

To be or not to be Europe: identity construction in the 2019 EU elections campaign on Twitter

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Whereas initially the use of Twitter by politicians was thought to open avenues for more direct interaction with citizens, research on different elections has shown that this does not seem to be the case. Rather, self-presentation seems to be the main aim of the use of Twitter by (candidate) Members of the European Parliament (henceforth MEP).

In this study, we will analyse the use of Twitter during the 2019 European electoral campaign by current MEPs who are running to renew their position, and compare these results with those obtained concerning the 2014 campaign (author & author 2015), in order to shed light on the evolution of the use of Twitter in this context.

Our corpus consists of the tweets and Twitter biographies of current MEPs from Belgium, France, Spain, UK, and we will adopt a corpus-informed linguistics discourse analysis combined with methods from communication sciences. We will focus on how and to which extent MEPs construct the following aspects of their identity. (i) We look into the construction of a geographical identity, namely whether the MEP privileges references to the European, national or regional level. (ii) We focus on how the Twitter users construct their political affiliation, namely whether they construct their affiliation as that to a national/regional party, a European political group, an ideology ... (iii) Finally, we will discuss how these MEPs present their work as an MEP, e.g. do they comment upon specific positions held in the European Parliament, do they comment on their realisations as an MEP.

Ultimately, our aim is then to account for the extent to which MEPs construct their identity in the campaign as that of a Member of European Parliament oriented towards the European level, or rather adopts different strategies for identity construction.

References

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