the challenges it sets for the research process in terms of data collection and methodology. However, in Finland, Facebook is more widely used by the electorate, so this study is valuable for focusing on this platform and its use in the Finnish election campaign context.

The main limitation regarding the data resulted from the method of data collection. The data collected with Facepager could only be performed within the limits that have been set for Facebook API and its use with Facepager. For example, one candidate, party leader Halla-aho, that should have been in the data, did not have a public page and therefore had to be excluded from the study. At the time of collection, the API did not restrict data retrieval from public pages. However, there were restrictions on what could be collected. For example, individuals' identities could not be retrieved, so only the time of individual posts and comments, the content, and the reactions were included in the data. This limited any research design ideas, for example, on performing network analysis or analyzing the communities within the discussion. The anonymity of returned data also presented a problem, in that there was no knowledge of the political ties, gender, ethnicity, age, social status, or other dominant class bias that may have affected the comments. However, the fact that the API restrictions secured anonymity improved the data collection's ethical considerations and the legal aspects such as following the GDPR, since no register of individuals other than the politicians was created, and the data included solely the dates and the text content for the posts. Looking into patterns and perceptions rather than individual opinions also helped to support the upholding of ethical considerations around researching social media.

In the data retrieval process with Facepager, there were some empty results which resulted either from the privacy settings of individual users or moderated comments that had been removed from the page. This produced a blank line in the

results for that particular comment. These appeared in the quantitative results and were shown in the number of total posts, but were missing from the data collected and the page when manually checking the comment threads. Also, some data produces an "off-cut" reply in the Facepager collection, which meant that some individual nodes were not collected and presented in the data. Studies show that screenshots actually give more information, and sometimes results collected through the API are limited when compared to those seen online. This limitation has to be born in mind when analyzing the content, but it can be considered as less significant in the context of large data sets (Jünger & Keyling, 2019).

With 16,175 posts and comments drawn from the pages of 18 candidates, the validity of the data set is debatable. In comparison to the data of Nelimarkka et al.'s (2020) research on the elections of 2015 with 2.8 million Facebook posts, comments, and tweets, it can be questioned whether the data in this study is representative of campaign communication on Facebook (see Miettinen & Vehkalahti, 2013: 84–104). Also, only a small portion of Finnish people participate in online discussions (Hakala & Vesa 2013: 224). Therefore, it needs to be noted that the analysis only presents those individuals and their opinions expressed on the Facebook pages where the data was collected. Laaksonen, Matikainen and Tikka (2013: 22) call this situation an illusion of comprehension. It is impossible to include everything in the data, and selections are always made regarding the data collection, and the analysis sets frames that direct the results. There are also pages other than the candidates' public pages where political campaign communication takes place and citizens discuss issues. Thus, this consideration challenges the representativeness of this data.

It was considered that the Facebook communication in the candidates' posts may not necessarily have been produced by them, as many have communications agencies that produce campaign communication content. Also, given access, people other than the page owner can post on the candidate's feed. The candidates were therefore asked who produced the content on their Facebook page, but not all the candidates replied to the inquiry. However, the text was interpreted based on its content, and the relevance was placed on what the public could see on the page, rather than who actually produces it.

The focus of this study needs to be recognized, as the data represents party leaders and vote-puller candidates. A particular limitation of this is that one party leader is missing. The choice of data selection to include party leaders and vote pullers had both strengths and weaknesses. Firstly, while it ensured that all the Finnish fractured party system parties were represented (see von Schoultz, Söderlund & Kestilä-Kekkonen, 2020), it also caused an overpopulation of National Coalition

Party candidates since several vote-pullers were members of that party. However, the data was collected similarly for all candidates, which makes it comparative. As a second consideration, the data set could also be treated as a whole and analyzed using the same analysis frame throughout the data by considering the dual actor model of both politicians and the public producing content.

More concrete limitations of the data used in this study were that it only represented one country, one particular election type, one election year, and one social media platform. At the same time, these were also grounds for its most significant contribution by providing deep insight into the topic. Especially, as social media discussion is dependent on the platform, its affordances, and the community, the scope of Facebook facilitated the unique purpose of analyzing how brands were constructed in Facebook campaign communication.

This single platform approach has been a common feature in online political communication research (Enli, 2017; Filimonov, Russmann & Svensson, 2016; Jürgens & Jungherr, 2015). While Nelimarkka et al. (2020) view it as problematic, it does provide an opportunity to focus on the specific nature and role of Facebook in the Finnish campaign communication context, mainly since the studies conducted on it remain few in number. They further remind us that the single-platform approach demands the consideration of platform-specific issues, which was taken into account in this study by including the affordances of Facebook within the analysis. Scolere, Pruchniewska and Duffy (2018) also support this approach in their idea of platform-specific self-branding. This study added the audience as an actor in the process, challenging their claim that control is in the hands of the individual who is branding themselves. Personal brands and the branding process is further affected by the affordances of Facebook, and the analysis on communication on those aspects is limited to both the functions of the platform and what can be acquired with the selected data collection method. In an examination such as this, these factors are restricted to the imposed conditions, and therefore any related restrictions are not a result of researcher choice or bias. In terms of the deliberation of platform bias, it can be considered unlikely that Facebook as a company would have a specific intention or interest in the Finnish parliamentary elections.

Facebook data are always only a reflection of the time when the data were collected. There is a constant variance with added comments, shares, likes, and deletes to even older posts. Content constantly changes online, and therefore, when the data is collected, only a shattered part of it is retained and analyzed (Laaksonen, Matikainen & Tikka, 2013: 21). The continuous flow of comments is further altered by deletion and the editing of comments and posts. In research on YouTube videos,

Rieder (2020) describes this as '*survivorship bias*,' which is a logical error resulting from the selection process where low or non-visibility causes ignorance of some data, and the focus is on data that has survived the process, in this case that which is still visible in the collected data.

Social media comments are often ironic and hard to interpret, so concluding meaning from individual texts is a challenge. This is the main reason why, for example, the division of negative and positive feelings towards a candidate would have been challenging to interpret in the analysis. Furthermore, online discussions are inter-linked, communal, and they do not always follow the typical comment-reply-comment format (Laaksonen & Matikainen, 2013: 203). Instead, they can progress in other directions, be transferred to other platforms, or be edited or removed.

Errors in interpretation can result from deleted comments or posts, making it challenging to understand the context where other comments or posts were created. This way, a new analysis of the same data repeating the methodology of the study might still show diverging results. In this study, the purpose was to understand and conceptualize the discussion which was visible to the public at the time of data collection, so this possibility did not meaningfully limit such a large dataset and its subsequent analysis.

The multimodal nature of social media communication also sets a challenge. In this study, links were not followed, and images or videos were not included in the analysis because of the focus on text in the scope of the study. But in future research, a visual analysis would no doubt contribute to further understanding the visual communication perspectives used in campaign communication in social media.

A methodological challenge exists in regard to choosing suitable analysis methods. Laaksonen, Matikainen and Tikka (2013: 23) point out that digital analysis tools do not provide the precise interpretation that only a researcher's manual work can achieve. Therefore, this study focused on manual qualitative content analysis. With one researcher and manual analysis, there is always a case of interpretation bias and its challenges. Specifically, the categorization and interpretation of data and chosen examples are always individual choices. However, regardless of the analysis carried out, the findings of any study have to be presented in relation to the study's aims and research questions. Therefore, the possible bias of the researcher is going to always be present, even if its theoretically reduced by the presence of multiple researchers.

Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 210) describe the challenge of understanding a persona and placing it in a context: "With persona being neither purely individual nor collective but rather the visible articulation of the way in which the individuals negotiate an identity into collectives, each different cultural setting produces different constellations of persona." Therefore, by investigating Facebook as an arena, this study only formed an idea of how politicians' personal brands were constructed on Facebook, which can also be considered as a cultural setting, and Finland as a political stage. The individuals in question, the political candidates, were also studied only in regard to their role as a politician, even though it is a problematic oversimplification when aiming to understand their personal brands, which are also affected by their personal lives and private personas. The analysis showed that brands were constructed from previous acts and perceptions of the candidates, which could argue that data focusing on one month before the election was not enough. However, the month before an election has an added focus on political discussion and political communication, thus attracting even parts of the electorate who may not typically follow the political discussion. Also, the focus of the study was on campaign communication, which even if it is argued should be assessed in longitudinal studies beyond the campaign periods (Larsson, 2015); with this focus can show what kind of perceptions are given at that particular time and how the candidates' personal brands are constructed during active campaign periods.

8 CONCLUSION

In this study, I have examined how politicians' personal brands were constructed, negotiated, and manifested on Facebook during the election campaign in 2019. The study built on a presumption of a dual actor model of this process by including both the candidates and the public, and the analysis supported this approach. On Facebook, politicians' personal brands were acknowledged processes, and coincidental negotiations carried out by politicians in their posts and the public in the comments. These conceptions were also supported by the reactions of the public that showed engagement, thus developing the exposure and significance of the candidates' campaign communication. But there seems to be a power shift, and as suggested by Matheson (2016), the active members of the public in this context are no longer just voters, they are also active communicators in the campaign communication process.

This dissertation began by outlining the characteristics of election campaigns in Finland through their legislation and history. Social media campaigning can be a 'Wild West' for politicians because there is no regulation other than what the individual companies, such as Facebook, have set. The Finnish multi-party system and structure of elections steer the focus to individual candidates (Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 293–294; von Schoultz, Söderlund & Kestilä-Kekkonen, 2020), which makes Finland an interesting case for studying politicians' brand construction. Similarly, the public debate on what does and does not belong to the public nature of politicians' roles inspired me to find out how professional, private and intimate content is negotiated, and whether there are boundaries between these different domains.

Marshall, Moore and Barbour's (2020) research and development of persona studies guided me in developing and understanding the central concepts. In Chapter 3, an extensive review of the concepts of identity, online identity, persona, and personal brand was carried out, only to conclude their complex and trivial nature is dependent on the individuals performing them — this conclusion held true throughout the analysis. Consequently, I concluded viewing persona as the collectively and publicly represented self, and personal brand as its sellable version.

My interest in Facebook as a platform for political communication had developed through realizing the limited, although lately growing, research on it, and seeing how broad and meaningful discussions on society and politics form there. Thus, online discussions in this study were understood as the posts and comments seen in the public pages examined, and engagement was analyzed through both the

comments and the reactions to the posts. Scolere, Pruchniewska and Duffy's (2018) idea of platform-specific self-branding inspired me to also include an evaluation of affordances in my study. Enli & Skogerbø's (2013), as well as Meek's (2017) views on social media inviting self-representations, confirmed the approach of studying personal brands and how they were used in Finnish campaign communication. The analysis of Facebook data enabled a unique contribution to be made in relation to Finnish campaign communication research. The aim of gaining a holistic view of the discussion formation and brand construction in the posts and comments on the candidate's public pages as units of analysis required triangulation, with a focus on qualitative data-based content analysis. The focus of the study was on the text, and emojis were considered when they were part of the text and helped to interpret the message. Visual content such as photos and videos was excluded from the analysis. The final data set included 16,175 posts and comments for 18 candidates.

To understand this context and the contents of the online discussion, I modified Nelimarkka et al.'s (2020) operationalization used in their study on the election of 2015. Using their operationalization for categorizing the content also helped me to understand possible developments in the Finnish campaign communication between 2015 and 2019. Herkman's (2011: 25) call for professional strategic communication inspired me to modify the research setting to include the dimensions of engagement and to see how the politicians' brands benefited from them in campaigns. Party leaders and vote-pullers were selected as data sources for analyzing personal brands because of their status as visible politicians with a supposedly strong brand recognition.

The theoretical framework needed development since no previous comparable studies had been carried out. However, Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer's (2012) operationalization for analyzing the personalization of politics provided a good starting point to process personal brand construction and to analyze personalized content. The earlier applications of Isotalus and Almonkari (2014) for Finnish politicians encouraged me to look for types of representations for candidates. For this, the developing field of persona studies and persona literacy presented by Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020) provided both a theoretical ground and a possibility to contribute to research on political self-representations.

The exploratory analysis built upon the iterative method, and was closely linked to grounded theory. With data-based analysis and a large data set, the rounds of manual reading, coding, and categorizing the data were extensive. Several approaches needed to be tested, and ideas were re-modelled based on these

iterative rounds. After the extensive analysis, I was able to answer my research questions and evaluate the presumptions that I started the research process with.

A personal brand of a politician consists of both the professional and the private dimensions of their identity. It manifests as six brand types that can overlap in the politicians' persona representations. Because Facebook is used as a more general type of communication platform and the audiences are multiple, these representations are not limited to, for example, just professional aspects. The level in the depth of the representations varied between politicians. This variety aligned with the electorate's heterogeneity; and while some voters looked for a strictly matter-of-fact candidate negotiating topic issues and concentrating on their professional profile, others viewed ideal candidates as being "one of us", relatable, approachable, and authentic, and who also represented the private dimensions of their lives. These representations could be supported with multi-modal content that the platform affords, such as videos, links to other media performances and photos.

At the end of Chapter 3, I suggested six types of representations of political selves, modified from the academic self proposed by Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020: 190). In the analysis, they manifested in the data into six types of brand representations. These were: 1) *the informer politician* announcing one-way type communication, mainly on the campaign trail; 2) *the listener politician* promoting interaction and participating in the discussion; 3) *the topic politician* negotiating policy issues and decisions; 4) *the humane politician* communicating intimate and private dimensions such as family, leisure time and feelings; 5) *the networker politician* communicating their connections and party or mobilizing and recruiting the constituents; 6) *the professional politician* building credibility and competence from both private and political roles and their past, representing a dynamic persona where each representation is connected to the political role.

While the persona construction of a politician was somewhat of a puzzle, the final piece would always be decided by the hands of the public. In the end, the public decide what they perceive, trust, support, or contest in the persona that the politician is aiming to convey. This constant negotiation between the politician and the public manifests as a personal brand that keeps being reconfigured as new elements and dimensions are introduced, and as new publics come into play.

I started this research with four presumptions. First, I set out to defend the idea that social media could be the significant catalyst in changing the campaign game, and to establish how it can be done. The analysis showed that while it could indeed be a significant catalyst, the Finnish campaign communication has not yet adopted social media into the campaign mix to a level that it would have profoundly

changed the game. Reflecting the analysis with the study by Nelimarkka et al. (2020) from the election campaign of 2015 shows no significant developments in social media campaigning. The findings of this study indicate that there is space for improvement. Notably, there are several tools and methods that politicians could benefit from, and no innovative curation of content was found in the data. This lack of innovation from politicians in organizing their online communication has earlier been discussed by Reunanen and Harju (2012: 137). The analysis suggested that this could be decisive for influencing voters; however, the candidates had chosen to keep their persona representations mainly professional and continue to utilize Facebook with a commercial approach of maintaining one-way communication, even though real-time interaction would have been possible and also welcomed by their audience.

My research and results show that political communication on Facebook has changed slightly between the elections of 2015 and 2019, although as noted, no significant developments have been made (see Nelimarkka et al., 2020). Therefore, there is a need to continue following up this process with coming elections. As Mattila et al. (2020: 82) state, the election of 2019 was not a specifically big turning point in campaign communications regarding social media. The development of campaign communication is gradual. However, the increased use of social media can be viewed in the context of a longer-term development that has changed communication over the past decade and over the few latest elections. It will also continue to develop in the ones ahead, and this development might well bring us into a genuine participatory period in Finnish campaigning, where it is no longer just the political actors who control communication, and the participating electorate gains more visibility.

My analysis showed minimal interaction between the public and politicians on Facebook, unlike Strandberg and Borg (2020) suggest for social media in general. The data corroborates with the observations of Ross, Fountaine and Comrie (2015) that instead of engaging in discussion with the public, even when asked to reply and participate (Tromble, 2016), Finnish politicians mainly use Facebook for one-way communication. Railo and Ruohonen (2016: 311) and Nelimarkka et al. (2020) have also found that candidates tended to share information on the campaign or official carefully crafted notices or blog texts, instead of commenting on political issues or engaging in discussions in real-time. But it is clear that the candidates need to be willing to engage in these dialogues, even if they are time-consuming. Without dialogue, the public sphere lacks the needed rational-critical debate (Habermas, 1989). But before there is a change from one-way communication to interaction between the candidates and the public, social media will not change the campaign game. After all, social media as a tool and a platform

is what its users make of it. Therefore, it cannot change or affect anything on its own, and these changes can only occur when someone who knows how to utilize its affordances takes action.

If the channel is opened and the profile is set up, then someone needs to be present. This also allows monitoring the public opinion, as suggested in the interviews in the study by Farkas and Schwartz (2018). Also, the study by Reunanen and Kunelius (2021: 36) reports that decision-makers acknowledge social media's significance in informing them about public opinion. While the participants in these discussions might not be a valid representation of the public as a whole, their response and comments can help in monitoring the pulse of the public regarding different topics. This can be done by following the reactions, reading the comments, and viewing the contents of the discussion. Also, Railo and Ruohonen's (2016: 289–291) interviews show that to build a connection during a campaign, people should be met, whether personally or in advertising, in their everyday life, and social media is undeniably part of the everyday life of the public in 2019 and forward.

My second presumption was that, as Enli (2015b) has suggested, the affordances of Facebook invite politicians to produce more personal content. However, only a few candidates revealed a wider private dimension of their persona when posting on Facebook. Instead, most used the platform consistently for traditional campaigning activities like campaign trail updates, media performance announcements, and topic issue argumentation. Nevertheless, some candidates personalized these posts by describing feelings, introducing loved ones or pets, or connecting issues to childhood memories. While using Facebook did not invite all of the candidates to share more personal content, it did it for the public when they were discussing the candidates. The public often discussed politicians and their personas in terms of their private dimensions, rather than by topical issues in a formal professional context. The public also engaged more with posts that shared private, and especially intimate content. This added to the candidates' exposure and provoked mainly expressions of support, thereby providing a mostly positive communication environment. This indicates that negotiating the private dimension could present an effective strategy for constructing a personal brand on Facebook for a politician.

Topic issue negotiations in the data were limited, as has previously been found by Van Dalen et al. (2015). Neither the candidates nor the public showed visible interest in discussing topic issues in the data. While the professional dimension was more prominent in the candidates' posts and in the comments they received, more engagement (creating wider exposure) usually came from content

negotiating the private dimension. Larsson (2019) has described that type of content as glimpses into the personal sphere, which describes it well. There were, for example, photos of the candidate with their spouse, intimate revelations on their childhood, talk about the family dog, their relationship with nature, or feelings about the campaign or leisure time in the posts, depicting the private life aspects of candidates.

My findings support Larsson's (2015: 461) six themes observed in Norwegian politicians' posts on Facebook. In his study, he distinguished the following categories: "Acknowledgements, providing Campaign Reports, Informing followers about prioritized policy issues, uttering Critique towards competitors or other actors, utilizing the Facebook platform for attempts at citizen Mobilization, providing glimpses into one's Personal sphere." In my data, prioritized topic issues were narrow in scope, only a few issues were brought up, and some topics introduced by the public were left unanswered and untouched. This narrow scope suggests a strategic choice to avoid controversial topics. Simultaneously, it can also be a sign of ignorance towards the comments and the direction the public are hoping for the discussion to take, given the strong indications of the candidates using Facebook for primarily one-way communication. The data showed little indication of actual campaign work mobilization, which other research has stated as a benefit of social media, but some mobilization was seen for following debates and participating in the campaign trail events. However, the limited mobilization calls found in the data support the negative response for mobilization posts on Facebook in terms of engagement found by Heiss, Schmuck and Matthes (2018) as well as Bene (2021).

In online campaign communication, political candidates or their campaign offices negotiate their brands in personal and unique ways. In the data, none of the Finnish politicians provided extensive access to their backstage life and activities (Goffman, 1959) on their Facebook page, similar to findings in the Instagram study on Santiago Abascal by Sampietro and Sánchez-Castillo (2020). Instead, they focused on their political roles and personas, and communicated those to the electorate. A strong focus on political content can construct a dull image of a candidate, whose only brand elements are topic issues and their political career. To promote interest in the persona, there should be a focus on both persona and private life matters (Railo & Ruohonen, 2016: 311). However, the traditional Finnish way has focused on matter-of-fact issues, which is supported by my findings on most of the candidates' posts in the data, and some of the candidates remained strictly official and factual in their Facebook communications. Based on the study's results on engagement with this type of communication, their audience

was not necessarily expecting anything more, and it might have even turned against more intimate and private persona representations.

Politicians' brands are a result of the interaction between the politicians and the public. When creating their brands, politicians naturally want to create a positive impression of themselves by highlighting favorable commentary, boosting it, and bringing up those sides that promote an affirmative response from the public. At the same time, they need to highlight key topics, and for example, party leaders promote their party and the agenda. However, the public decide what they "buy" from the person, and which dimensions they view as meaningful and engaging. For example, one politician can be praised for being warm and personal, while another is respected for their calm and topic competence. The construction of their brand must start from the politician themselves. As Shepherd (2005) reminds us, self-branding is an inside-out process which starts from the individual's genuine qualities and characteristics, so a personal brand cannot be fully constructed from elements external to them. Branding is partly planned and strategic, but part of it is also uncontrollable and coincidental. Additionally, and just like identity, the brand is also a process that changes over time.

As Kaneva and Klemmer (2016) point out, the influence of the politicians is only as strong as the emotional connection that they are able to build in their interaction with the electorate. The interaction on Facebook is public, and requires participation. The affordances of each platform guide how the discussion flows, and each candidate can control how the discussion is organized through calls for discussion and also its moderation on their pages. I agree with Bossetta (2018) that the evolution of new platforms and social media communication is so rapid that the actors must be ready to adjust their ways. Sometimes, the brands result from the strategic planning of the politicians and their PR consultants (Enli, 2015a). Nevertheless, in the end, it is the public who decide how they bring up politicians in their comments. A political brand is therefore a manifestation of the interaction between the party, the candidate, and the public. This leads to my third presumption: that the audience is an essential actor in the process.

The focus on brand construction has been based on the notion that the person is both the subject and the individual actor. However, in this study, leading from my third presumption, I have shown how the public are also actors when publicly discussing the politicians, thus constructing their personal brands. The analysis corroborates Shepherd's (2005) notion that everyone has a brand. Yet if an individual decides not to construct one, it might well be created by other people. The brand is not necessarily constructed *with* the collective, but *in* a collective. In social media, the discussion takes place under and sometimes completely

independently of the original posts and their content, because it is the public who choose what and how they want to comment. This way, and unlike Metz, Kruikemeier and Lecheler (2020) claim, Facebook campaigning is not controlled by political actors even on their own pages; and the public also decide how the politicians and their actions are represented online, thus adding elements to their personal brands. The discussion takes its own routes when the public start commenting, and the politician loses the control unless they want to actively moderate the discussion. However, this raises wide criticism and suspicion towards them, and hurts the idea of authenticity, which is one of the central affordances of social media platforms.

My final presumption about strategic personal brand construction still waiting to enter Finnish campaign communication was confirmed by my analysis. Pernaa, Niemi and Pitkänen (2009: 99–100) suggest that politicians and political parties have started professionalizing the management of public exposure by polishing their images with the help of consultants. Enli (2015b) argues that a personal brand is sometimes the result of what the politician and consultants have negotiated publicly. However, my analysis showed no indication that the candidates would not have been responsible for planning and performing their personal brand, mainly on their own.

Therefore, I conclude that the professionalization discussed by Pernaa, Niemi and Pitkänen (2009), Herkman (2011: 108–115) and Enli (2015b) has not yet reached the Facebook communications of politicians in Finland, at least not as being seen as a minimum requirement by parties. Differentiation from others and the uniqueness of the constructed self is the core of brands (Shepherd, 2005; Pich & Armannsdottir, 2014). However, the analysis showed that the candidates were not prominently communicating these differentiation points, which resulted as limited brand representations on Facebook, regardless of the platform's affordances.

While the data shows no indication of one strategic approach of Facebook communication over another, there are implications of candidates having more preferred approaches. The public resented the absence of candidates from the discussion, emphasizing the importance of the listening politician who was missing in the candidates' posts, as answers to questions were expected. While moderation was critiqued, some curation of the content was still expected. However, my analysis implies a need for a better communication culture among the public, and frustration over negative or inappropriate comments is evident. The public utilize the platform as a discussion forum and as an added public sphere, and is therefore looking for interaction with its candidates. Nevertheless, the data showed that this need was not being satisfied.

In their study, von Schoultz, Järvi and Mattila (2020: 185–186) find that when choosing whom to vote for, the Finnish constituents consider the candidate's party the most, and their reliability, previous political experience, and abilities to take care of issues next. Their visibility, family, or friends were rarely seen as deciding factors. This suggests that the politician's personal brand should be constructed around the professional political role, and can explain why the Finnish politicians in the data focused on the professional brand type representation. However, as Metz, Kruikemeier and Lecheler (2019) state, on social media, more extensive engagement and the visibility that comes with it are easier to reach with a more personal approach, and the public respond positively to emotional and private content. The conflicting results from previous research offer no conclusive statement for what would work as a strategy for all politicians. Therefore, the individual choices and divergent approaches for persona representations linked to each candidate are not alarming; instead, they show their complex nature.

The analysis highlighted that the candidates and their communication are broadly interpreted through an earlier perception; i.e. the images that the public have of candidates rather than the performance or rhetoric of the current moment. Also, the party features in this picture, and the FNES shows a declining curve on the individual over party importance for voting decisions (Isotalo et al., 2019: 16). As a result, parties may be expected to focus more on polishing their party brands. However, the party brand is usually built through people, which can be seen in the media coverage suggesting that Sanna Marin's performance during the spring 2020 corona crisis considerably promoted the party's popularity (Sundman, 2020). Also, several examples of strong personas have been seen to have made a difference in election results (Kinnunen, 2020). The more we break away from the tight connection to parties which ruled voting before the 1960s (Railo et al. 2016: 317), the more critical personal brands are for politicians who want to stay in parliament. Therefore, it is undeniable that the strong personal brand of a politician helps in campaigning, and for example, it can reduce the need for paid exposure and help to mobilize the electorate to forward the political message. With the way marketing changes and that new generations will perceive messages; connecting with brands, whether personal or company, has become the core of making consumer decisions, and this may well translate to voting.

Some candidates do not strategically construct a personal brand or focus on how it develops among the public. How much longer can they keep this up when others learn to exploit the affordances and the focus on persona remains to be seen, especially if they avoid strategic brand construction in their campaign work, or if they consider it unimportant during their political career. Just as new businesses have disrupted and challenged traditional brands through platform economy,

those personas strategically exploiting social media may become the voting magnets of the future. In Finland, we can look at the successful social media mobilization of the Finns Party and see implications of how much further this widely spread civil mobilization and their committed communication can take us, if they are even more strategically harnessed for the use of a particular party or an interesting candidate.

Further studies in this research field are needed because each study is only a reflection of the time it describes. Platforms change, candidates change, and professional political communication develops alongside these changes. To understand the current, we need to study history and look at what is to come, in order to evaluate and plan how to develop campaign communication and the media literacy needed to interpret it. Election types may also differ in the importance placed on politicians' personal brands. Social media can have varying significance between election years and types. Therefore, studying Finnish election campaigns on social media should not stop here. Politicians' personal brands should also be further discussed to advance the field of persona literacy (Marshall, Moore & Barbour, 2020: 129) and to better develop campaign communication.

Strandberg (2016) notes that the internet and social media offer everyone an accessible forum to follow political communication. Railo et al. (2016: 333) add that it increases political participation and knowledge. However, my findings show no indication of a 'must' or a 'need' for citizens to be on Facebook, in order to participate in societal or political discussion. Specifically, the platform does not offer crucial information that would support voting decisions, and the content is mainly similar to what is presented in traditional media. Nevertheless, the data shows that if a citizen is present and participates, they must understand the fine-tuned tones, the variety of the discussion, the hidden motives in emotional comments, the repeated arguments and personal references that are made to support and attack candidates, parties, or political agendas.

Similar to Enli (2015a), I also see the progress towards the professionalization of social media communication, where strategic personal brand construction will be an art to master for every politician aiming for a long career. Just like the way strong brands in products stand the test of time and criticism, the same goes for strong personal brands. Criticism and movements against a politician cannot turn constituents and their opinions when the politician's personal brand is strong enough to convince enough voters and influence enough fellow politicians to impact issues. Regarding Facebook, the affordances of the platform are not yet fully exploited by politicians. However, a large audience formed of actively participating and decision forming members of the public expects interaction, thus

opening the ground for more interactive and professional campaign communication in social media.

Railo and Ruohonen (2016) claim that the elections of 2003 and 2007 were the peak of intimised, persona-centered, and entertainment-oriented campaign exposure. However, there is still room for varied dimensions in the persona representations seen in political campaigns. Strandberg and Borg (2020) name 2019 as the most significant step towards "internet elections". I estimate the increase in social media use for campaigning to only rise from where we are now. Especially, the significance of the private dimension shares in the data and its engagement connect back to my original suggestion: politics is personal. The development of new platforms and the more personal approach to social media that younger candidates have will continue to change campaign communications. Personal and intimate have already been regarded to have pushed their boundaries, and new election seasons will see candidates born with the idea of constant self-exposure through vlogging, reality television, and virtual reality applications.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Data collection table

Name	Party	Votes	Leader	Likes	Followers	Facebook profile/ page	Facebook ID
Li Andersson	Left Alliance	24 542	yes	53 436	54 787	https://www.facebook.com/lindrssn/	180708511964032
Antti Häkkänen	National Coalition Party	20 234	no	4 828	4 879	https://www.facebook.com/hakkanenantti/	1413586768888450
Pekka Haavisto	Green League	20 163	yes	28 070	28 314	https://www.facebook.com/haavisto.pekka/	28729512139
Elina Lepomäki	National Coalition Party	19 292	no	16 521	16 823	https://www.facebook.com/elinalepomaki1/	860106373999721
Sanna Marin	Social Democratic Party	19 088	no	13 644	13 699	https://www.facebook.com/MarinSanna/	117265168335655
Juha Sipilä	Centre Party	16 688	yes	15 883	17 081	https://www.facebook.com/juhasi.fi/	1538045659818250
Ville Tavo	Finns Party	14 957	no	2 596	2 691	https://www.facebook.com/villetavo/	357133674370482
Anna-Maja Henriksson	Swedish People's Party	14 545	yes	3 605	3 631	https://www.facebook.com/annamajahenriksson/	130342453687731
Antti Lindtman	Social Democratic Party	15 541	no	7 150	7 165	https://www.facebook.com/anttilindtmantekija/	173116522742529
Kai Mykkänen	National Coalition Party	14 226	no	4 586	4 832	https://www.facebook.com/mykkanenkai/	773492619380543
Mauri Peltokangas	Finns Party	13 114	no	7 796	7 946	https://www.facebook.com/mpeltokangas/	507454776332376
Laura Huhtasaari	Finns Party	12 991	no	16 766	17 378	https://www.facebook.com/laurahuhtasaaren/	856761524451987
Harry Harkimo	Movement Now	12 963	yes	9 179	10 155	https://www.facebook.com/harryhjallisharkimo/	655201351251935
Ben Zyskowicz	National Coalition Party	12 556	no	5 837	5 732	https://www.facebook.com/benzyskowicz/	302565484196
Sari Essayah	Christian Democrats	12 397	yes	14 632	14 404	https://www.facebook.com/essayah/	129082145514
Antti Rinne	Social Democratic Party	12 110	yes	11 993	12 528	https://www.facebook.com/anttirinnej/	1441362419430380
Petteri Orpo	National Coalition Party	10 792	yes	14 276	14 746	https://www.facebook.com/OrpoPetteri/	154256701288026
Sampo Terho	Blue Reform	3 094	yes	3 043	3 313	https://www.facebook.com/sampoterho/	205004656205052

Appendix 2. Post examples A1-A35 (continues)

Code	Candidate	Original post	Translation
A1	Mykkänen	Uutta kehystä tarjolla! Toimivaksi koettu tapa muistuttaa ystäviä siitä, että 1) työn pitää kannattaa, 2) Suomen pitää olla avoin ja turvallinen ja 3) tarvitsemme päästöttömän tulevaisuuden. Ja ennen kaikkea, äänestäminen on tärkeää ja kaikki apu on tarpeen. #tottaKai	Offering a new frame! A way seen to function to remind friends that 1) work must be profitable, 2) Finland must be open and secure, and 3) we need a future without emissions. And most of all, voting is important and all help counts. #tottaKai
A2	Andersson	Hyvää rasismien vastaista päivää! Jotkut puolueet kääntävät ihmisiä toisiaan vastaan ja lietsovat rasismia, jotta heidän ei tarvitsisi puhua hyvinvoinnista ja toimeentulosta. Meille ihmisten yhdenvertaisuus ja syrjimättömyys ovat tärkeimpiä lähtökohtia – nyt ja aina. Teemme päivittäin kaikkemme, jotta rasismille ei olisi tilaa, vaan kaikki voisivat elää elämäänsä ilman sen aiheuttamaa pelkoa. Meidän Suomessamme rasismille ja syrjinnälle ei ole sijaa. #SinäPäätät	Have a good Against Racism day! Some parties turn people against each other and promote racism so that they would not have to talk about social welfare. To us, equality and the non-discrimination of people are the most important starting points - now and always. Every day we do everything we can so there would not be space for racism and everyone could live their lives without the fear it causes. There is no space for racism and discrimination in our Finland. #YouDecide
A3	Haavisto	Tänään istuttiin vihreän liikunta- ja urheiluväen kanssa miettimässä vihreiden liikuntapoliittisia tavoitteita. Huippuhihtäjä Martti Jylhä oli kertomassa Protect Our Winters Finland -järjestön toiminnasta - eli miten estetään ilmastonmuutos ja turvataan todellinen talvi. Hienoa keskustelua - ja urheilijat ovat nyt mukana ilmastonmuutosta torjumassa.	Today we were sitting together with the Green party exercise and sports people thinking about the Green Party aims for sports politics. A top skier Martti Jylhä was describing the activities of Protect Our Winters Finland -organization - which was how to prevent climate change and secure real winter. Great conversation - and the athletes are with us in preventing the climate change.
A4	Sipilä	Nuorten liikehdintä osoittaa, että ihmiskunnalla on toivoa. Nuorten huoliin vastattava. Hiilinieluja tarvitaan lisää. Keskusta haastaa suomalaiset toimijat istuttamaan ensi kesänä ylimääräiset 10 miljoonaa puuta uutta metsää. #ilmasto #metsät	The movement among young people is showing that there is hope for humankind. The concerns of young people must be answered. More carbon sinks are needed. The Center Party challenges Finnish actors to plant an extra 10 million trees of new forest next summer. #environment #forests

Code	Candidate	Original post	Translation
A5	Mykkänen	I believe there currently isn't enough dialogue being held about Finnish politics and the elections in English. This is important for foreigners in Finland to effectively take part in our society. I want to help and enable expats residing in Finland to use #AskKai and ask me about the biggest policy questions they have now that we are only few days from the election Sunday. So please, let me hear 'em and I'll do my best to answer online and in the next video. Every question is important. Remember to vote! ----	I believe there currently isn't enough dialogue being held about Finnish politics and the elections in English. This is important for foreigners in Finland to effectively take part in our society. I want to help and enable expats residing in Finland to use #AskKai and ask me about the biggest policy questions they have now that we are only few days from the election Sunday. So please, let me hear 'em and I'll do my best to answer online and in the next video. Every question is important. Remember to vote! ----
A6	Huhtasaari	Täytän huomenna 40 vuotta! Syödään yhdessä soppaa (30.3. klo 11-13) Eetunaukiolla Porissa. Tulethan paikalle.	I am turning 40 years old tomorrow! Lets eat soup together (30.3. at 11-13) at Eetunaukio in Pori. I hope you'll be there.
A7	Tavio	Rikosjuristina tulee tietää millainen on johdatteleva kysymys. Nyt sinäkin voit oppia sen - tekemällä Yle Kioskin vaalikoneen.	As a criminal lawyer one must know what a leading question is like. Now you can learn it too – by using the Yle Kioski election candidate
A8	Henriksson	Vi gick till "frisören" med Romeo. Man måste ju städa upp sig lite då det blir val och därtill vår! Romeo kävi "parturilla". Täytyy olla vaalikunnossa! Före [kuva] Efter [kuva]	We went to a "hairdresser" with Romeo. One must clean themselves up a bit for the election and onwards. Before [photo] After [photo]
A9	Orpo	Onnellinen jälleennäkeminen vaalikadulla (edellisestä noin tunti aikaa) Tällä äänestäjällä kuulosti olevan aina ruokakuppi tyhjä 🐶 Pessillä oli muuten paljon enemmän ihailijoita ja rapsuttelijoita kuin mulla 😞	Happily reunited at the campaign street (last time about an hour ago) This voter seemed to always have an empty food cup. 🐶 Pessi by the way had a lot more fans and people wanting to touch him than me 😞

Code	Candidate	Original post	Translation
A10	Henriksson	Idag har jag "laddat batterierna". Njutit av promenad i Fäboda-skogen och därtill skidat 12 km längs den så kallade vandringsleden. Mycket is och ställvis vatten. Men det gick ändå förvånansvärt bra. Och så hinner man ju tänka en hel del. Tre veckor till val och många intressanta möten, debatter och kampanjträffar återstår. Jag försöker hinna med så mycket som möjligt. För att vara på topp och kunna prestera bra, behöver man också lite egen tid emellan. Med full energi ser jag nu fram mot nästa vecka. Ihana sunnuntai ja luultavasti tämän talven viimeinen hiihto. Suomen luonto on niin kaunis. Pitäkäämme huolta luonnon monimuotoisuudesta!	Today I have "charged the batteries". Enjoyed a walk in the Fäboda Forest and skied 12 km along the so-called hiking trail. A lot of ice and some water. But it nonetheless went surprisingly well. And then you have time to think a lot. Three weeks until elections and many interesting rallies, debates and campaign hits remain. I'm trying to get as much done as possible. To be on top and be able to perform well, you also need some time of your own between. At full energy, I am now looking forward to next week. (Finnish) Wonderful Sunday and probably the last skiing for this winter. The Finnish nature is so beautiful. Lets take care of nature's diversity!
A11	Rinne	Aivan loistava suoritus naisleijonilta! Finaalipaikka on upea juttu! 🍌🇫🇮	Ab+A7:D13solutely amazing achievement from the Finnish lions! A finale spot is a great thing! 🍌🇫🇮
A12	Rinne	Radio Nova pyysi kirjoittamaan kirjeen 18-vuotiaalle Antille. Minä kirjoitin. 😊 *** ---- Et vielä tiedä, että reilun viiden vuoden päästä istut oikeustieteellisessä tiedekunnassa opiskelemaan juristiksi. Tapaat siellä kaverin, joka opettaa sinulle opiskelutekniikkaa. Suosittelen kuuntelemaan häntä, sillä se auttaa sinua valmistumaan puolessatoista vuodessa. ----	Radio Nova asked me to write a letter to an 18 year old Antti. I wrote 😊 ***---- You don't know yet, but in about 5 years from now, you will sit in law school to study to become a lawyer. You will meet a guy there who will teach you studying techniques. I recommend you listen to him because that will help you to graduate in a year and a half. ---
A13	Terho	Tässä on Suomi100 -juhlallisuuksiin osallistunut klassinen sävellykseni.	Here is my classical composition that participated in the Finland 100 -celebration.
A14	Essayah	Nyt oli mieheni Roopen vuoro olla Ilta-Sanomien haastateltavana.	Now it was my husband Roope's turn to be interviewed by Ilta-Sanomat.
A15	Henriksson	Dessa underbara döttrar ser till att hålla sin mor på gott humör och "up to date" med allt mellan himmel och jord. Och jag för min del bidrar med att "veta en hel del". Hur kan du mamma, veta allt det där undrar de ibland. Men det är ju enkelt, jag har levt längre 😊. Viikko sitten vietin aikaa molempien tyttöjen kanssa. Aina yhtä hauskaa. Girlpower!	These wonderful daughters make sure to keep their mother in good spirits and "up to date" with everything between heaven and earth. And I for one contribute by "knowing a lot". How can you know all that stuff mom, they sometimes wonder. But it's simple, I've lived longer 😊 (Finnish) A week ago I spent some time with both girls. Always as much fun. Girlpower!

Code	Candidate	Original post	Translation
A16	Orpo	Lapsi kotona! Viikon aikaisin, mutta paras aamuherätys. 😊15v. tyttäreni on ollut viikon kouluvaihdossa Espanjassa ja kävin hakemassa hänet koululta. Onhan tämä hienoa. Tyttö sai viettää viikon toisen perheen luona Espanjassa ja he huolehtivat hänestä. Kävi koulussa, sai uusia ystäviä ja oppi kieltä. Tätä se eurooppalaisuus ja kansainvälisyys on käytännössä ja parhaimmillaan! 🇫🇮🇪🇺	Child at home! A week early, but the best morning wake up. 😊 My 15 year old daughter has been on a school exchange in Spain and I went to pick her up from the school. This is great. The girl got to spend a week with another family in Spain and they took care of her. She went to school, got new friends and learned the language. This is what being European and international is in practice and at its best! 🇫🇮🇪🇺
A17	Marin	Aamulehti tietää kertoa, että "Sanna Marin oli lauantaina pirteyden perikuva". Ja miksi en olisi ollut, sillä Pirkanmaan kiertäminen, ihmisten kohtaaminen ja heidän kanssaan keskustelu on ollut ihan parasta. Kaiken lisäksi saan nukkua joka yö kotona ja olla tyttäreni kanssa aamut ja illat, kun tavallisesti olen Helsingissä tai kierrän puolueen varapuheenjohtajana eri puolilla Suomea. Huomenna sitten jännitetään, miten vaaleissa käy. Toivotaan SDP:lle hyvää tulosta 🌹	Aamulehti says that "Sanna Marin was the epiphany of cheerfulness on Saturday." And why wouldn't I have been, because touring Pirkanmaa, meeting people and talking with them has been the best. In addition to all that, I get to sleep at home every night and be with my daughter mornings and evenings when normally I am in Helsinki or touring all around Finland as the vice party leader. Tomorrow we'll be excited for the election turnout. Lets hope for a good result for the Social Democratic Party 🌹
A18	Mykkänen	Vaalityöt tehty. Kotona ollaan 😊 Hyvä olo! Kaikki mitä miehestä irtoaa on laitettu peliin viimeisinä viikkoina. Meidän kampanja ja ihmisten uskoton itsensä likoon laittaminen oli enemmän kuin uskalsin odottaa. Vaaliteisteistä olen tyytyväinen, ne meni juuri kuten tavoittelin. Tämän kuvan myötä iso kiitos ja halaus teille kaikille. Ehdokkaat, kotijoukot, läheiset, äänestäjät 💙 Taistellaan hyvän Suomen ja ihan jokaisen suomalaisen puolesta! Ollaan vastuullisia. Vihaa ja vastakkainasettelua vastaan. Toivotaan, että huomenna pääsemme näyttämään, että meitä on eniten!	Campaign work done. I am home 😊 Feeling good! We have gone all in during the last week. Our campaign and the amazing throwing yourself out there from people was more than I could have expected. I am satisfied for the debates, they went just like I aimed. With this picture, a big thank you and a hug to all of you. Candidates, home front, close ones, the voters 💙 Let's fight for a good Finland and for every single Finn! Let's be responsible. Against hatred and juxtaposition. Let's hope that tomorrow we get to show that we represent the most!
A19	Marin	Tulen tapaamaan sinua ensi viikolla eri puolille Pirkanmaata. Toivottavasti näemme 🌹	I will come to meet you next week in different parts of Pirkanmaa. I hope that we meet 🌹

Code	Candidate	Original post	Translation
A20	Zyskowicz	Huomenna vaalipäivä, mutta tänään painetaan vielä täysillä! BZ tavattavissa klo 12 Larun kevätmarkkinoilla ja iltapäivällä kierrämme Helsingin keskustassa! #BZ2019	Tomorrow is the election day, but today we are still going fullsteam! BZ is available at 12 in the spring fair of Laru and in the afternoon we are touring in Helsinki city center! #BZ2019
A21	Mykkänen	Eilisaamu #myyrmäki (kampanjan coolein jalkautuminen sään puolesta...), tänään aloitettiin 0715 #karjaa ! Kevätaurinko paistaa! Nyt #lohja , sitten #vihti , #Hyvinkää , #kirkkonummi #kauniainen . Jaksaa jaksaa!	Yesterday morning #myyrmäki (the coolest taking to the street of the campaign in terms of weather...), today we started at 0715 #karjaa ! The spring sun is shining! Now #lohja, then #vihti, #Hyvinkää, #kirkkonummi #kauniainen . Going strong!
A22	Orpo	Eilen tuli taas kierrettyä Turun seutua oikein urakalla! Kun olen kotona pyrin aloittamaan päivän lenkillä Pessin kanssa. Niin myös tällä kertaa. Sen jälkeen päivä jatkui Auria Biopankissa, jossa tutustuin lääketieteen tutkimuksen uusimpiin käytäntöihin. Matka jatkui aurinkoiseen Naantaliin, jossa Kokoomuksen ehdokkaat vetivät kahvilan täyteen! Tämän jälkeen kuulijana ja puhujana Centrum Balticumin itämeriseminaarissa, josta tv-haastattelun kautta eduskuntatutkimuskeskuksen tilaisuuden luennoitsijaksi vanhaan tenttitaliini. Taisi muuten olla sama sali jossa aikoinaan tein oman pääsykokeeni Turun Yliopistoon! 💎 Sieltä vielä Maskuun tapaamaan Eläkeliiton jäseniä ja lopuksi omien tukijoukkojen kanssa kahvitteluhetki Turussa! Ja tottakai päivään mahtui myös turkulainen lounas 🍷 Matkassa mukana oli myös kuvausporukka, jonka materiaalia sopii innolla odottaa! 😊	Yesterday we were touring the Turku region with heavy labor! When I am at home, I aim to start my day with a jog with Pessi. I also did that this time. After that, the day continued at the Auria biobank where I got to know the newest practices of medicine research. The trip continued to sunny Naantali, where the National Coalition Party candidates filled the cafe! After this I visited the Centrum Balticum Baltic Sea Seminar as a guest and speaker, from there for a tv interview to lecture in my old exam hall for the parliamentary research center event. It was probably the same hall where I performed my entrance exam for the University of Turku. 💎 From there to Masku to meet members of the Pension union, and finally a coffee moment with my own support group in Turku. And of course there was a Turku lunch fitted into my day 🍷 There was also a photo group along the journey for which I am excited to see the material! 😊
A23	Sipilä	Ennakoäänestys on alkanut. Nyt on mahdollisuus äänestää sen puolesta, että vastuullinen ja koko Suomea kehittävä politiikka jatkuu Suomessa. Keskustan ehdokkaat ympäri Suomen ovat valmiina tekemään Suomen arvoisia tekoja 🍀	Preliminary voting has begun. Now it is possible to vote for the continuation of responsible and developing politics for all of Finland. The Center Party candidates around Finland are ready to commit deeds worthy of Finland. 🍀

Code	Candidate	Original post	Translation
A24	Häkkinen	Vastuuta on kannettava kaikista sukupolvista – myös tulevista. Äänestä Anttia, tykkää kuvasta ja jaa jos olet samaa mieltä. www.anttihakkanen.fi	We need to carry responsibility for all generations - also the future ones. Vote for Antti, like the picture and share if you agree. Www.anttihakkanen.fi
A25	Tavio	Ole rohkea suomalainen. Äänestä.	Be a brave Finn. Vote.
A26	Haavisto	Monet ovat kysyneet, miten voi parhaiten tukea kampanjaa? Vaalityö on kallista, vihreillä ei ole takanaan suuria rahoittajia. Pienikin rahallinen apu auttaa. Kymppillä saa 500 esitettä, viidelläkymppillä radioaikaa, satasella osan lehtimainoskuluista. Tule mukaan tukemaan kampanjaa!	Many people have asked, how to best support the campaign? Campaign work is expensive, the Green Party have no large donors behind them. Even a small financial aid helps. Ten euros will provide 500 brochures, fifty euros some radio time, a hundred part of the magazine ad costs. Come and support the campaign!
A27	Peltokangas	Tässä halukkaille valmis kannatuskansikuva... tukitiimini ja minä kiitämme vaalituestanne... kaikki tuki on askel eteenpäin! Matkaa on vielä.. Kiitos!	Here is a ready profile picture support frame for those who want it... The support team and I thank you for your support.. All support is a step forward! There is still way to go.. Thank you!
A28	Zyskowitz	Viimeinen kampanjapäivä käynnistyy Narinkkatorilta. Muistakaa huomenna Helsingissä kirjoittaa lippuun 222 ja tehdään Petteri Orposta Suomen seuraava pääministeri! #BZ2019 #kokoomus	The last campaign day is starting from Narinkkatori. Tomorrow remember to write 222 in the ballot and lets make Petteri Orpo the next prime minister! #BZ2019 #NationalCoalitionParty
A29	Häkkinen	Eduskunnassa oli tiistaina vaalikauden viimeinen istunto. Neljään vuoteen mahtuu paljon. Työtä suomalaisten hyväksi. Vastuut ovat kasvaneet. Kiitän äänestäjiä, edustajia, ministereitä ja muita yhteistyöstä. Kotijoukoille suuri kiitos tuesta. Olen ehdolla eduskuntaan myös tulevalle vaalikaudelle.	On Tuesday it was the last session in the parliament of the parliamentary season in the parliament. A lot has been going on over the past four years. Work for the Finnish people. Responsibilities have grown. I thank the voters, the parliamentary representatives, the ministers and everyone else for their co-operation. A big thanks to home for their support. I am also running for parliament for next season.

Code	Candidate	Original post	Translation
A30	Peltokangas	<p>Puheenjohtajamme Jussi Halla-aho ON, vaalitentti toisensa jälkeen rauhällisin, järkevin ja käytökseltään fiksuin puheenjohtaja. Kaikki muut ovat toinen toistaan enemmän päälle mylviviä, paniikissa olevia huutajia, ilman mitään selkeää linjaa. Kaikki muut haluavat Suomen täyteen halpatyövoimaa ja turvallisuusuhkia.</p> <p>Perussuomalaisena on helppoa olla ja hengittää sivistyneessä, aidossa kansallismielisessä seurassa. Suomi tarvitsee rauhallista, järkähtämätöntä ja isänmaallista kansallismielistä politiikkaa. Lähde mukaan! Äänestä Suomi takaisin! 🇫🇮</p>	<p>Our party leader Jussi Halla-aho IS, from one debate after another the most calm, reasonable and smart behaving party leader. Everyone else one debate after another is shouting more and more, panic yellers, with no clear direction. Everyone else wants to fill Finland with cheap labor and security threats. As a Finn Party member it is easy to be and breathe in a civilized, genuine patriotic company. Finland needs calm, firm and patriotic nationalistic politics. Join! Vote Finland back! 🇫🇮</p>
A31	Marin	<p>Huomenna on SDP:n puoluepäivä. Olen keskustelemassa Ylen Aamutv:ssä klo 8.10 alkaen. Puheenjohtaja Antti Rinne on tentattavana klo 21.00. Meillä taitaa olla sama suunta 🇫🇮</p>	<p>Tomorrow is the party day for the Social Democratic Party. I am talking on the Yle morning show starting at 8.10. The Party leader Antti Rinne is going being questioned at 21.00. We might just have the same direction 🇫🇮</p>
A32	Andersson	<p>Vasemmistoliitto on luotettavin valinta ihmiselle, joka haluaa pysäyttää Suomen eriarvoistumisen ja varmistaa, että ilmastonmuutokseen löydetään ratkaisut. Toiseksi viimeinen puheenjohtajatentti on käynnissä juuri nyt! Kannusta Liä twitterissä tunnisteilla #SiksiVasemmisto ja #Vaalit2019 Voit katsoa tenttiä suorana lähetyksenä täältä: https://www.mtv.fi/uutiset</p>	<p>The Left Party is the most trustworthy choice for a person, who wants to stop the growing social inequality and make sure of finding solutions for climate change. The penultimate party leader debate is going on right now! Support Li on Twitter with a hashtag #thatswhyleftparty and #election2019 You can watch the debate as a live broadcast from here https://www.mtv.fi/uutiset</p>
A33	Terho	<p>Mukana Reserviläinen-lehdessä. Uskottava isänmaan puolustus on turvallisen yhteiskunnan tae.</p>	<p>Covered in the Reserviläinen magazine. A credible defense of the homeland is the guarantee of a secure society.</p>
A34	Terho	<p>En hyväksy yhteiskuntaa, jossa maahanmuuttajilla ainoastaan sosiaalitoimisto on suomalaisten kanssa yhteinen. Lisää blogissa: http://sampoterho.fi/?p=4199</p>	<p>I do not approve of a society where only the social welfare office is common to immigrants and Finns. More on the blog: http://sampoterho.fi/?p=4199</p>

Code	Candidate	Original post	Translation
A35	Henriksson	Började dagen strax efter kl 05 i morse. Skulle vara vid MTV3 redan 06.30. Därefter har det rullat på. Utfrågning också hos Iltalehti. Trevlig caféträff i Hagalund tillsammans med många av våra jättefina nyländska kandidater. Nu dags att avrunda för denna dag. I morgon blir det västra Nyland. Vilkas päivä. Kaksi TV-tenttiä. Ehdin myös käydä eduskunnassa. Talo oli aika tyhjä ja hiljainen. Sitten Espooseen tapaamaan äänestäjiä. Meillä valtavan päteviä, kivoja ja innokkaita ehdokkaita Uudellamaalla.	Started the day right after 5 in the morning. Should be at MTV3 already by 6.30. From there, we have been on the move. An interview with Iltalehti. Nice coffee meeting in Hagalund together with many of our great Uusimaa candidates. Now its time to unwind from today. Tomorrow its Western Uusimaa. (switch to Finnish). Busy day. Two TV debates. I also had time to visit the parliament. The house was pretty empty and quiet. Then to Espoo to meet the voters. We have enormously qualified, nice and excited candidates in Uusimaa.

Appendix 3. Example comments B1-B61 (continues)

Code	Candidate	Original Comment	Translation
B1	Tavio	Moi Ville! Miten onko auto verotukseen tulossa helpotusta tämän ilmasto vouhotuksen vallitessa vai päin vastoin ja entä polttoaine verotus?	Hi Ville! Will there be a new tax break for car taxation in the middle of this environmental fuss, or is it going to be the other way, and how about fuel taxation?
B2	Pelto-kangas	Politiikka on joukkuepeliä, tiiminrakentamista ja enemmistön päätöksentekoa. Yksin mikään puolue ei pysty asioita muuttamaan tai päättä, vaikka tahtoa löytyisi enemmän kuin Daavidilla Goljatin kaatamisessa. Siispä: ketä Mauri ottaisit hallitukseen Perussuomalaisten kanssa ja miksi? Tsemppiä loppumetreille vaalikentille! 🍀	Politics is a team sport, team building and majority decision making. Single parties cannot change or decide things alone, even if they have more will than David against Goliath. So Mauri: who would you pick to govern with The Finns party and why? Good luck for the last meters of the campaign! 🍀
B3	Lepomäki	Elina Lepomäki - ketä samanhenkistä Helsingin vaalipiirissä kannattaisi äänestää jotta linjasi saisi enemmän tukijoita eduskuntaan?	Elina Lepomäki - Who in the Helsinki district should I vote for to get more supporters of your line of thinking into the parliament?
B4	Haavisto	Miksi ne Carunakaupat tehtiin?	Why was the Caruna sale done?
B5	Sipilä	Miten tuon ministeriauton käyttö vaalikiertueella?	How about using the ministerial car during the campaign tour?

Code	Candidate	Original Comment	Translation
B6	Essayah	Hei, näin vaalien alla haluaisin tiedustella, mikä on Sinun ja edustamasi puolueen kanta nykyiseen Tartuntatautilain 48 pykälään? Kyseinen pykälä on aiheuttanut sotealan henkilöstön keskuudessa ongelmia, sillä työnantajat tulkitsevat tuota pykälää toisaalta hyvin eriarvoisesti mutta toisaalta myös kovin tiukasti. Tuon pykälän myötä alalla työskenteleviltä vaaditaan kausi-influenssarokote jolloin menetämme oikeuden päättää kehoomme kohdistuvista toimenpiteistä. Pykälä on myös vastoin perustuslakia ja mm ihmisoikeuksia. minäpäätänitse - yhteisön seinältä voit käydä lukemassa tosielämän kertomuksia siitä, miten työnantajat mm siirtävät ammattitaitoisia hoitajia kiinteistöhoitotyöhön, koska ovat kieltäytyneet rokotteesta. Järkevää aikana, jolloin muutoinkin on hoitajista pulaa 😞 #minäpäätänitse	Hello, in the run-up to the election, I would like to inquire what is the position of You and the party you represent on the current Section 48 of the Infectious Diseases Act? This section has caused problems among the staff in the field, because employers interpret this section very unequally on one hand, but also very rigorously on the other. With that section, people working in the sector will be required to have a seasonal flu vaccine in which case we lose the right to decide on measures against our bodies. This article is also against the Constitution and human rights, and I decide - on the wall of the community you can go to read real-life accounts of how employers are transferring skilled carers to real estate care because they have refused the vaccine. Making sense at a time when there is otherwise a shortage of carers 😞 #minäpäätänitse
B7	Sipilä	Maamme asiat ovat kunnossa kun sinä Juha,Urpilainen,Stubb,Katainen,Lipponen ja Sale olette teloituskomppanjan edessä tuomittuna maanpetoksesta.	The affairs of our country will be fine when you Juha Urpilainen, Stubb, Katainen and Sale are placed in front of an execution squad and condemned for treason.
B8	Sipilä	toivottavasti puhjohtaja kausi päättyy tuolta takin kääntäjä valehtelija ei uskos et uskovainen jätkä on.	I hope the head of the party leader term will end for this turncoat liar one wouldn't believe he is religious.
B9	Haavisto	Pekka, sun ihan turha kalastella noilla puheilla ääniä. Olet osoittanut olevasi äärimmäisen kallis suomalaisille ! Siis rahallisesti. Eikö yhtään hävetä ?	Pekka, it is completely futile to fish for votes with those speeches. You have proved that you are extremely expensive to Finns moneywise! Aren't you ashamed at all?
B10	Rinne	Naisleijonien finaali paikka on upea juttu. Kai siitä nyt Anttikin saa kaiken vaalikiireen keskellä ilman v...uilua iloita. <3	The women lions reaching the finals is a great thing. One would think also that Antti can rejoice in it in the midst of the campaign rush, without people giving him shit. <3

Code	Candidate	Original Comment	Translation
B11	Rinne	Perussuomalaisten kannatukselle tekisi hyvää, jos vielä esiintyisit ainakin kertaalleen televisiossa. Luulisitko Antti, että saisit tämän järjestymään?	The popularity of the Finns party would increase if you would appear one more time to be seen on television. Do you think you could make this happen Antti?
B12	Terho	Sampo ja muut loikkarit: Onnittelut rannalle jäämisestä! Äänestin - valitettavasti- edellisissä eduskuntavaaleissa sinua. Nyt olen onneksi nähnyt millainen mies olet. Ja onneksi jäit rannalle. Nyt Sampo vaan työkkärin tätien luo pohtimaan aktiivimalliin sukeltamista. Saat Jari Lindströmin kanssa kokea kansamme syvien riven kohtalon.	Sampo and other defectors: Congratulations on being stranded. I unfortunately voted for you in the last election. Now I have seen what kind of a man you are. Luckily you didn't make it. Now you should head to the arms of the employment office ladies and think about a jobseeker activity scheme. You can feel the fate of the regular people with Jari Lindström.
B13	Henriksson	Sfp står inte upp för oss finlandssvenskar längre .så nej . [suomeksi: RKP ei edusta enää suomenruotsalaisia. Joten ei.	The Swedish party does not represent the Swedish speaking Finns anymore. So no.
B14	Orpo	Höpö.höpö,höpö!	Nonsense nonsense nonsense!
B15	Peltokangas	YLE on Suomen CNN. Ja nythän siellä ameriikoissa on valtamedia ongelmissa kun toitottivat kaks vuotta russia collusion, joka nyt todistettu valeuutiseksi. YLE on samalla tavalla Suomen eliitin käskyläinen.	Yle is the CNN of Finland. And now in America, the mainstream media is in trouble as they were shouting Russian collusion for two years which has now been proven to be fake news. Yle is similarly the lackey of Finland's elite.
B16	Henriksson	Varför fick Li Andersson så mycket taltid.... dåliga debattledare, svagt. Men Anna- Maja bra när taltur gavs [suomeksi] Miksi Li Andersson sai niin paljon puheaikaa.... Huonot vaaliväittelyt vetäjät, heikkoa. Mutta Anna-Maja hyvä kun sai puheenvuoron	Why did Li Andersson get so much talking time.... bad debate leaders, weak. But Anna-Maja was good when her talking turn was given
B17	Zyskowicz	Noniin tääkin pelle tuli mun fb kutsumatta 🗨️	Ugh another clown on my FB feed without an invitation 🗨️
B18	Andersson	En ole kiinnostunut sivusta, en ole kiinnostunut Li Anderssonista eli Facebook on taas valeuutisen isä ! Varmistukseksi : EN PIDÄ LI ANDERSSONISTA !!! 😞😞😞	I am not interested in this page. I am not interested in Li Andersson. Once again Facebook is the father of fake news. I DONT LIKE LI ANDERSSON!!! 😞😞😞
B19	Häkkänen	Ja mun uutisvirtaan tän hymypojan vaalimainos 😞😞 Ei saatana!!!! Ällöttävää...	An advert for this smiley boy in my feed 😞😞 Fuck no!! Disgusting...

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B20	Haavisto	Laitetaanpa uudelleen tämä linkki kun edellinen jo poistettiin. Katsotaan montako tuntia kestää ennen kuin vihreä avoin keskustelukulttuuri jälleen tämän sensuroi.	I will post this link again, since the other one was deleted. Lets see how many hours until the green open communication culture censures this one.
B21	Rinne	Ei taida Antti Rinne näitä kommentteja edes lukea..	I don't think Antti Rinne even reads these comments...
B22	Essayah	Komia pari. 😊	Handsome couple. 😊
B23	Orpo	Yhtä söpöjä, koira ja isäntä ❤️	Equally cute, dog and master ❤️
B24	Sipilä	Innostava insinööri; jatkakoon Suomen kunnostusta! Vaikka miehellä parta harmaantuu ja rypyt lisääntyvät tässä pestissä, sisulla siitä selviää 😊	Inspiring engineer. He should keep on fixing Finland. Beard gets grey and wrinkles add on, but with grit you can manage 😊
B25	Essayah	Kisakunto osuu hyvin kohdilleen, kuin Stuttgartin kisoissa konsanaan! Maaliin asti! 🏆🏆	The competition mode hit the spot, like in Stuttgart back in the day. On to the finish line and beyond! 🏆🏆
B26	Harkimo	Lässytyksen mestari.	Master of bullshit.
B27	Harkimo	Wau Näitä lisää! Suoraa rehtiä puhetta ilman bullshittiä. Kiitos Hjallis'- esimerkillistä<3	Wow more of these! Straight honest talk without any bullshit. Thank you Hjallis - exemplary <3
B28	Sipilä	Juha Sipilä on osoittanut myös henkilökohtaisessa elämässään miten menestyään. Hän on osannut hoitaa myös Suomen asioita. Hän on empaattinen, mutta ei hölmö. Raha ei näet kasva puissa, vaan jonkun täytyy ne tienata. Tienattuja rahoja voi jakaa kansalle tulonsiirtoina. Velkarahalla tulonsiirtojen teko, jota edelliset hallitukset tekivät, saa hetken lapset varmaan iloitsemaan, mutta kun Sipilän hallitus joutui maksamaan näitä velkoja takaisin, kansa valittaa empaattisuuden puutteesta - kun jaettavaa ei riitä. X X, syytä edellisiä hallituksia niistä remonteista, joita Sipilän hallitus joutui tekemään Suomen pelastamiseksi velkakierteestä.	Juha Sipilä has shown how to achieve success also in his personal life. He has also been able to run things for Finland. He is empathetic, but not a fool. Money doesn't grow on trees, someone must earn it. Earned money can be divided to people with wealth transfer. Using debt to make wealth transfer, which previous governments did, will make children rejoice for a moment. But when the bill comes due, then people complain about the lack of empathy, when there is just nothing to share. X X, blame previous governments for those shake outs that the Sipilä government had to do in order to save Finland from the cycle of debt.
B29	Huhtasaari	🇫🇮Suomineito🇫🇮Voimakas & vahva kuva	🇫🇮Finnish Maiden🇫🇮Powerful & Strong image
B30	Zyskovicz	Voi Ben... Oot kyllä charmanttisin mies politiikassa! ❤️	Oh Ben... You are the most charming man in politics! ❤️

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B31	Lindtman	Vaihdapa lookiasi nuorekkaampaan suuntaan, kun olet nuori. SDP:ssä on setiä tarpeeksi. Ihan kaikella hyvällä 🌸😞😞	Change your look to a more young direction as you are young. SDP has enough old men. With all good intentions 🌸😞😞
B32	Haavisto	Et taida tajuta että jos ottaisit maahanmuuttajia kotiisi niin luultavasti kuolisit ekan viikon sisällä, koska olet homo. Silti suosittelet sitä kansalaisille Pekka Haavisto	You don't seem to realize that if you would take immigrants into your home, you would probably die within the first week because you are gay. But still you recommend it to people Pekka Haavisto.
B33	Rinne	Oletko varma että kunto riittää pääministerin vastuuksiin. Nyt olisi vielä kasvoja menettämättä mahdollisuus hypätä sivuun	Are you sure you are healthy enough for prime minister responsibilities. There is still a chance to step down without losing face
B34	Marin	Emman äiti ministeriksi nuori osaava	Emma's mom to ministry - young and capable
B35	Tavio	Kiitos Ville Tavio, että olet kansalaisten asialla. 🙌😄🌸 Olisin eilen tullut oikein kädestä pitäen kiittämään hienosta tähänastisesta työstäsi eduskunnassa, mutta olit koko ajan varattu.	Thank you Ville Tavio for having the citizens interests at heart. 🙌😄🌸 I would have come to shake your hand as a thank you for all the great work in the parliamentary session yesterday, but you were occupied at all times.
B36	Zyskowitz	Hienoin puoli Benissä on se, että hän on vaalikampanjoinin jälkeenkin tavoitettavissa toreilla ja erilaisissa tapahtumissa, vastaa kansalaisten kysymyksiin ja kuuntelee heidän näkemyksiä asioista. Kaikki, mitä hän tekee, hän tekee ne kunnolla. 👍😊	The best part about Ben is that even after campaigning he is reachable in the marketplace and different gatherings, answers questions from the citizens, and listens to their views about matters. Everything he does he does well 👍😊
B37	Rinne	Hei! Olen uusi äänestäjänne ja toivon henkilökohtaisia viestejanne siitä, miksi ja kannattiko minun äänestää teitä...	Hi! I am a new voter for you and I hope for personal messages on whether it was worth voting for you...
B38	Sipilä	Olihan hurja Pirkanmaan kierros! Kiitokset vierailusta. Täytyy sanoa että aiemmin kun on vain median välityksellä saanut sinusta käsityksen oli hienoa nähdä kuinka aito ja maanläheinen mies olet oikeastikin. Jaksoit kohdata jokaisen ihmisen erikseen, se oli hienoa.	A wild Pirkanmaa round! Thank you for coming. I have to say that earlier when I had only had the media-made impression, it was great to see how genuine and down to earth you are for real. You had the energy to meet all of us in person, that was great.

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B39	Marin	Vaikka en sinua tällä kertaa äänestäkään, toivon mitä parhaita menestystä. Olet humaani ja upea poliitikko! Tanssinopettajana voin sanoa venyttelemisestä sen verran, etteivät ole siinäkään ääri liikkeitä välttämättömiä lihashuollon näkökulmasta.	Even if I didn't vote for you this time, I wish you all the best. You are a humane and fine politician! As a dance teacher I can say something about flexibility. Even in that extreme movements are not required as a point of physical wellbeing.
B40	Pelto-kangas	Mitä sanoi Rinne kun katseli Sipilän ja Orpon kanssa kannatuslukuja ? "Meillä taitaa olla sama suunta"	What did Rinne say when he looked at the polling numbers with Sipilä and Orpo. "It seems we have the same direction"
B41	Mykkänen	U have my support 🙏	U have my support 🙏
B42	Essayah	Jos olisi pelkästään henkilövaalit, äänestäisin Sari Essayahaa, mutta kun ei ole!	If this would be only a persona election I would vote for Sari Essayah, but it isn't!
B43	Lindtman	Sama suunta täällä Jyväskylässäkin <3	Same direction also here in Jyväskylä <3
B44	Marin	Jos Marin olisi Rinteen sijaan johdossa, niin ei olisi kahta sanaa vaalien voittajasta. Nyt menee jännäksi 😬.	If Marin would be running the party instead of Rinne, there wouldn't be any question of the winner in the elections, now it will be a tight race 😬.
B45	Lepomäki	Elämäni ensimmäisen kerran äänestin Kokoomusta 4 vuotta sitten. Äänestin Elinaa, koska hänen asiallinen argumentaationsa ja selkeät visionsa vakuuttivat. Nyt olen entistä vakuuttunempi ja ääneni menee Elinalle. Kokoomuksesta en ole kauhean vakuuttunut, mutta eipä mikään muukaan puolue ole täydellisen hyvä ja ihana.	For the first time in my life I voted for the National Coalition party 4 years ago. I voted for Elina, because her matter-of-fact argumentation and clear vision convinced me. Now I am even more convinced, and my vote goes to Elina. I am not that convinced by the National Coalition party, but none of the parties are perfectly good and wonderful.
B46	Harkimo	On se Kurko 👍	Such a king he is 👍
B47	Häkkänen	Fiksu,älykäs ja miellyttäväkäytöksinen Mies.Kelpaa Kokoomuksen keulakuvaksi.Tulevaa Pääministeri ja Presidenttiainesta.	Smart, intelligent and pleasant acting Man. Fit for the head of the National Coalition party. Future prime minister and president potential.
B48	Pelto-kangas	Sunnuntaina JUSSI 🇫🇮	On Sunday JUSSI 🇫🇮

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B49	Haavisto	Kävin juuri kuuntelemissa Liike Nytin Hjallis Harkimoa ja Karoliina Kähköstä. En ole koskaan aiemmin ollut tyytyväisempi äänestykseeni, tein oikean päätöksen. Etujoukoissa on upeaa olla murtamassa suomalaista korruptio demokratiaa. [linkki poistettu]	I was just listening to Hjallis Harkimo and Karoliina Kähkönen from Movement Now. I have never before been more satisfied with my vote, and I made the right decision. It is great to be in the front group breaking the Finnish corruption democracy. [link removed]
B50	Rinne	Hyvä Antti. Iso vaalivoitto tulee. Että jytäkhtää!!	Great Antti. Big election victory coming up. So that it will jytäkhtää [jytäkhtää is a metaphor used in reference to "a big bomb"]!!
B51	Pelto-kangas	Äänestetty	voted
B52	Andersson	Mites on sosisiko tuohon ilmastonsuojeluun myös lisäksi eläintensuojelu? https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/4096	How about it, would animal protection also go there in addition to protection of the environment? [link to the initiative]
B53	Haavisto	Hyvää pohdintaa Haavistolta, mutta uskottavuutta nakertaa Caruna-ratkaisu.	Good thinking from Haavisto, but his credibility is eroded with the Caruna deal.
B54	Henriksson	Waude, hyvin pärjätty hiillostuksessa. Arvostan paljon!!	Wow you have done well in the grilling. I respect that a lot!!
B55	Andersson	Vautsi, sä olet super pakkaus. Super kaunis, järkevä, hyvä ulosanti, inhimillisyyys, järkevät ja selkeät mielipiteet. Olet Paras!	Wow you are a super package. Super beautiful, sensible, good verbal skills, humane, sensible and clear opinions. You are the best!
B56	Sipilä	Ei voi muuta kuin sanoa, että osaaminen näkyy ja kuuluu: asiasisältöjen hallinta, esiintymisen miellyttävyys, ilmeet, eleet, tarvittaessa napakkuus, huumori, hyvä artikulointi, sukupolvien tarina, kunnioitus. Nimim. Ensi kerran koskaan keskusta koska Sipilä	I cannot say anything else than abilities can be heard and seen: knowledge about matters, the pleasantness of public performance, facial expressions, gestures, sharpness when needed, humor, articulation, narrative of the generation, respect. Signed: first time ever Center Party voter because of Sipilä
B57	Pelto-kangas	Ainoastaan Sari Essayah hallitsee Halla-ahon lisäksi normaalin ihmisen käytöstavat. Muut käyttäytyvät kuin lauma aivottomia idiootteja. Taivas varjele että mua hävettää noiden muiden lapsellinen käytös.	Only Sari Essayah and Halla-aho have common courtesy skills like a normal person. Others act like a herd of brainless idiots. Heaven forbid how I am ashamed of the childish behavior of those others.

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B58	Sipilä	Oli kyllä hienoa kuunnella asiantuntevaa ja kokonaisvaltaista puhetta. Toimittajatkin joutuivat hieman koville. Päätäväisyys ja suoraselkäisyys ovat hienoja ominaisuuksia. Kiitos.	It was great to listen to a knowledgeable and wholesome speech. Even the reporters were a bit taken back. Determination and integrity are great qualities. Thank you.
B59	Marin	Vaikka vihreä olenkin, on todettava että tässä tentissä loisti Sanna Marin! Olet ihan mielettömän skarppi ja ajantasalla. Toivottavasti puolueesi älyää tehdä susta pj.n	Even though I am a green party voter, I must say that in this debate Sanna Marin shone. You are unbelievably sharp and on point. I hope your party is wise enough to make you the party leader.
B60	Rinne	Hei täällä lapin demari!! olet pilannut omalla egollasi ja sekavilla puhetaidoilla vaalivoiton demareille!!!! näin tulee käymään ja se vituttaa meitä lapin demareita! eli me täällä lapissa halutaan sinut pois puheenjohtajan paikalta ja halutaan nuorempi puheenjohtaja!!esim..Sanna Marin olisi yksi vaihtoehto ja myös Antti Lindman olisi myös hyvä ja urpilainenkin on hyvä vaihtoehto!Houom..Antti jos Sanna Marin olisi vetänyt tämän kevään vaalikampailun olisi SDP Varmasti suurin puolue 14.4 2019!! Antti luovu peheenjohtajan paikalta ja anna ruorille ja rohkeille vetää SDP uusille raiteille!! ja tämä on totista viestiä sinulle täältä Lapin vaalikentiltä!!	Hi, here is a Lapland democrat. You have ruined the election for the democrats with your ego and confusing speech skills!! This will happen and it pisses us Lapland democrats off a lot! We here in Lapland want you away from the role of the head of the party, we want a younger leader. For example Sanna Marin, Antti Lindman or Urpilainen would be better. Antti, if Sanna Marin would have lead this election campaign, the Social Democratic Party would definitely have been the biggest party on 14.4.2019. Antti, you should relinquish the leadership position and give a chance to the younger and braver ones to lead the Social Democratic Party to new ventures. This is the true message to you from the Lapland region!
B61	Andersson	Minua kammoksuttaa kaikenlainen henkilöpalvonta! Persut puhuvat mestarista 😞 Halla-aho ja Huhtasaari vievät aikuisia miehiä ja naisia kuin pässiä narussa.	I am horrified by all kinds of persona worship! The Finns Party supporters talk about the master 😞 Halla-aho and Huhtasaari are leading grown men and women like sheep.