Research on the Usage of Social Media
in Taiwan Region's Political Campaigns and Elections

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Abstract: Since the 1990s, many new research issues have been added to traditional political science under the influence of the Internet. As new social media on the Internet develops, what kind of role does social media play during the elections of all levels in the Taiwan region, especially the election of leaders? Qualitative research based on in-depth interviews may answer this question. Social media plays a positive role in campaigns and elections of the Taiwan region: firstly, the parties in the Taiwan region place high emphasis on social media campaigns in elections; secondly, social media campaigns during elections mainly focus on daily life information and pay less attention to political publicity; thirdly, the parties attach great importance to social media used by Taiwan youth, because social media is the main channel for youth to follow election information. Finally, social media has a high forward rate, attracts the attention of voters, especially young voters, to election information and further generates voting behavior.

Keywords: Social media, political communication, elections in the Taiwan region, campaigning in elections, in-depth interview

1. Introduction

In 1983, the American futurist Alvin Toffler forecasted that humanity would enter into an Internet political era. Toffler (1984, p. 9) said: "Information and power are hand-in-hand and are closely related to the politics. As we go deeply into the information political era, this relation will become deeper and deeper." The emergence of the Internet has, and will, change political behavior. This phenomenon is a cause for concern and discussion amongst researchers in the fields of communication and politics. (Bimber, 2000; Delli Carpini, 2000, pp. 341-349; Shah, Kwak & Holbert, 2001, pp. 141-162; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 2003, pp. 129-153; Mossberger, Tolbert & McNeal, 2008, p. 85).

As for political elections, the influence which the Internet exerts onto political elections mainly reflects the candidates' campaign (Just et al., 1997, pp. 93-98; Bimber, 2003, pp. 201-220; Horrigan, Garrett & Resnick, 2004; Carlson & Standberg, 2008, pp. 159-174). Specifically in the Taiwan region, ever since the appearance of the Internet, it has played an important role in the process of Taiwan political elections (Zhang, 2002; Wang, 2006; Liu, 2006; Hong, 2009; Wang, 2010). As the Internet develops deeply in the vertical direction, the use of social media adds a new communication capacity for the campaigns of political elections in the Taiwan region. Social media conducts social communication behavior on the Internet presented by the new media terminals, such as PC (personal computer), mobile phone and tablet computer,

etc. In the Taiwan region, commonly used social media platforms include Facebook, smart phones, APP software and Plurk. Plurk (www.plurk.com) is a newly-emerging Internet tool which offers "time flow" similar to Twitter. APP (application) refers to a third-part application program for smartphones. The most famous APP stores include App Store of iPhone; Google Play Store of Google, Ovi Store of Nokia, BlackBerry App World of BlackBerry, Marketplace of Microsoft, etc.

This research mainly observes the use of the above mentioned social media platforms in elections at different levels within the Taiwan region and their corresponding positive effects, if any. In the process of campaigns in Taiwan region's elections, what kind of influence has social media exerted? This paper takes the Taiwan presidential election of 2012 and local civil servant elections in 2010 as cases to explore the kind of role social media has played in the campaign process. Through the conducted research, the authors find that social media has become an integral media platform during political campaigns. When transmitting election information to voters, both the Kuomintang (hereinafter abbreviated as KMT) and the Democratic Progressive Party (hereinafter abbreviated as DPP), with considerable influence and power over the political ecology of Taiwan and over small parties with less influence such as the People First Party (hereinafter abbreviated as PFP), used social media to attract more voters, especially young voters, to follow political elections at all levels.

2. Research Method

Through a qualitative research method, the research explored how election media staff at all levels, and in participating parties in the Taiwan region, use social media to publicize parties and candidates. This allowed for further understanding into the positive influence that social media has on political elections within the Taiwan region.

The reason for using qualitative research is first and foremost because social media is a newly emerging form of media. What are its uses during Taiwan region's presidential campaigns? Since minority media staff and participating party candidates are involved in the campaigns, it is not suitable to carry out large-scale questionnaires. Meanwhile, they are the key to running campaigns to the voters during elections at all levels. It can be said that the election information received by voters is reviewed, approved, and sent by this social media staff. Secondly, in questionnaire surveys involved in political elections within Taiwan region, such as the Taiwan Election and Democratization Survey carried out by the Election Research Center of National Chengchi University every four years, the respondents are common voters, and the survey is used to collect their opinions about political elections. However, the participating party candidates and media staff do not have their attitudes reflected in such public survey data.

To conduct qualitative research, the authors stayed in Taiwan region for one month, from June 20 to July 20 in 2012. During this time period, the authors carried out in-depth interviews with ten individuals who have occupied campaign staff positions of all parties, competitive candidates, and work staff during the 2012 Taiwan Presidential Election and the 2010 "Election of Local Civil Servants". These ten respondents were mainly comprised of competitive candidates from the KMT and DPP candidates' work and media staff, as well as the media staff of the PFP. They all mentioned the high attention and use of social media. Since the other two

parties, the New Party (NP) and the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU), had considerably narrow support, the authors could not interview them within the limited time frame. Although we were not able to interview and understand how small parties such as the NP or TSU used social media campaigns in elections, the insight gained from the media staff of PFP could be applied to understand the conditions of small parties.

The majority of the interviews were conducted face to face with interviewees, in local cafés and offices. At the very beginning, the authors designed an open problem framework for interacting with respondents. For instance, the authors could ask questions such as: "In the course of the last election, did you or your party use the Internet and social media." If the respondent was involved in the election of "central" level, the question would then refer to the 2012 Taiwan Presidential Election; if the respondent was involved in election of local civil servants, it would refer to the 2010 "Election of Local Civil Servants". Many respondents could not think of social media immediately. Therefore, the authors included discussion about the broader topic of the Internet: "Why did you decide to use social media campaigns in the election," "What kind of content and information were listed on social media," "Why did you or your party pay close attention to social media," and "Why could social media attract attention to you or your party."

Focusing on the open problem framework, the authors communicated with the respondents and their answers provided the authors with organic and original data. Some answers surprised the authors because they were beyond the authors' expectations when proposing and designing the problems. These answers constituted original data for the authors' analysis and served as the basis from which to draw conclusions. Frisch (1990) proposed that the interviewer take more responsibility for the creation of works, while the respondent should be the positive participant; it is the respondent's story that constitutes the biggest value of the interview. Therefore, the most valuable elements of this research are the original interview records provided by the respondents. In the case of the consent of all respondents, the authors completed written and audio records, and further filed them into written data for follow-up documentary analysis. Since the campaign staff, candidates, and their work staff who participated in Taiwan region election campaigns are in the minority, and to preserve the requested anonymity of the respondents, the following data analysis is anonymous.

The following Table 1 lists the demographic characteristics of the ten respondents.

Table 1. The Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Respondents	Sex	Age	Party	Education Level	Positions
A	Female	40-50	DPP	Undergraduate	Assistant of "Legislator"
B	Male	40-50	DPP	Undergraduate	Company employee
C	Male	40-50	DPP	Undergraduate	"Legislator"
D	Male	30-40	DPP	Ph.D. Candidate	Assistant of "Legislator"
E	Male	30-40	DPP	Undergraduate	Councilman
F	Male	30-40	DPP	Undergraduate	Executive committee of the party member
G	Male	40-50	DPP	Undergraduate	Media staff
H	Male	50-60	KMT	Master	"Legislator"
I	Male	30-40	KMT	Ph.D. Candidate	Media staff
J	Male	40-50	PFP	Master	Media staff

Age here is expressed by "age group" because the respondent's age is considered a matter of individual privacy in the Taiwan region.

Due to limited space, the author did not include the research narrative of Respondent J; if there is interest in what Respondent J discussed, please contact the authors of this research paper.

The general designation "Legislator" is given to ensure the anonymity of the respondents.

3. Analysis

Through these interviews, we know that all parties participating in elections within the Taiwan region pay close attention to social media. In the election of the "central" level of the Taiwan region in 2012 and the election of local civil servants in 2010, all parties used social media for their political campaigns. During the campaigns and elections, the KMT (on behalf of the blue camp) and DPP (on behalf of the green camp) occupied the main stream of information while smaller parties stayed at the edge. This notwithstanding, all parties pay close attention to social media.

3.1. The Participating Parties Focus on Social Media Campaigns in Taiwan Region Elections

The DPP is the earliest party to use the Internet in its political campaigns, particularly social media. For instance, there were Internet campaign work staff of DPP for Chen Shui-bian's run for Taipei Mayor in 1998.

Respondent A, assistant of "Legislator", participated in the election as a member of the DPP, and mentioned in the interview that the DPP paid great attention to the Internet and social media. Respondent A expressed that the Internet was the most important aspect of the campaigns. The DPP has full-time positions tasked with constantly updating information at all times on each social media platform, including Facebook. She said that:

> In the consideration of general election, now, the Internet is the most important part. We indeed pay extreme attention. We set full-time persons in charge of the operation of each website and update at almost any time."[1]

Respondent B is a member of the DPP and works in a research company. When asked, "why does the DPP attach importance to social media?", Respondent B expressed that the DPP was a party with a good use of the media. When mentioning the Internet and new media, he took Facebook generally used in Taiwan regionas an example of the importance of social media in the DDP's campaigns. The use of Facebook, for example, may allow voters to consider that the DPP is creative. It is the potential media advantage from social media that encourages the DPP to put topics on Facebook and increases the DPP's degree of exposure to voters. Respondent B considered that the DPP did not have an advantage in traditional media, but had a great advantage in social media. He said:

> DPP is a media party. It would like to do creation, set the agenda and create exposure.

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[1] Respondent A, Interview with the authors, audio recording, July 3, 2012.

For example, you just mentioned new media; you should know Facebook is very popular in Taiwan, for we take advantage of new media. But we have a disadvantage in traditional media.[2]

The authors asked not only one respondent questions regarding the use of media by the DPP, especially the DPP's advantage in Internet and social media. One underlying reason was discovered from speaking with Respondent G. Respondent G has been responsible for the Internet and media publicity for the competitive elections of important persons within the DPP. When asked about using the Internet and social media campaigns in elections, he commented that the DPP was earlier than other parties in using newly emerging media platforms such as the Internet and social media. The DPP was the first party to use Internet campaigning. From Respondent G's observations, we can consider that, in order to contact populations of voters that could not be reached before, the DPP used Internet campaigns. Newspapers, radio broadcasts, and television have fixed audience groups. Compared to these platforms, the Internet may help to contact voters that traditional media cannot, by virtue of the broadness of the broadcast. He said that:

I am always responsible for the Internet campaigns of the DPP. We were the first to start. Since the basic organization of the DPP is inferior to that of the KMT, the Internet may help the DPP to contact many people who cannot be contacted as usual.[3]

After comparing the different basic organizations of the DPP and KMT, he added that:

Elections are plural mobilizations and should tell the voters the ideas and propositions of the candidates and the party at different levels and various channels, such as the Internet, Television, and Newspapers. The Internet was an important link in the process of plural mobilization.[4]

During the election campaigns, various media platforms have transmitted the ideas and opinions of political figures and parties. Over the course of campaigns and elections, the Internet has become a very important and integral part of the media. For this purpose, Respondent G also gave the example that some candidates had great performance in the Internet publicity and won the most votes in the election region since the elections started. He said:

Some party candidates who were trying hard in the Internet operating won the most votes in history of their election region, including Yingwen Cai's Internet secretary Sammy and Senator Yanxue Lai of Nantou County, both of whom have received great success.[5]

It is thus clear that the DPP used the Internet for competitive elections the earliest in

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2 Respondent B, Interview with the authors, audio recording, July 5, 2012.
3 Respondent G, Interview with the authors, audio recording, July 6, 2012.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.

order to transfer competitive information to basic organizations, and to contact voter groups that traditional media could not. In the course of the DPP's media publicity, the Internet is an indispensable media platform after newspapers, radio broadcasts, and television. What is more, the candidates who have tried publicity through operating the Internet obtained great success in their election region. It is an example that the Internet has a positive effect on election campaigns. As the status of the new emergence and development of the Internet and social media continues to be carried forward, the previous media features of the Internet also provides media advantage for the DPP regarding the aspects of setting topics and increasing exposure rates.

In March 2009, the KMT created the Internet Department to manage related staff of the Communist Youth League of the KMT. When asked, "how does the KMT use social media campaigns in the election?", Respondent I, a member of Communist Youth League and in charge of the media campaigns of the KMT, provided substantial input. During preparations for the 2012 Presidential Election, the KMT released micro films of idol drama style on social media and studied Obama's campaigns, releasing Flag Girl (國旗女孩) and Love Visa (愛情簽證), etc. Attracted by micro films and short publicity films, more and more fans started paying attention to Ma Ying-jeou's campaigns in elections. Meanwhile, the media staff of the KMT released special app software to interact with fans and followers. Although the fans that paid attention to him are not all of the voters participating in the election, the more fans Ma accrues, the greater the amount of voters that are attracted and the overall degree of attention from voters. Respondent I mentioned that:

> During the period of the presidential election in 2012, we posted many things on the Internet. We introduced the micro movie whose style was much like idol dramas. We learned from the experiences of Obama and introduced 'Flag Girl' (國旗女孩), 'Love Visa' (愛情簽證), and so on. The click-through rate was quite high. We also gave suggestions to Mr. Ma and told him how to deal with Facebook. He has many fans and the number of his fans is maybe more than 1,000,000. There are also many Facebook fans in 'Taiwan Cheer and Praise' (台灣加油讚). And App software, such as 'Good Morning Punch Machine' (早安打卡機), 'Bear Love Taiwan Big Band' (熊愛台灣大樂隊), 'Taiwan Peace Blessing' (台灣平安福) and so on.

Taiwan Cheer and Praise (台灣加油讚) is the name of Mr. Ma's re-election Campaign for office in 2012 in the Taiwan Region. It is the partial tone of "Taiwan's gas station" in Mandarin. To be specific, the "Praise (讚)" is partially homophonous with "station (站)" in Mandarin, which makes the slogan humorous and memorable.

To sum up, the DPP that used the Internet is the earliest and the latecomer KMT have used social media to different extents during their campaigns in the 2012 election. They carried out competitive publicity for the party and the party's candidates through social media. Although traditional media still played their original publicity functions, social media can supplement the publicity limit of traditional media due to broadcasting features and has unique advantages in aspects of contacting voters, sending information, issuing topics and publicizing party image. This pushes all competitive parties in the Taiwan region to focus on campaigns and elections based on social media.

3.2. The Information of Social Media Campaigns Covers Daily Life Information Rather than Political Propaganda

Before the advent of social media, mass media would deliver and evaluate daily political events through a variety of information to affect individual political behavior (Dawson & Prewitt, 1969). That is to say, mass media campaigns have a strong political propaganda element, mainly including the guiding principles and propositions of all political parties or campaign ideas of candidates in different political parties. Social media campaigns instead focus on daily life information rather than any political propaganda. The aim is to be close to ordinary voters and to allow the voters to have an impression of candidates of the parties through this context that seems unrelated to the election.

Respondent G talked about a typical case of the DPP's campaigns that seemed unrelated to the campaign itself. He talked about an Internet micro movie launched on Mother's Day by the DPP, which was not propaganda for political correctness but rather about the salient problem of unemployment of graduates in Taiwan. This Internet micro movie was rapidly reprinted in social media. While people were concerned about the micro film, they became concerned about the DPP and its propositions. This is the difference between social media platform and traditional media propaganda. He said:

> On Mother's Day, we introduced a movie on the Internet and gained great praise. It said that a mother was worried that her son couldn't find a job after graduation, so she tried very hard to learn Internet resources to help her son find a job. This story was designed to address the unemployment problem that undergraduates faced after they graduated. Jobs with 22,000 New Taiwan Dollar [NTD] salaries were hard to find. At least 60,000 people saw the movie after it was introduced, which didn't include reprint, friendly links, or forwarding on Facebook and so on. This kind of daily life, similar to the impact of personal feelings, can move people's hearts more than the political correctness or party propaganda film, and has a stronger spread capacity.[6]

Respondent F was an executive committee member of the DPP. During the local elections in Taiwan, he seldom referred to political issues when using social media for propaganda. From the following conversation with Respondent F, we can understand that the general propaganda way for elections is to use a propaganda message to widely publicize the candidate's campaign ideas in his local election. Besides this traditional way, this candidate also made a micro movie of a beautiful young girl and put it on YouTube. At the same time, his other micro movies were posted on his Facebook. YouTube and Facebook are the popular social media platforms in the Taiwan region and many people use them to access information. At the end of the conversation, he stressed that he would not emphasize political information on social media platforms. He said:

> For the first election, I invited a beautiful young girl to make a micro movie for

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[6] Respondent G, Interview with the authors, audio recording, July 6, 2012.

propaganda and put it on YouTube to increase publicity. Later, I ran for the city legislator. I used creative advertising, which was good in our electoral district Internet! Almost everyone has a Facebook, but I tried to behave relatively younger for there were more senior voters in this area. Generally, candidates use a propaganda car for campaigns. In order to enhance my campaign, I made a racing car into a cartoon fish and ran in the street. When people saw the fish, they accordingly knew that was me. I put the propaganda micro movie on the Internet. They [supporters] browsed my Facebook and then they knew that was me. They were not much interested in politics.[7]

Meanwhile, he further talked about the content he put on Facebook. While fans on Facebook page of Respondent F made comments on a snack he had mentioned, they also remembered this candidate's name. He said:

For example, when I competed for the election, I felt it was boring to post political information to social media every day. I thought the political information which can be talked about was not substantial. Every day, I went to eat a snack and then posted the shop where I ate at to recommend its good food. Facebook would respond to this naturally, saying I also went there. Posting and sharing it would attract many people to participate and comment. Then everyone would evaluate that this shop was the best and so on.[8]

Respondent E was a councilman of the DPP. He shared similar experiences with Respondent F in the local election, so he put forward similar observations. During the process of running for city councilman, Respondent E also used an approach similar to Respondent F's. Many fans responded to him and interacted with him. Meanwhile, fans remembered him and had an impression of him. He said:

For example, at about 9 o'clock at night, I ate noodles in the sidewalk snack booth. I ordered a bowl of noodles, a dish of vegetables and two kelps. I took a photo and posted it. I did not write anything and just wrote that I had supper. Then many people responded to me.[9]

For the use of Facebook, it is not only used for DPP propaganda, but also used by KMT candidates. Respondent H was a "Legislator" of the KMT. He mentioned the content he put on his Facebook. The interaction of this life information has made fans remember him as a candidate. He said:

I live in the suburban district of the city. I will take photos of the beautiful scenery here and put them on the Internet; I also posted my photo of riding bicycle. Once there was a bird flying into my house; I took a photo of it and put it on the Internet. There were

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[7] Respondent F, Interview with the authors, audio recording, July 5, 2012.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Respondent E, Interview with the authors, audio recording, July 5, 2012.

many people leaving their messages and comments.[10]

From the above, we can know that both candidates of the DPP and KMT use social media platforms in the process of election campaigns and the information issued by them on social media platforms is no longer about tough political information or campaign information, but with information about candidates' daily lives. The information makes their fans have a strong sense of relatability and belonging with the candidates, resulting in more interactions between the candidates and fans. In such interactions, social media fans remember the candidate' name.

3.3. The Parties in the Taiwan Region Place Emphasis on the Social Media Mainly Used by Youth

The parties in the Taiwan region compete via using social media to conduct election campaigns because they want to attract the attention of young people. At present, social media focuses on the use of young people, so campaign information in the process of all levels of political elections in the Taiwan region can not be separated from social media.

As a media staff member of the DPP, Respondent G mentioned that they had to watch television in a fixed time and place. The news published in newspapers was yesterday's news. If they wanted to get real-time news and information, they mainly used the Internet. In Taiwan Region, numerous people surfed the Internet, and the main users were the middle-class and young people. Additionally, the Internet is the most important platform for interpersonal interaction. Here Respondent G did not clearly put forward social media, but rather that its function as a platform for interpersonal interaction is the main characteristic of social media. Respondent G said:

> There are about 15 million people who use the Internet. The working people could not watch television during the working day. Newspapers always publish yesterday's news. If they would like to obtain the further news, they would rely on the Internet. The Internet is the main channel in which the middle class and the young obtain the information and news, and also is an important platform for interpersonal interaction.[11]

Further talking about the underlying reasons of the DPP using the Internet and social media, Respondent G commented that the DPP paid close attention to the Internet because young people used it. They conducted campaigns on Plurk and Facebook, which are the main social media platforms used in Taiwan region. In 2012 Presidential campaign, they also specifically made campaign content accessible on smart phone platforms. They focused on Internet campaigns to attract the attention of the youth. Of course, they did this in order to obtain their votes. Young people, especially first vote families, were the new voting population for whom all parties competed in the presidential election in 2012. The so-called "First Vote Family" refers to the voters who are the first ones to have the right to vote for elections in the Taiwan

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[10] Respondent H, Interview with the authors, audio recording, July 13, 2012.
[11] Respondent G, Interview with the authors, audio recording, July 6, 2012.

region. According to regulations, voters must be residents over the age of 20. According to the estimation of statistical data from the "Department of Census Administration of Ministry of the Interior", in the election of 2012, the total number of first vote families was approximately 1.2 million. If calculated at 80% of previous average vote rate, it is estimated that nearly one million people of first vote families will go to the polls.

Another reason why the DPP is particularly concerned about the Internet and social media is that they think the KMT has always occupied the traditional media resources, such as newspapers or television. They think the KMT can buy commercial advertisements one year in advance for which the DPP cannot compete. Therefore, they chose the Internet and social media with its low costs. Respondent G said:

> Since 1998, we began to pay attention to the Internet. The young people like to use it. We used Plurk, Facebook and so on. In the last election (the presidential election in 2012), we specifically publicized with mobile phones. The DPP always has had a disadvantage in media resources. Newspapers and television are always occupied by the KMT. They have enough money so that they can buy commercial breaks one year ahead. Under this circumstance, we chose to use the Internet. In addition, we did Internet campaigns in order to attract the attention of the young and obtain the votes of the men and women who spend most of their time indoors [12]

The men and women who spend most of their time indoors refer to those who always stay at home and play games and surf the Internet. The primary characteristic is that they prefer to stay at home and be involved in fewer social activities.

When interviewed, Respondent A also mentioned that the DPP paid much attention to the Internet and social media to attract the attention of the youth. Respondent A mentioned that the Internet and social media platforms were very helpful for campaigning in elections because young people in Taiwan region liked to use this way to familiarize themselves with the candidates, including their current "Legislators". Candidates of the DPP paid much attention to the operation of the Internet and social media. She said:

> For now, it is very helpful for the operation of offices, because young people like to use this way to know the candidates or current "Legislators", so we try hard to operate on the Internet.[13]

Respondent I worked on the media publication of the KMT. The reason why the KMT pays attention to the Internet and social media resources is the same as that of the DPP. Respondent I mentioned that the KMT attached importance to the Internet in order to pay attention to the young people, as the party wanted to attract their attention to the KMT so as to obtain their votes. The generations of youth after the 1980s took charge of the propaganda on the Internet and social media platforms because they were the main people who used the Internet. Media

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[12] Respondent G, Interview with the authors, audio recording, July 6, 2012.
[13] Respondent A, Interview with the authors, audio recording, July 3, 2012.

staff of the KMT would use Facebook, app software, online communities, and so on to conduct campaigns targeted towards young people because they knew that young people paid attention to these social media resources. He said:

> The KMT attaches importance to the Internet because the KMT pays attention to the young people and wants to attract young people. Young people after the 1980s take charge of this because we live on the Internet. When we conduct campaigns, we can use Facebook, app stores, and online Communities. All of these are the preferred resources of young people.[14]

In addition to the media staff of the KMT, when Respondent H, as a KMT "Legislator", mentioned the reason why he used social media, he mentioned that he used social media in order to communicate with voters, especially the young netizens. He said he had no idea how to communicate with these netizens without the Internet. From the point of Respondent H, campaigns could not be separated from the use of the Internet and social media platforms. He said:

> I use Facebook in order to communicate with voters, especially the netizens. They are accustomed to living on the Internet. Without the Internet, they have no idea to communicate with others![15]

From the above, whether the DPP or KMT, when conducting campaigns, parties use social media to attract the attention of young people. The KMT even allowed young people make their own campaign information and put them on social media. The reason why they pay particular attention to young people is that young people, including first voter families, have weak political positions and thus can be mobilized. Therefore, the young people naturally become the main objects for whom all parties fight.

3.4. Social Media Has a High Forwarding Rate, Which Can Make Netizens Pay Attention to Campaigns

If campaign information obtains a high forwarding rate, it makes users pay attention to the information and people related to the campaign, and may even encourage users to vote for them.

Respondent A mentioned this characteristic of high forwarding rates of social media and believed that it could make the issue more effective. Because of the concern and discussion of fans, staff could analyze the issue from different perspectives and they could seek more identification. This is an effective way of using social media to publicize "Legislators" and their parties. She said:

> We thought the popularity of the Internet made the concerned issue more effective. As for us, when the "Legislator" made a speech, he or she proposed a 'Rejuvenating'

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[14] Respondent I, Interview with the authors, audio recording, July 19, 2012.
[15] Respondent H, Interview with the authors, audio recording, July 13, 2012.

idea. That night, after we sent out the information, there were 2,800 people joining the Facebook page of this committee member, attending the discussion boards and then transmitting the issue. After the second day, there were more than 5,000 people. Therefore, we found that if we used the online community, we could master the domination of the issue. In this way, we would judge in which standpoint we could look for more identity. Accordingly, the online community would be easy to build. We regarded it as the master of issues and the orientation of online groups.[16]

We use the designation "Legislator" here because we do not use the name of the committee member to protect the privacy of the respondent.

Respondent C was a DPP "Legislator". When mentioning the effectiveness of social media, he thought it was not convenient that Facebook had a limit of people joining a page. From his conversation, we could understand that many people paid attention to his Facebook. He said:

In fact, all these are effective, FB [Facebook] also has limits. For example, there are 1,000 people on my FB. And the limitation is no more than 5,000. I myself have two FBs. It is troublesome. The one you commonly use, someone would like to join your FB. Sorry, it is more than 5,000 people now. So you have to go to another FB and it will affect you.

Respondent E observed his own election and admitted that the high forwarding rate of social media could bring voters to pay attention to campaigns in political elections. Though they were not his voters, this individual's online links would promote the spread of his election information, which will expand his attention, and then add new votes. He said:

From my Facebook and interactions on the Internet, I found that there were many young people agreeing with me. Before I ran for the election, my Facebook was almost full and there were more than 4,000 people. But not all were my voters. But there was a link with interpersonal Internet. In fact, when we succeeded, 9,000 votes was enough. If you could add 300-500 voters from your Facebook. That was really great.[17]

Respondent D also admitted that social media would let netizens pay great attention to campaigns in political elections, and even vote for the candidates he supported. If the member candidate is remembered by young voters because of operating social media, he will get the vote of the young voter. This is to attract the attention of netizens to the candidates in the process of campaigning by social media so as to influence the voting behavior. He proposed his idea and said:

You see, [in a local election] the mayor and the representative were elected together. As for the mayor, I have a specific idea to choose a candidate but the representative is

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[16] Respondent A, Interview with the authors, audio recording, July 3, 2012.
[17] Respondent E, Interview with the authors, audio recording, July 5, 2012.

different. If I know him, I will choose him. As a young person, he would be elected as familiar one. Therefore, it is the advantage of running these social media. Under that circumstance, I would vote and I definitely vote for the person I knew before.[18]

Not only that, as an Internet media staff of the DPP, when Respondent G analyzed the forwarding characteristics of social media, he further analyzed the evolution of the Internet and concluded that the high forwarding feature of social media makes campaign information get transmitted quickly so as to attract the attention of the voters and even lead to the new voting behavior. He said:

At the end of 1990, people only published their ideas on fixed websites. After blogs appeared, people expressed their opinions on their own blogs. In the era of Web 2.0, everyone became a little media. The important blogs became the opinion leaders on the Internet. The number of browse rates and its influence is the same as traditional media. Nowadays, Internet tools have been pushed forward, including Plurk, Facebook, search engines, and so on. When every individual become the media center, the messages he sent have been read by friends around. Some people even have hundreds or thousands of Facebook friends. The messages have been delivered quickly. So social media itself is a small magazine.[19]

In conclusion, the interpersonal interaction of social media brings high forwarding rates. If campaign information is put on social media, it will attract the attention of lots of fans so as to bring about the forwarding of campaign information. Although these fans are not the final voters, they will have an impression of the candidates at all levels of elections in the Taiwan region because of their attention to campaign information, so that they may vote for these candidates. This is the positive impact of social media on the process of political campaigning.

4. Conclusion and Discussion

Through the 40-day observation of political elections in the Taiwan region and interviews of ten related staff of "central" and local elections of different parties in Taiwan region, we found that the parties that participated in elections in the Taiwan region were fully aware that in Web 2.0 era of the Internet, without social media, such as Facebook, campaigning in political elections could not go smoothly. Therefore, the parties compete on social media during their campaigns. In order to attract the attention of voters, especially young voters, the context of political publicity covers information involved around daily life rather than political propaganda. In this way, social media has high forwarding rates and makes the voters pay attention to elections and increase votes for candidates. Specifically, the following observations are found in this paper:

Firstly, social media has a positive effect on campaigns in the Taiwan region elections. Social media plays an important role in the aspects of delivery, choice, receipt and so on in the

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[18] Respondent D, Interview with the authors, audio recording, July 5, 2012.
[19] Respondent G, Interview with the authors, audio recording, July 6, 2012.

political publicity of information. This conclusion that social media has a positive effect on campaigns in the elections has been proved again in the "Nine Union" [20] elections, also called local elections of civil servants in the Taiwan region in 2014. Some scholars observed that social media had become the critical media platform of candidates' campaigns in political elections. Especially in the mayoral election of Taipei, Wen-Jong Juang analyzed that the influence of the Internet was one of the key elements that contributed to Wen-Je Ko's successful election. He published his articles on the Internet and his positive reports and publicity were far greater than his opponent. That was why his image was better (see also Lin et al., 2014). The research on the active role played by social media in the mayoral campaigns and elections of the Taipei mayorship needs to be supported by more data to verify the positive role of social media.

Secondly, it is better to attract young voters by using social media to publicize elections. The parties, especially the KMT and DPP, participating in elections of the Taiwan region pay great attention to the media habits of young voters when using social media. For example, in local elections, the micro movie of "Go Back Home to Vote" (返鄉投票) and "Mother's Day" (母親節短片) made by the DPP made them more successful in their political campaigns; in the "central" election, the micro movie of "Flag Girls" (國旗女孩) and "Love Visa" (愛情鑒證) of the KMT made their Internet campaigns catch up with and surpass the other parties. In order to attract the attention of young netizens and master the characteristics of social media, the context of social media that the "legislators" and councilors post covers more daily life information than political propaganda. Because the information is interesting, young netizens compete to forward it. Because of the very high forwarding rate, netizens pay more attention to campaigns in political elections and furthermore probably vote for the candidates.

Finally, the traditional media represented by television is still the most influential media in campaigns and elections. For now, while various newly emerging media may be prominent in campaigns and elections, they could not substitute for the traditional media which still have the preeminent position in campaigns and elections. The parties still treat traditional media, such as newspapers, and television, as the primary channels and approaches in campaigns and elections.

This research utilized qualitative research. Through in-depth interviews, the authors primarily discovered how the parties use social media campaigning in elections and what kind of positive effects social media has on the process of the political elections. We can say that the research presented in this paper not only discovers how staff use social media in the process of

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[20] The local elections of civil servants in Taiwan region in 2014, also called the "Nine Union" elections, were held in November, 2014. Six direct-controlled municipalities in the Taiwan region elected the new term's mayors and city councilors in direct-controlled municipalities and elected the new term's mayors and county magistrates, city and county councilors, village and town magistrates, village and town citizen representatives, village and *li* representatives, district Mayor of native mountain districts, and representatives of native mountain districts. What differentiates these elections from others is the combined election of mayors and city councilors in direct-controlled municipalities and mayors, county magistrates, city and county councilors to reduce election expenses and social costs. On November 29, 2014, the local elections of civil servants in Taiwan region, also called "Nine Union" elections, were held and 6 mayors of Direct-controlled municipalities, 16 mayors and county magistrates, 375 city councilors in Direct-controlled municipalities, 532 city and county councilors and 198 village and town magistrates were elected.

campaigns and elections, but also provides a valuable starting point for carrying out statistics-based surveys.

However, it remains to be studied whether this conclusion can be applied to campaigns and elections of other countries and regions or not. For example, to a large extent, in the process of elections, does social media encourage young voters to vote for the candidates and adopt new voting behaviors? Could social media promote a positive interactive mechanism between voters and party candidates in the process of elections? All these questions need to be answered with a large scale survey.

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