Article:

A Platform for Individualized Campaigning? Social Media and Parliamentary Candidates in the 2009 Norwegian Election Campaign

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A New Platform for Individualized Campaigning?
Social Media and Parliamentary Candidates in the Party-centered Norwegian Campaign

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It is often argued that new technology will increase centralization of political parties but Internet-based technologies, especially the social media, provide individual candidates with opportunities to run campaigns more independently of the central party. This article argues that the effect of new technology depends on the contextual characteristics of the campaign, most importantly the nomination process and the electoral system. It investigates the effect of online social media on individual candidate campaigning through a study of parliamentary candidates'use of social media in the 2009 Norwegian election campaign, a campaign environment with few incentives for candidates to undertake individualized campaigning, using the 2009 Norwegian Candidate Study. Findings reveal that online social media are much appreciated by candidates and are used to a great extent. The technological effect on individual campaigning appears small as candidates who consider social media important do not focus on their own candidacy to a greater extent than other candidates. However, candidates with an individualized candidate focus are more inclined to use Facebook and consider social media important for their campaign communication. Consequently, although social media in the short run are not likely to increase individualized campaigning as such, candidates with a candidate focus have been offered a new channel for selfpromotion.

Introduction

One possible consequence of the increasing use of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) is more individualized election campaigns. Internet technology, especially the new online social media and Social Networking Sites (SNS) like Facebook, provides individual candidates with new opportunities to run campaigns more independently of the central party (Zittel 2009).[1] However, the most common view is arguably that new technology will increase the centralization powers of the parties: the technology offers tools to better implement the central party campaign strategy and enables parties to communicate more directly with the campaign organization and voters (Farrell and Webb 2000; Norris 2000). To some extent the technological effect on individualized campaigning will depend on the contextual characteristics of the campaign (Zittel 2009; Karlsen 2010a). In the United States, the Internet and new online social media have received much attention when it comes to campaign organization. The US campaign is candidate-centered, hence the individual candidates build their own campaign organizations and the social media have proven useful in this respect. In Western European, party-centered systems, the candidates typically form part of the campaigning effort of the party organization, and candidates do not build their own personal organizations. Hence, the individual candidates' use of (and the usefulness of) social media and social networking sites, as well as any consequences in terms of individualized campaigning, are all open questions.

Research Questions

The aim of this article is to investigate the effect of online social media on candidate campaigning through a study of parliamentary candidates' use of social media in the 2009 Norwegian election campaign. Social media represent a relatively new medium, which arguably had its breakthrough in electoral politics in relation to Obama's campaign for the 2008 Democratic presidential nomination. Consequently, although there is much anecdotal evidence, there are still few scientific empirical studies on the extent of social media use in campaigning. Against this backdrop three questions are explored empirically in this article. As we know little of candidates' employment of social media, the first two questions investigate the use and motives for using social media in campaigns: to what extent are social media used and considered important in candidates' campaigning efforts? Second, what are the motivations for using social media in the campaign? The third research question investigates the relationship between social media and a candidate-centered campaign

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[1] Social media entails online media for social interaction and often refer to technology that allows user-generated content. Social Networking Sites are a specific type of social media that focuses on building online social networks based on shared interests or activities.

style: to what extent (and in what sense) do online social media increase individualized campaigning? The data consist of the 2009 Norwegian Candidate Study. The Norwegian campaign environment is party-centered and the campaign environment offers few incentives for an individualized campaign style. The parties are very much the center of attention, and candidates focus to a great extent on the party and not their own candidacy in their campaign communications (Karlsen and Skogerbø 2010). Hence, the effect of social media on individualized campaigning can be regarded as a most difficult case.

The results reveal that online social media are used to a great extent: more than 40 percent of the candidates employed Facebook in the campaign, with 73 percent of candidates between 26 and 35 years of age, and more than 50 percent of all the Labor candidates using Facebook. Still, on average candidates consider the platform less important than some traditional channels, most importantly the local newspapers. However, the candidates who use Facebook consider it important for their own campaigning. This article argues that this is an indication of the usefulness of SNS in campaigning, and points towards increasing use in future elections. SNS platforms appear to have qualities that are appreciated by candidates, and they consider the possibility to communicate directly with voters most essential aspect of the online social media. However, other aspects are considered to be important as well, and the findings highlight the multipurpose aspects of social media.

The Norwegian campaign environment offers few incentives for individual campaigning, and candidates who consider social media to be important do not focus on their own candidacy to a greater extent than other candidates. However, candidates with a candidate focus are more inclined to use Facebook and to consider social media important. Consequently, although social media in the short run are not likely to increase individualized campaigning as such, new SNS platforms might increase differences in campaign style among candidates in a political system. Candidates with a candidate focus have been offered a new channel for self-promotion.

Campaigns, Candidates and Social Media

Individualized campaigning refers to a situation where the candidate's constituency campaign is independent of the central party (Zittel and Gschwend 2008), both concerning vertical organization and strategy, and the communicative focus of the campaign (Karlsen and Skogerbø 2010). The vertical organization concerns the relationship between the central party and the individual candidates: do the candidates form part of the greater party campaign organization, or do they organize their own campaigns? The communicative focus of the campaign refers to whether the aim of the communication is to draw as much attention as possible to the party or to the candidate's own candidacy.

New communication technologies have arguably received most attention for their ability to increase the centralization powers of political parties (Norris 2000; Farrell and Webb 2000). In these studies the effect of communication technology is often understood as part of a general centralization process in political parties that is also essential in the cartel party thesis (Katz and Mair 1995). The technology undoubtedly offers tools to better implement the central party campaign strategy, and enables parties to communicate more directly with the campaign organizations and voters. However, as mentioned above, new ICTs don't only present centrifugal incentives; they also provide individual candidates with new opportunities to run campaigns more independently of the central party and offer them a new platform for self-presentation (Zittel 2009). However, technology and technological use are shaped by existing practices (Neuman 1991, 2001; Anstead and Chadwick 2008; Karlsen 2010a), and to some extent the effect of technology on individualized campaigning will depend on the contextual characteristics of the campaign environment. So what do we know about the vertical organization of campaigns and the relationship between the central party organization and the individual candidates running for election?

The vertical organization, the relationship between the national level and the local level, and between the party leadership and the individual candidates, differs between systems. Most importantly, Plasser (2002) distinguishes between a US style and a Western European style of campaigning. The US political parties reformed their nomination process in the late 1960s and introduced the primaries. The indirect result of this was an increasingly candidate-centered style of campaigning (Agranof 1974; Brox and Shaw 2006), with the campaign organization built by the individual candidate. Candidates hire a campaign manager and campaign staff, identify their own campaign message, do their own polling, and recruit and organize volunteers in the grass-roots campaigns. Campaigning in Western Europe is party-centered, as the party organization is the campaign organization. The individual candidate typically forms part of the party campaign organization— this centralizing effort of the party is highlighted as a characteristic of the Western European model (Plasser 2002, 83).

The US and the Western European styles of campaigning are ideal types. The US candidate-centered campaign is highly individualized. Campaigning in Western Europe is less individualized but differs between countries. The extent of the difference is of course an empirical question. In this regard some scholars emphasize the importance of the electoral system, and argue that proportional systems will increase party-centered campaigning while plurality systems will increase candidate-centered campaigning (Plasser 2002; Bowler and Farrell 1992, 8; Swanson and Mancini 1996, 17f). However, Plasser (2002) also argues that the empirical evidence points to party-centered campaigning in Western European systems with plurality systems, most importantly in Britain and France. In the British case the evidence appears to be somewhat mixed. Denver et al. (2003) claim that the central party has taken

an increasingly large role in planning and managing the constituency campaigns. On the other hand, in a study of the British Labour 1997 campaign, Whiteley and Seyd (2002) argue that variations in campaigning between the constituencies were produced by the candidates (and local branches) rather than by the targeting efforts of the central party. Nevertheless, these studies show that UK constituency campaigning is far removed from the individualized candidate-centered US campaign.

Two other factors might be more influential than the distinction between proportional and plurality electoral systems (Karlsen and Narud 2011). First, as we have seen, scholars point to the introduction of the primaries to explain the rise of the candidate-centered US campaign (Agranof 1974; Brox and Shaw 2006). Hence, candidate selection appears to be an essential factor in this respect. If the party controls the nomination, the candidate has to please the part of the party that controls nominations in order to secure re-nomination. Second, concerning electoral systems, there might be a greater incentive for candidates to focus on themselves in a proportional system, which opts for preference voting, than in a plurality system. In plurality systems the candidates do not have to run against another candidate from their own party. In a proportional system with preference voting, individual candidates not only have to make sure that the party receives enough votes, they also need enough "personal" votes to win a mandate at the expense of other party colleagues.

Based on the above discussion, individualized campaigning can be expected to differ between systems depending on the characteristics of the nomination process and the electoral system, and this is related to the strength of parties. Moreover, studies show that individualized campaigning differs between candidates in the same political system based on party affiliation and their placement on the list (Karlsen and Skogerbø 2010). These aspects are revisited in the discussion of the Norwegian case below, after a discussion of the use of social media in campaigning.

Social Media and Campaigning

The empirical evidence so far has shown that the inclusion of the Internet in parties' campaign strategies has not occurred at the expense of other campaign practices. The Internet can potentially offer everything that all earlier media have offered: text, sound, images, and interactivity (Croteau and Hoynes 2003, 296-7). However, this is also true for candidates' personal websites and blogs as well as for social networking sites (SNS). The special appeal of online social media and especially SNS is that they allow users to network with each other: users construct a public or semi-public profile, make a list of other users to share a connection with, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (boyd and Ellison 2007, 211). An SNS profile typically consists of three elements: a description of the individual, their friends list, and communication exchange between profile owners (e.g.

through the Facebook wall; Ancu and Cozma 2009, 567). These qualities can of course be taken advantage of by individual politicians as well as political organizations. Motivations for using SNS in campaigning are considered below.

In the US, the Internet has received most attention for the ability to help organize campaigns (Hindman 2005; Chadwick 2007). The Obama campaign used their social networking site, MyBarackObama (MyBO), as well as Facebook, to organize local volunteers. In addition to online discussions and communication, SNS were especially important for organizing offline activities like volunteer groups, meetings, phone calls, and canvassing efforts (Plouffe 2009; Harfoush 2009).[2] European parties have certainly been influenced by the US success in using social media and SNS. However, due to differences in culture and institutional settings, parties adapt the strategy to existing campaign practices (Karlsen 2010a).

In general we can distinguish between controlled and uncontrolled campaign communication channels. As shown in Figure 1, different media technologies offer different types of controlled and uncontrolled channels.

Figure 1. Typology of Mediated Campaign Communication Channels.

		Party Control	
		Uncontrolled	Controlled
Media Technology	Press	Independent newspapers	Party newspapers, pamphlets, newspaper ads
	Broadcast (Television/radio)	Television news, radio news, etc.	TV-spots/ads
	New Media (ICTs)	Online newspapers, social media (SNS, independent blogs etc.)	Parties' and candidates' websites and social media

Generally speaking, after the party press gradually vanished in the 1950s and 60s, parties and candidates had to rely on paid television spots or printed material to reach out to voters through controlled channels. With the introduction of the Internet, parties and candidates have once again been able to reach voters directly with their message without the distorting effect of journalists. The Internet has provided parties and candidates with new dynamic channels for reaching out to the electorate, firstly through party and candidate websites, and more recently through social media like blogs and SNS. However, political party use of the Internet has seemed to disappoint

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[2] However, according to Nielsen (2009) the use of Social Networking Sites in the primary campaign also encountered some severe problems.

scholars and other observers, as interactive elements have been used to a lesser extent (Gibson and Ward 2009).

In a party-centered campaign, social media offer new opportunities for the central party to organize the campaign, but it is also possible to organize local campaigning efforts through SNS platforms, which offer candidates a greater opportunity to focus on their own candidacy. Consequently, as regards control of the message, we should distinguish between the central party being in control (eg through the party website), and the individual candidates being in control of the message on their own social media profiles. Note that the nature of social media communication challenges the very concept of "message control", involving as it does not just top-down communication, but also network-based horizontal communication.

The dominant campaign communication perspective is arguably to reach out to as many voters as possible with the campaign message (Norris et al. 1999), and online social media can be viewed in a top-down manner as just another channel to reach potential voters with the campaign message. However, social media use by voters is still a marginal phenomenon: only 7 percent visited a candidate's social media profile in the 2009 Norwegian campaign.[3] Hence, the use of social media in campaigning might be considered a waste of time, because parties and candidates will reach too few to make a difference. However, this argument overlooks other important aspects of campaign communication.

One such aspect is direct communication with voters. Studies suggest that direct face-to-face contact is the most effective way to mobilize voters (Gerber et al. 2000). In addition, although mediated direct contact seems less effective, online social media offer new possibilities of direct contact with voters. However, the network characteristics of social media arguably give this communication a more detached—less private—feel. This underlines the fact that social media, and especially SNS, are really a new type of mediated communication. Most importantly, although both are mediated by the Internet, SNS differ considerably from the early personal websites in terms of creating networks as well as tapping into existing networks.

Another essential aspect of social media and campaigning involves audience characteristics. Voters who befriend politicians online are most likely interested in party politics and many are probably party activists. In this regard they can be considered to be opinion leaders: heavy media consumers who are likely to influence others (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955; Katz 1957). On the other hand, if the audience consists mainly of party activists, SNS campaigning could be seen as preaching to the converted (Norris 2003). However, for candidates in party-centered systems, preaching to the converted is most likely a worthwhile exercise: in order for candidates to secure or improve their position in the party it's important that they demonstrate active campaigning for the party. For top candidates it might be essential to secure re-nomination

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[3] Source: The Norwegian Election Study.

at the next election; for lower placed candidates with little hope of securing a mandate, it might be important in order to secure future local party positions.

Candidates might also find it worthwhile to use online social media to appear modern in the eyes of the electorate, and maybe more importantly, to political journalists. National campaigns gain a lot of coverage in the traditional media, and use of new technology is certain to receive some attention in newspapers and the television news. Consequently, innovative use of social media often provides candidates with valuable attention in the traditional media.

In summary, social media and SNS provide parties and candidates with new opportunities to organize the campaign, reach out to voters directly, reach out to as many voters as possible, communicate with opinion leaders, and communicate with, and appear visible to, party members. SNS can also be used to appear modern in the eyes of the electorate and political journalists, and to thereby obtain coverage in the traditional media. Consequently, we should expect candidates to embrace these new opportunities as a supplement to other means of communication in their campaigning efforts.

The Norwegian Campaign Environment

What can we expect from the Norwegian case, regarding candidates' use of social media and the consequences for individualized campaigning? The Norwegian political system is characterized by a parliamentary government, a stable multiparty system, and well-organized membership parties. Hallin and Mancini (2004) identify the Norwegian media system as a typical example of the Democratic Corporatist Model, a model characterized by the historical coexistence of commercial media and media tied to organized social and political groups, and by a relatively active but legally limited role of the state (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 11). However, in Norway the prominence of the market has increased in recent years and even the public broadcaster (NRK) has become more commercial and market-oriented (Østbye and Aalberg 2008).

Internet access and use are comparatively very high, and Facebook in particular is widely used. According to the European Social Survey,[4] more than 60 percent of the population accessed the Internet every day in 2008, which was the highest in Europe. According to TNS Gallup, in 2008 31 percent of the population was on Facebook at least once a week, while in 2010 the share had increased to 62 percent.[5] Consequently, based on Internet and social media use in the population, we would expect candidates to employ these tools to a great extent. However, social media and SNS are (and were in 2009) still relatively new and this makes a digital divide between candidates likely. Based on existing knowledge of digital inequalities we might expect

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[4] See http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/ for information about the ESS.
[5] http://www.tns-gallup.no/?did=9091935.

younger candidates to consider SNS more essential to their campaign than older candidates (van Dijk 2005). Moreover, a candidate's use of social media might be related to their party's Internet strategy and willingness to help candidates online (Karlsen 2009). In 2009 the Norwegian Labor Party was heavily influenced by Obama's online success, and developed comprehensive strategies to integrate the Internet and social media into their campaigning efforts (Karlsen 2011). Moreover, the larger and more resource-rich parties have an organization that is better equipped to help candidates online. On the other hand, social media represent a financially low cost platform, and smaller, less resource-rich, parties might encourage candidates to employ them. Such competing explanations might balance each other out, leaving few differences between parties (Karlsen 2009).

Although Internet penetration in the population is high, other characteristics might act as countervailing forces in regards to use the media technology in electoral politics. In Norway the political parties control the nomination process. The process is decentralized, as the nominations are made by representative conventions organized by the constituency branches of the party organization (the constituencies represent the 19 counties; Valen et al. 2002). Moreover, the electoral system is based on proportional representation and a list system; there is only a theoretical possibility of influencing the candidate order. Consequently, when the candidate is nominated, their election depends solely on the party vote. Based on these characteristics it is no surprise that campaigning in Norway is typically party-centered, centralized and nationwide, and that the candidates campaign as part of the greater party campaign organization (Karlsen and Skogerbø 2010). The campaign message is national in scope, and the strategy is worked out centrally and implemented locally. There are few incentives in this institutional setting for candidates to highlight their own candidacy, and personal candidate websites have not been widely used. However, as discussed above, the social media have qualities, especially the network aspect and the potential large audience, that might make candidates employ the new media.

As for the different motives for using social media, we would expect that candidates find the technology less helpful in organizing the campaign since candidates form part of the greater party campaign (Karlsen and Skogerbø 2010). We have little existing evidence to help us with expectations concerning the relative importance of the other goals: to reach out to as many voters as possible, direct communication with voters, be visible to others in the party, to appear modern, and to get coverage in the traditional media. This article therefore aims to explore the reasons candidates have for using social media in political campaigns.

Regarding the third research question, whether or not social media encourage more individualized campaigning, the party-centered nature of the Norwegian campaign environment already discussed might restrain the technological push towards individualization. Conversely, in a system that opts for individualized campaigning, ICTs and online social media might

increase the tendency towards individualized campaigning. However, although the Norwegian context offers few incentives for individualized campaigning, the communicative focus differs between candidates (Karlsen and Skogerbø 2010). Candidates placed higher on the lists are more inclined to focus on themselves than candidates placed lower on the lists. This effect of list placement in regards to the communicative focus is partly contingent on party affiliation: Labor Party candidates are particularly inclined to draw attention to the party, while Conservatives and Christian Democrats focus more on their own candidacy. Consequently, although the majority of candidates in a system might carry out their campaigning efforts within the larger campaign organization of the party, other candidates might still use new ICTs to increase their level of individualized campaigning. Candidates who are inclined to focus on themselves might recognize the potential of social media to promote themselves and use the social media to a greater extent than others. With this in mind we turn to the role of social media and SNS in the 2009 Norwegian election campaign.

Candidates and Social Media in the 2009 Norwegian Campaign

In this section the three research questions are studied empirically, with the analysis divided into three parts. The use and relative importance of social media and SNS is examined first. The relative importance of different reasons for employing social media and SNS in the campaign is examined next. The final part of the empirical analysis investigates whether, and how, the use of social media in party-centered campaigning leads to more individualized campaigning. The data consist of a survey of candidates running for election for any of the seven major parties in the 2009 parliamentary election.[6] The response rate was 52 percent, resulting in 1015 candidates (out of 1972) included in the study. All seven parties are in general equally represented among the responding candidates, and top candidates are represented equally with candidates placed lower on the lists. 55 percent are male, 8 percent are younger than 26, 11 percent are aged between 26 and 35, 36 percent are between 36 and 50, 39 percent are between 51 and 66, and 3 percent are over 66.[7] The mean placement on the list for the age groups ranges from 7.8 for the youngest group, and 8.1 for the candidates between 26 and 35.

Asking questions about social media and SNS in a survey entails a few minor problems, as a distinction between social media and SNS is not generally made in daily language.[8] Facebook, Twitter, etc., are constantly

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[6] The Norwegian Candidate Study constitutes the Norwegian part of the Comparative Candidate Survey project. Many of the central variables used in this study are, however, not included in the comparative common core. See http://www.comparativecandidates.org/

[7] We do not have information regarding the age and gender distribution of the set of all 1972 candidates running for election.

[8] See note 1.

referred to as social media. As we wanted to make sure that the candidates had SNS in mind when they were asked questions about online social media, we always included "like Facebook" in the question. Since the aim of this study is not to study differences between social media in general and SNS, this should not represent a problem.

Candidates' Use of Social Media in the Campaign

Internet use is widespread in Norway, and although we know that the parties have been online since the late 1990s, we know little about whether and how the individual candidates employ the new media technology. In the survey we asked the candidates whether they used the Internet in a number of different ways for campaigning purposes (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Candidate Internet Use (%).
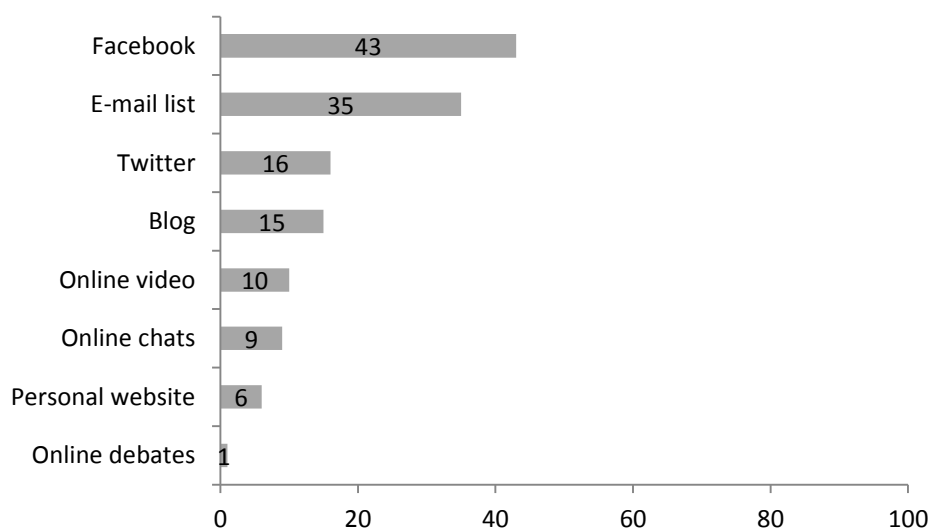
Question: "Independent of your party's webpage, did you as a candidate make use of the internet to reach voters in any of the following ways?" N=1011.

As shown in Figure 2, Facebook was used most widely by candidates for campaign purposes, with more than 40 percent of surveyed candidates using Facebook in their campaigning efforts. Twitter was used by substantially fewer but was nevertheless the third-most used Internet utility (16 percent; following from 35 percent use of email distribution lists). Blogs, online videos, participation in online debates, and personal websites (independent of the party website) were used considerably less than Facebook. Consequently, based on this initial analysis, it appears that candidates consider use of social media (particularly Facebook), to be a worthwhile new campaign practice.

As argued above, we expected differences between candidates in the use of the online SNS. The young tend to utilize new technology more than older cohorts who are typically less inclined to use the SNS sites in their everyday life, and consequently the threshold to use it in campaigns is probably greater. As Figure 3 shows, this expectation holds.

Figure 3. Candidate Use of Facebook and Twitter by Age Group (%).
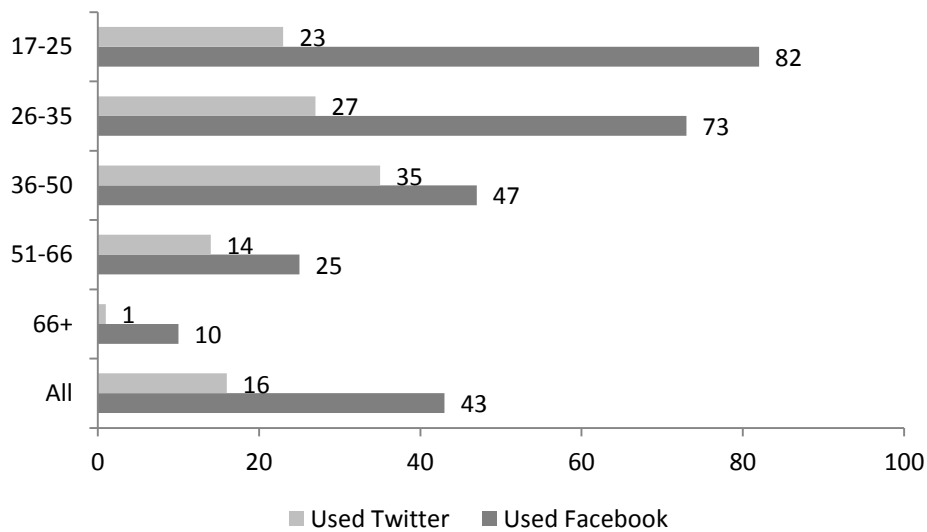
N=88 (aged 17-25); 11 (26-35); 361 (36-50); 367 (51-66); 28 (67+).

More than 80 percent of the candidates below the age of 25 used Facebook for campaigning purposes, and 73 percent of the candidates aged 26 to 35 used it. The share is substantially less for the candidates aged 36 to 50, and only a quarter of the candidates aged 51 to 66 used Facebook. Interestingly, the use of Twitter does not follow the same pattern, with candidates between 36 and 50 using it more extensively than the youngest candidates.

We have already discussed how party affiliation might be an important variable to explain differences between candidates' uses of social media. As shown in Figure 4, there are indeed party differences between candidates as regards use of Facebook and Twitter to support their campaign efforts.

Figure 4. Candidate Use of Facebook and Twitter, by Party Affiliation (%).
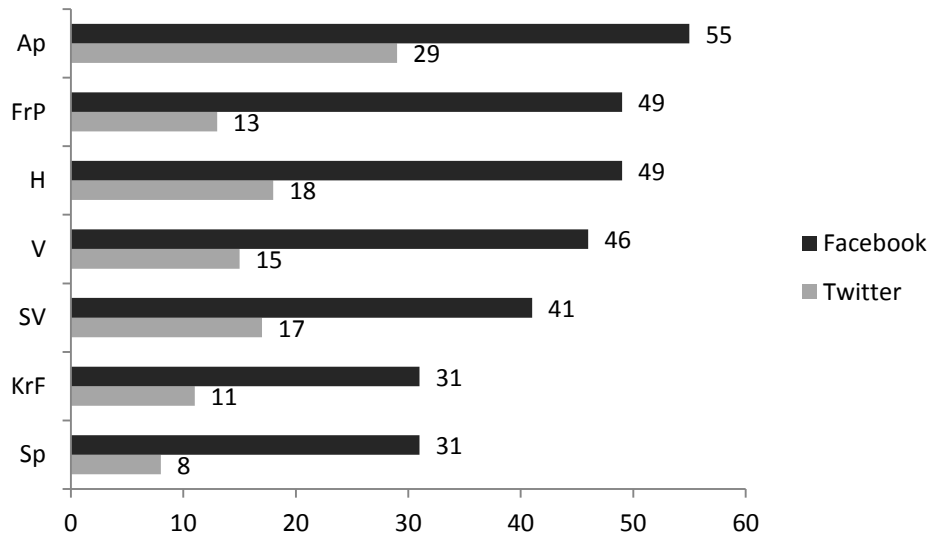
Parties: Labor Party (Ap), Progress Party (FrP), Conservative Party (H), Liberal Party (V), Socialist Left Party (SV), Christian Democratic Party (KrF), Centre Party (Sp).

The Labor Party candidates are most likely to use Facebook and Twitter, followed by the Progress Party and the Conservatives. These are the three largest parties: meaning that they are the most resource-rich, as well as having the most candidates with a chance of actually winning a mandate. There will be more discussion on this below.

It is clear that in 2009 Facebook was a widely used campaign tool, but how did candidates think this platform compared to more established communication channels? The candidates were asked about the importance they attached to a range of media for their campaigning effort (Figure 5). Candidates who do not utilize social media cannot be expected to assess them as being very important: Figure 5 therefore reports the means for the nine surveyed communication channels for all candidates, as well as for those who used Facebook in the campaign.

Figure 5. Relative Importance Attached to Campaign Communication Media by Candidates.
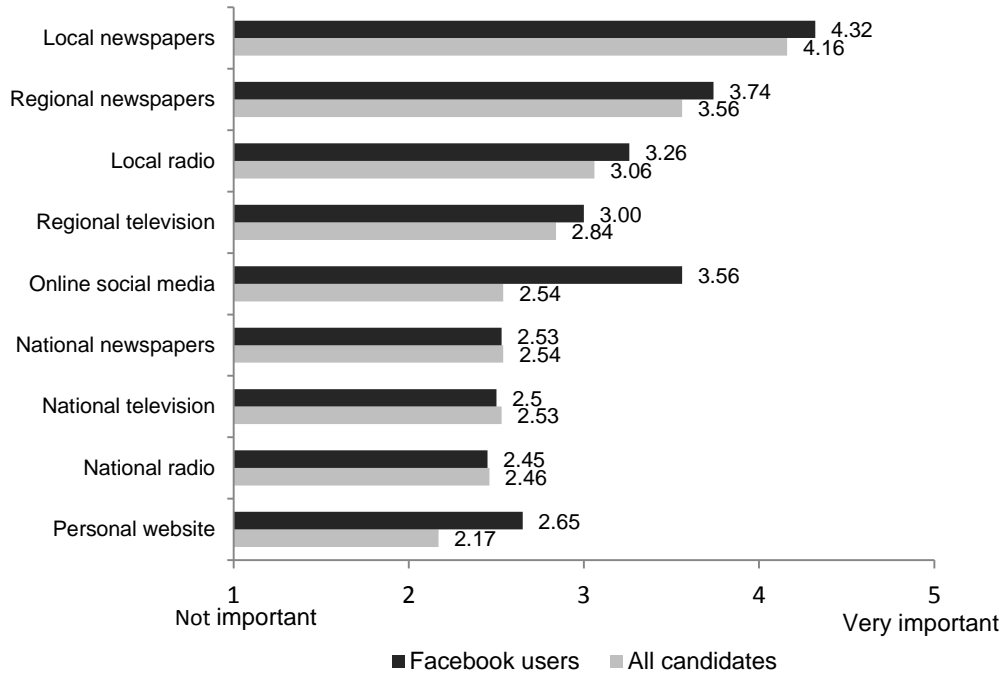
Question: "On a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 indicates unimportant and 5 indicates very important, how important were the following media for you in your campaign effort?" N All candidates: 932-973, Facebook users: 416-430

On average, social media were considered by the candidates to be less important than local and regional newspapers, local radio and regional television programs. While television is still widely considered by parties and voters as the most important communication medium in election campaigns (Karlsen 2010b), local and regional newspapers are considered most important for the individual candidates in their campaigning effort. The mean for online social media is on a par with that for national newspapers, with 29 percent of candidates considering them to be important (4 or 5 on the scale). An important thing to note in Figure 5 is the greater importance assigned to social media compared with personal websites.

Figure 5 confirms that candidates who use Facebook consider social media to be much more important than non-using candidates. For these Facebook users social media are rated as the third most important media, behind local and regional newspapers. Furthermore, on average the youngest candidates (82 percent of whom use Facebook) consider online social media the second most important communication tool, after local newspapers (analysis not shown). Apparently, the qualities discussed above appear to be

essential for the group that already uses social media, but how do candidates assess the various different reasons for using social media?

Incentives for Using Social Media

To explore why social media were used in the campaign, candidates were asked to rate six possible reasons for use on a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 equals not important and 5 equals very important). The given reasons were based on the incentives and goals discussed above, namely to: (1) reach out to as many voters as possible, (2) communicate with voters in a direct manner, (3) appear modern, (4) gain coverage in the traditional media, (5) render the candidate and their message visible to others in their own party, (6) organize the campaign in their constituency. The results are reported in Table 1.

Table 1. Motives for Using Social Media in the Campaign.

	Not important			Very important				
	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	St.dev	N
Communicate directly	7	9	20	30	34	3.74	1.21	509
Reach out to voters	7	14	22	26	31	3.59	1.26	514
Be visible to others in the party	10	14	25	34	18	3.37	1.20	509
Be modern	14	15	24	28	18	3.21	1.29	509
Get coverage in traditional media	17	16	22	22	23	3.16	1.40	504
Organize the campaign	22	21	23	20	13	2.81	1.33	504

Question: "On a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 indicates unimportant and 5 indicates very important, how important were the following reasons for using social media for you in your campaign effort?"

According to Table 1, the candidates considered the possibility of coming into direct contact with voters to be most important reason to use social media. The second most important reason was to reach out to as many voters as possible, followed by increasing candidate visibility within the party (with more than half of the candidates who used social media believing social media to be important in this regard). As has been argued above, it is essential for the individual candidate to be visible to others in the party, as the regional party controls nominations: social media seem instrumental in this respect. In accordance with our expectations, the most important aspect of new ICTs in the US context (to organize the campaign), is considered to be least important by candidates in the Norwegian campaign. Nevertheless, a third of the candidates who used social media considered this to be important.

Further analysis shows that there is little difference between candidates in terms of list placement, party affiliation, and age when it comes to assessing the different reasons for using social media. [9] This is also true for campaign

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[9] The results are not reported in a table due to the lack of differences.

focus. Candidates with a candidate focus and candidates with a party focus have a similar pattern of assessment.

In summary, the analysis highlights the multiple possible uses of online social media. Most candidates who employ Facebook find it essential for several different reasons: it's a new way for candidates to reach voters in a more direct manner, as well as a tool to reach as many voters as possible, and to increase their visibility to others in their party. Social media and SNS are clearly used and considered important by many candidates for several reasons, but what are the effects on individualized campaigning?

Social Media and Individualized Campaigning

As discussed above, new ICTs might lead to more individualized campaigning as they provide individual candidates with new opportunities to run campaigns more independently of the central party. This question is addressed empirically in this section by investigating the extent to which candidates who use social media in their campaign are more inclined to focus attention on themselves as a candidate in their campaigning communication, and less inclined to attract attention for the central party (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Effect of Social Media on Campaign Focus (Means).
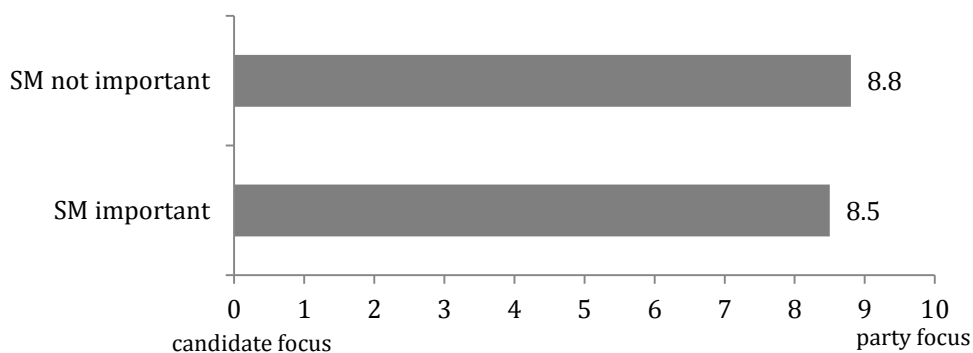
SM (Social Media). Question: "What was the primary aim of your campaign? Where would you place yourself on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "(to) attract as much attention as possible for me as a candidate" and 10 means "(to) attract as much as possible attention for my party"?"

First of all, candidates in Norway are very party-centered in their campaign communication. Candidates who consider social media to be important are not much more inclined towards focusing on their own candidacy in the campaign: on average there was only a slight tendency for these candidates to focus less on the party than other candidates. Furthermore, there was no difference between the two groups in terms of assessing the importance of the central party for the candidate's campaign efforts (Figure 7).

This might be expected based on the finding that campaign organization was considered by candidates to be the least important reason for using social media (Table 1).

Figure 7. Importance of the Central Party for the Candidate's Campaign Effort, by Importance for Candidate of Social Media (Means).
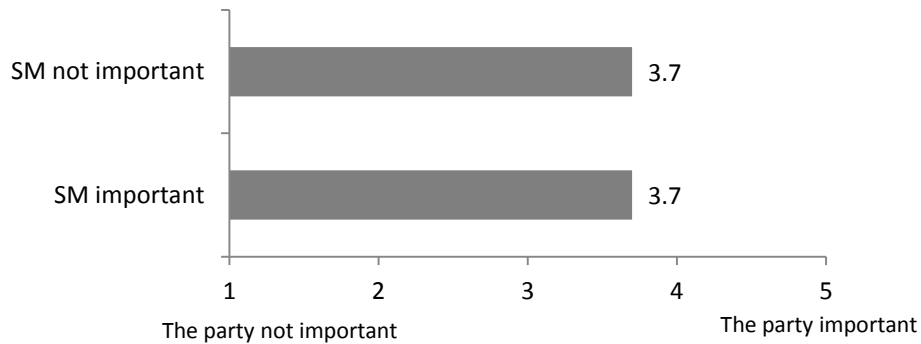

SM (Social Media). Question: "On a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 indicates not important and 5 indicates very important, how important was the central party and the work being done there for you in your campaign efforts?"

The above analysis tells us that social media use does not make candidates more inclined to focus on themselves. Obviously, social media could nevertheless be a useful tool for candidates who already focus on their own candidacy in the campaign: we might therefore expect them to use social media to a greater extent than candidates who are more inclined to focus on the party. Figure 8 shows the use of social media by these two groups: candidates who focus on their own candidacy and those who focus on the party.[10]

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[10] Candidates who placed themselves on 0 to 5 on the scale were coded as having a candidate focus, while candidates who placed themselves on 6 to 10 on the scale were coded as having a party focus.

Figure 8. Candidate Use of Facebook and Twitter, and Importance Attached to to Social Media (%), by Self-Candidacy or Party Focus of Campaign.
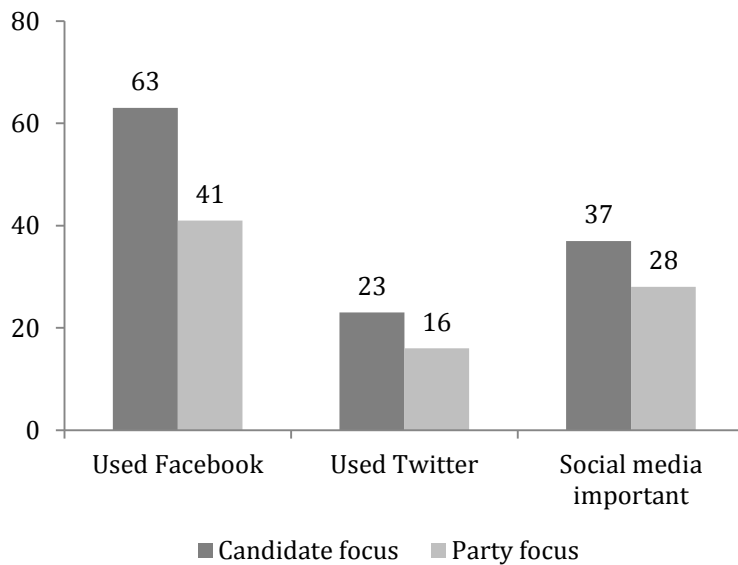
N = 110 (candidate focus); N = 890 (party focus). On the scale from 1-5, 4 and 5 were coded as important.

Candidates who focus on their own candidacy in the campaign are more likely to use Facebook than candidates who focus on the party (63 percent compared with 41 percent). Candidates with a candidate focus are also more inclined to use Twitter, but the difference is smaller (23 percent compared to 16 percent). They also consider social media to be more important for their campaigning effort than candidates with a party focus (37 compared to 28 percent). However, this finding might be due to the fact that candidates who are inclined to focus on themselves are placed higher on the list, therefore they campaign to a greater extent, and are therefore more inclined to use most tools available. Table 2 reports the results of two multivariate analyses, showing the effect of age, list placement, mandate expectation (whether or not the candidate thought they had a chance of winning the mandate), and candidate focus on Facebook use and importance attached to social media. We saw above that there are substantial differences between candidates from different parties, so in model II we also control for party affiliation.

Table 2. Effect of Age, List Placement, Mandate Expectation, Candidate Focus, and Party Affiliation for using Facebook and for Considering Social Media Important.

	Facebook Use				Social Media Important			
	I		II		I		II	
	B	beta	b	beta	B	beta	b	beta
Constant	0.94**		1.06**		3.63**		3.87**	
Age	−0.02**	−0.42**	−0.02**	−0.42**	−0.04**	−0.33**	−0.04**	−0.33**
List	−0.01**	−0.13**	−0.01**	−0.14**	−0.02*	−0.09*	−0.04**	−0.10**
Win mandate	0.07**	0.15**	0.05**	0.12**	0.10*	0.09*	0.06	0.05
Candidate focus	0.02**	0.08**	0.02**	0.08**	0.06*	0.09*	0.05*	0.08*
Party dummies								
SV			−0.10	−0.07			−0.25	−0.07
Sp			−0.23**	−0.16**			−0.55**	−0.14**
KrF			−0.16**	−0.11**			−0.17	−0.04
V			−0.06	−0.04			−0.32	−0.08
H			−0.06	−0.04			−0.03	−0.01
FrP			−0.10*	−0.07*			−0.01	−0.00
R^2	0.24		0.26		0.14		0.15	

Multivariate OLS regression. B- and beta-coefficients, and explained variance. N=903 (Facebook); N=853 (social media). *$P<0.05$, **$P<0.01$.

Parties: Socialist Left Party (SV), The Centre Party (Sp) the Christian Democratic Party (KrF), the Liberal Party (V), The Conservative Party (H), and the Progress Party (FrP).

Age is continuous from 0 (recoded from 18). List placement is from first (1) to last place.

Win mandate: 0: "I thought I could not win" and "I thought I could hardly win" and "I thought it was an open race". 1: "I thought I could hardly lose" and "I thought I could not lose".

Candidate focus = 10, party focus = 0 (on the scale).

The Labor Party (Ap) is the reference category.

As we see from Table 2, the young candidates, the highly placed candidates and the candidates who focused on their own candidacy were more inclined to use Facebook and to attach importance to social media. The most important thing to note is that candidate focus has an independent effect on Facebook use and importance attached to social media, even when age, list placement, mandate expectation, and party affiliation (model II) are controlled for. Hence, although all kinds of candidates employ social media and SNS in the campaign, the candidates who seek to attract attention to their own candidacy appear to be especially keen. This suggests that they find the new medium helpful for this more candidate-focused type of communication.

Also important to note in Table 2 is that party affiliation has an effect of Facebook use even when we control for age, list placement, mandate expectation, and candidate focus. Candidates from the Centre Party and the

Christian Democratic Party are significantly less inclined to use Facebook than Labor Party candidates. This probably reflects the efforts of the Labor Party to increase the number of candidates who employ social media (Karlsen 2011).

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this article has been to investigate the effect of online social media on candidate campaigning in party-centered election campaigns. Due to the relatively little existing knowledge, the aim has been first to study the use, the relative importance, and candidate motives for employing social media in campaigns. The second aim has been to explore whether and to what extent social media increase individualized campaigning in the party-centered Norwegian system. Against this background three research questions have been studied empirically.

The first dealt with the use and the relative importance of the new technology compared with other means of communication. 40 percent of candidates used Facebook in the campaign, with younger candidates being more inclined than older cohorts to use social media in the campaign (82 percent of the candidates 26 years of age and younger utilized Facebook). This suggests that candidates who use social media in their daily life find it natural to use the communication platform in their campaigning efforts as well.

On average the candidates considered social media to be less important than established media like local and regional newspapers and local radio, but more important than national television—a medium that seldom offers ordinary candidates coverage. Moreover, candidates who used Facebook in the campaign considered social media to be the third most important media in their campaigning efforts, confirming that social media have qualities that are deemed useful by candidates who are familiar with the technology, regardless of age.

Social media are considered more useful than personal websites. Personal candidate websites have not been widely used in the Norwegian context, most likely because of the lack of possibility for preference voting. In countries with preference voting, like Finland, were the voters decide the ranking of the candidates, it has been much more common for candidates to have a personal candidate website (Carlson and Strandberg 2008). This finding suggests that candidates consider the networking qualities of SNS as a greater asset than more static personal websites; consequently we would expect the importance and use of SNS in campaigning to increase considerably in future elections, also in so called party-centered systems.

The second research question dealt with different motives for the candidates to employ social media in their campaigning efforts. The analysis shows that candidates considered the possibility of direct communication with voters as most important, followed by the goal of reaching out to as many

voters as possible. Social media were also considered important for increasing candidate visibility to other party members and party activists. This is important for a number of reasons, for example, to secure local and regional positions for the lower placed candidates (or re-nomination at the same or higher list position the next time around for the higher placed candidates). However, the most important finding in regards to motives is the multipurpose qualities of online social media: most candidates find the use of social media in campaigns important for several different reasons.

One of the findings concerning motives for social media use deserves extra attention. On average, social media were considered least important in terms of campaign organization. This might seem puzzling given this is what has received most attention in relation to the US case. However, as has been discussed in this article, differences in campaign style help explain why the Norwegian candidates seem not to highly value this aspect of social media. While US candidates build their organization from scratch, Norwegian candidates campaign as part of a larger party campaign organization. Consequently, although they organize the constituency campaign to some extent, this organization draws on existing party organizational practices, as well as a centrally decided party campaign strategy.

The last research question dealt with whether or not the introduction of online social media in electoral politics increases individualized campaigning. As discussed, new ICTs and online social media can be expected to increase individualized campaigning as they offer candidates new opportunities to promote themselves, as well as to organize their own campaign. However, at first glance social media do not appear to lead to more individualized campaigning. Candidates who use social media in their campaign work are not more likely to promote their own candidacy, and they highlight the importance of the central party for their own campaigning efforts.

New media technologies should not be expected to change the style of campaigning, at least not in the short term. The characteristics of the Norwegian campaign environment, most importantly the nomination process and electoral system, do not favor individualized campaigning (Karlsen and Narud 2011), and probably act as restraints on any technological push towards individualized campaigning. The parties control the nomination process, and once that process is over the possibility of being elected depends solely on the party vote. In systems that allow for more personal voting, such as the mixed German system or the Finnish system, new media might increase existing tendencies towards individualized campaigning (Zittel 2009).

However, if we study the effect of communicative focus on using social media (rather than the effect of using social media on communicative focus) we learn that social media might still increase individualized campaigning and candidate focus. Candidates who promote their own candidacy are more inclined to use Facebook and to consider online social

media essential for their campaigning efforts. Over time this might lead to an increase in candidate focus.

To conclude, this study offers evidence of the present importance and the future potential of social media for candidate campaigning, particularly in the context of party-centered systems. Candidates might use social media to extend their existing communication practices: candidates who focus mostly on the party might use these new platforms to extend their party-centered communication style; candidates who focus on their own candidacy have been offered a new platform for self-promotion. One possible outcome of increasing use of social media might therefore be a more differentiated style of campaigning.

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