Emotive and Positive Political Communication on Facebook: The Case of Argentinean Leaders

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Abstract

The communication that political leaders have performed on social media in recent years demands constant and novel approaches for understanding how politicians interact with their supporters in the digital space. In this sense, the aim of this research is to examine the communication that Argentine political leaders display on Facebook, the most popular social media amongst Argentineans, during a highly polarized and politicized period in the country, taking special attention to the role that emotions play in this digital scenario. Using content analysis of the texts included in the posts, the results of this empirical work demonstrate that, on Facebook, political leaders prefer to communicate emotive messages rather than non-emotive contents and positive emotions rather than negative ones. Besides, hope is not only the most expressed one but also the emotion that generated more interaction among digital political supporters.

Keywords: political communication, emotions, Facebook, diffusion model, engagement

Introduction

In the middle of 2015, Argentina was going to have general elections: firstly in August, citizens had to choose among pre-candidates from different alliances and political parties, the official candidates that were going to compete in the general elections in October 2015. In a highly politicized and polarized country (Lodola, Kitzberger, Lodola, & Kitzberger, 2017), negotiations about candidacies began at the end of 2014. Cristina Fernández was the president at that time but, according to the national constitution, she couldn't be a candidate for a third period. After several negotiations, Daniel Scioli was chosen as the candidate for the official political alliance. Mauricio Macri was seen as their principal opponent, a center right wing leader who was the mayor of Buenos Aires, the capital city of the country. Sergio Massa, a national congressional representative, was another candidate for presidency. The three ones had something in common: public polls indicated great general lack of knowledge about them around the country (I Profesional, 2014).

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Within the communication panorama, the general election that took place in Argentina in 2015 found the country in a novel situation. On one hand, Internet access was widespread for the first time in the country, and 70% of Argentineans spent more than four hours browsing the Internet (INDEC, 2015). Moreover, there were 1.4 mobile phones per inhabitant and more than 45% of the population had a smartphone (BancoMundial, 2014; INDEC, 2015; Kemp, 2015) and they checked these devices more than two hundred times per day, showing a growing interest for exploring their social media feeds (Gallo, 2015). In addition to this, almost 55% of Argentineans were active Facebook users (INDEC, 2015). This situation facilitated the incorporation of social media in local political communication as part of a communication strategy. Before then, most Argentine politicians had used social media but not frequently: leaders had a chaotic management of digital platforms: opening accounts, fan pages and profiles in every social media, without any prioritization or communication planning (Tarullo, 2014), without taking advantage of the tools and the functions these platforms allow, but spreading their messages in a top-down model similar to the one that is characteristic of traditional media (Holtz-Bacha, 2013). Along with this, social media as personal channels of promotion get on well with a personalist political communication that is an essential characteristic in the Argentinean political arena (Tarullo, 2018a).

This study aims to analyze the political communication that Argentinean leaders performed on Facebook during a highly politicized and polarized moment in the country, taking into particular consideration the role that emotions played in the posts, the engagement that they brought among politicians' Facebook fan page followers and whether there were differences among the studied politicians, the most popular ones when this study was conducted.

Theoretical background

The absence of intermediaries and a non-stop connection facilitated by speed, versatility and low cost (Maarek, 2014), both characteristics that rest on the core of social media, are features, among others, that have transformed the way in which politicians communicate with citizenship (Castells, 2009). For some authors (Lotan, Ananny, Gaffney, & Boyd, 2011; Zuckerman, 2014) this can collaborate to a non-stop horizontal scheme where leaders are in communication with digitalized citizens and, for other scholars (Couldry, 2014; Gillespie, 2013; Gladwell, 2010; Graham, Jackson, & Broersma, 2014; Waisbord, 2015). This scheme collaborates with an incessant process of spreading and diffusion of political messages. Furthermore, social media has increased the personalization of political communication along with a simplification of political messages, a trend that has been recognized in previous studies, some of them previous to the dissemination in the use of social media (Bennett, 2012; Ortega, 2011).

Moreover, the popularization of social media has taken a portion of the emotion kingdom from television, the media that has been recognized as the principal channel in amplifying audiences and broadcasting political messages widely (Adamo, Beaudoux, & Freidenberg, 2000), due to some reasons. First, because social media accepts different formats of visual content such as short videos, pictures, memes and gifs (Russmann & Svensson, 2017); second, they concede different and novel circulation and interaction possibilities among users (Fuchs, 2013); and third, they have an emotional architecture that allows different performances among users and also among users, the content and the platforms (Karen Wahl-Jor-

gensen, 2014), including the possibility to express with emoji the emotions that users want to disseminate throughout the digital space (Sampietro, 2019).

Emotions promote political participation (Brader, 2006), as citizens participate motivated by their own concerns, beliefs, dreams and expectations (Rosas & Serrano Puche, 2018) and they participate when they "feel passionately" (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019,p.28). Following this idea, authors have argued that rationality and emotion are connected as constitutive and complementary dimensions of the subject (Dahlgren, 2018; Papacharissi & Fatime Oliveira, 2012), making place for an affective public (Papacharissi, 2015) and an increasing emotional public sphere (Lunt & Pantti, 2007). In this sense, the concept of public sphere anchored on rational deliberative practices of participation (Castrelo, 2018; Habermas, 1990) has been overcome by this concept of an emotional public sphere that has emerged "as an alternative to the hegemony of rationalist models of the public sphere and the media built on the basis of traditional— but also misleading—dichotomies such as reason/emotion, mind/body, private/public, and objective/subjective" (Rosas and Serrano Puche, 2018, p.2033).

A range of studies has given empirical evidence about different emotional states and their effects on citizen's participation. For instance, fear motivates citizens to engage in electoral participation (Miller & Krosnick, 2004; Tarullo, 2018b; Valentino, Hutchings, Banks, & Davis, 2008; Weeks, 2015), while anxiety leads to a growing interest in political issues in general (Huddy, Feldman, & Casesse, 2007; G. Marcus, Neuman, & MacKuen, 2015; G. Marcus, Sullivan, Theiss-Morse, & Stevens, 2005). Besides, hope and enthusiasm increase the interest of knowing about the general context and the trust that the expected events will eventually occur (Just, Crigler, & Belt, 2007).

With the proliferation of social media, the role of emotions in communicating political messages through these platforms and the interaction and engagement that different emotions trigger among users have been studied recently and in different circumstances, especially in highly polarized contexts. For example: the digital communication strategy based essentially on anger, run by Donald Trump in the United State (Anderson, 2018; Guess, Nyhan, & Reifler, 2018; Lakoff, 2016), the Brexit referendum in Great Britain and the role of emotions, specially fear and anger, in spreading fake news (Bastos & Mercea, 2017), the speech of Podemos on Facebook in Spain (Sampietro & Valera Ordaz, 2015), among others.

Messages with emotions not only are the most and best remembered (Lang, 1994) but also, they generate emotional contagion and they are propagated faster than the contents that privilege rationalism and cognition (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Apson, 1994). Moreover, different empirical research demonstrated that on YouTube (English, Sweetser, & Ancu, 2011; Guadagno, Rempala, Murphy, & Okdie, 2013), videos containing particular emotions are shared more than others, while on Twitter, scholars have identified that emotive tweets are shared more than non-emotive messages (Aragón, Kappler, Kaltenbrunner, Laniado, & Volkovich, 2013; Boyd, Golder, & Lotan, 2010; Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013; Toret, 2013). Alongside, Bene (2017) has demonstrated that on Facebook, during the Hungarian elections, citizens preferred to share positive content than messages with negative emotions (Bene, 2017). In this sense, humor and enthusiasm were triggered by Barack Obama in his political communication strategy on Facebook, while Republicans appealed to fear during the 2008-2012 period (Borah, 2016). Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan have demonstrated that among Facebook followers of German politicians, posts with positive and negative emotions are more commented that messages without affective words or expressions (Stieglitz & Dang-xuan, 2012). Moreover, the relationship between emotions and digital participation on social media has been

studied on Facebook pages in the 2011 movements of the Egyptian revolution and the Spanish Indignados (Gerbaudo, 2016).

Theoretical-methodological framework: studying emotions from the neuroscience perspective

Emotions in political communication can be studied from diverse angles and using different theoretical approaches (Peyton, 2014; Sánchez Aranda, 2012; Schemer, Wirth, & Matthes, 2007; Westen, 2008, among others). One approach comes from the neurosciences field: Antonio Damasio (1999) studies emotions as the driving force of thinking and behavior. Therefore, he breaks up with the dichotomy reason-emotion, placing them in the brain, where both share spaces, neuronal nets and decision-making. Damasio (1999) recognizes, at least, two groups of emotions: the primary basic ones and the social ones (Damasio, 1999). The primary ones, that were also identified by other scholars (Ekman, Wallace, & Phoebe, 1972), are profoundly settled in the human brain and in the great majority of the species as they were introduced through the survival instinct (Castells, 2009). Because of this, they are easy to recognize, no matter the context nor the cultures in which they are deployed. These primary emotions are fear, anger, disgust, surprise, sadness, and happiness, "the emotions that first come to mind whenever the term emotion is invoked" (Castells, 2009, p. 44). On the other hand, the social emotions include "sympathy, embarrassment, shame, guilt, pride, jealousy, envy, gratitude, admiration, indignation, hope and contempt" (Castells, 2009, p. 44). These emotions are not individual notions, but require relationships with other human beings.

For Castells (2009), fear and hope are different sides of the same coin because both emotions, even if they are opposite, drive to elector's involvement. That, in the case of Facebook, can be seen in the digital participation that this platform allows: likes, shares and comments. Therefore, people who experience these two emotions are more motivated to pay attention to political campaign messages and to exchange information and opinions than those who are not emotionally motivated, and this is more evident in politicized and polarized scenarios (Toret, 2013).

Objectives and methodology

This exploratory research aims to study the communication that Argentinean political leaders perform on Facebook during 2014/2015, taking special consideration to the role that emotions played in the digital messages that the most popular Argentineans politicians posted on this social media. We assume that communicating emotions by local political leaders were particularly important during this moment of the country because of some reasons. Firstly, this period of time contains negotiations, primary elections, general elections and the first ballotage that took place in the country, situations that turn the context into a highly politicized scenario Secondly, social polarization has increased steadily in Argentina (Svampa, 2005) and some researchers have pointed out that polarized contexts could be seen as ideal for appealing to emotions (Toret, 2013; Tucker et al., 2018; Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019).

The questions that drive this research are the following:

RQ1. What kind of posts prevail in the political communication that Argentinean political leaders run on Facebook? Do they prefer to post emotive or non-emotive messages? Are there differences in the communication that the studied politicians establish on Facebook?

RQ2. Which are the emotions that local politicians display most? Do they prefer to communicate negative emotions, or do they run a digital campaign based on sharing positive emotions through their messages?

RQ3. Which are the emotions that generate more interaction, i.e. likes, shares and comments?

To achieve these aims, we conducted a quantitative content analysis of the messages that Argentinean politicians published on Facebook, more specifically the political posts published by Cristina Fernández (the president at the moment of this study), Mauricio Macri (the mayor of the Argentinean capital city), Sergio Massa (a national congressman) and Daniel Scioli (the governor of the province of Buenos Aires in 2014) on that platform, the most popular social media in the country (Hootsuite, 2018; INDEC, 2015, 2018).

From the Argentinean context, we chose these four leaders for the following reasons. Firstly, because they were the most mentioned politicians in online conversations. According to the Interbarómetro report in October 2014, Fernández led online conversations: her name was present in almost 20% of online political debates, followed by Scioli (12.94%), Macri (11.72%) and Massa, who was in fourth place (10.46%) (Interbarómetro, 2014). Furthermore, they were the ones with the highest number of followers on Facebook in the local context (Gallo, 2015; Tarullo, 2014).

Besides, according to media news, Macri, Massa and Scioli were the first ones in different intention voting polls for the 2015 general elections. In 2014, different press releases guessed that these three were going to be pre-candidates in the Primary, Open, Compulsory and Simultaneous elections (PASO), kind of internal primary political parties elections in which citizens choose the general elections candidates (I Profesional, 2014; La Nacion, 2014). This internal election was going to take place in August 2015.

The sample was formed as follows:

Cristina Fernández (2007-2011; 2011-2015) was voted as the president for a second consecutive time in October 2011, with 54.11% of total votes. Her husband, Néstor Kirchner, had been president of Argentina during the 2003-2007 period. Fernández was the main leader of the alliance Frente para la Victoria, an alliance of different sectors coming from Partido Justicialista, Union Civica Radical and the Socialist Party. At the beginning of this study, she had 1,474,786 followers on her Facebook fan page.

Mauricio Macri was, at the beginning of this study, the mayor of Buenos Aires City (2007-2011; 2011-2015). He was the leader of the political group PRO. In 2015, and with the general elections in mind, he founded Cambiemos, an alliance of central right wing political parties. When we started this research, Macri had 937,839 Facebook followers.

In November 2014, Sergio Massa was a national congressman, representing Frente Renovador, a political alliance that he had formed in 2013. In 2014, Massa created another alliance with different sectors that came from Unión Cívica Radical and Partido Justicialista. Massa had 588,488 followers on his fan page on the studied social platform.

At the moment of this study, Daniel Scioli was the governor of the province of Buenos Aires (2007-2011; 2011-2015). He was Frente para la Victoria presidential candidate for the

2015 general elections. He had been vice-president during Néstor Kirchner's presidency (2003-2007). He had 781,206 Facebook followers.

We chose Facebook because it was the most popular social media amongst Argentineans: more than half of the population had an account on this social platform (INDEC, 2014, 2015). On this social media, users could have a private account or a fan page. Politicians had a fan page, which users can "like" and follow. During the period of this research, Facebook allowed users to publish photos, albums of photos and videos that can be or not accompanied by a text. Moreover, users could write a text and attach, or not, a video, an album of pictures or a picture.

The constructed week was used for designing the sample (Stempel & Westley, 1989). In 49 days, we collected manually the posts, using the screenshot program Fireshot (Softonic, 2014), in a scheduled hour range from 21 to 23:30.

The collected data was analyzed with the statistical programme info.stat (Infostat, 2010).[1]

Codebook

The codebook is fundamental for the content analysis technique. As Benoit states, "the codebook must be developed with the research purpose (research questions or hypotheses) in mind. The point of developing the codebook is to specify procedures that will allow the researcher to accomplish the purpose envisioned for the study" (Benoit, 2011, p. 272).

The codebook that was designed for this research was divided in three parts. In the first part, we recognized formal variables, this means: author of the post and date of the post. For the last, we only evaluated the text in the codification process, leaving the visual communication content for future research. Then, for the second section of the codebook, we categorized the status of the posts, this means we identified whether they had emotive content in the published messages. Sentiment analysis has been used in previous research that work with large amount of data (Groshek & Al-Rawi, 2013; Ortigosa, Martín, & Carro, 2014). Taking into account the small sample of this study, we used manual analysis of the content, looking for the presence of affective words and expressions in the published texts. For the third variable to assess content, we classified what kind of emotion was included in the posts. For the operationalization of this variable, we used Damasio´s typification of primary emotions: fear, anger, disgust, surprise, sadness, and happiness. Moreover, after an inductive approach to the corpus of the study, we included others, which were: indignation, pride, gratitude, hope and feeling safe. Hope, pride, indignation and gratitude are some of the secondary emotions group identified by Damasio (1990). Moreover, feeling safe has been included by scholars in previous research that studied the presence of emotions in political communication (Hill, 2000).

The third part of the codebook was dedicated to studying the engagement that the posts had. We included the number of likes, shares and comments that each post received from politicians' followers. For this, engagement was categorized following the scheme proposed by Aragon et al. (2011). These scholars state that there are three types of interaction with the content on social media: support interaction (likes), diffusional interaction (shares) and conversational interaction (comments).

It is important to say that when we collected the data for this article, the button Like was the only one that Facebook offered for expressing a reaction to the posts. Others, such as sadness, surprise, anger and love were incorporated to the social platform in 2018.

Reliability

Two external analyst-coders collaborated to measure intercoder reliability who analyzed all the variables in 20% (n=80) of the posts that the studied politicians published on Facebook (n=403).

The coefficients Cohen's Kappa (ê) and Krippendorff's Alpha (á) were used to measure the level of agreement of the tabulation (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007; Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002). According to the results, (0.88 for Cohen's Kappa (ê) and 0.92 for Krippendorff's Alpha (á) in one case and 0.87 (ê) and 0.90 (á) in the second one) the recording process has significant reliability (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991).

Findings

The aim of this study is to analyze the communication that Argentinean political leaders Cristina Fernández, Sergio Massa, Mauricio Macri and Daniel Scioli published on Facebook from November 2014 to November 2015.

In 49 days of study, we collected manually 403 posts, that were distributed as follows:

Table 1. Distribution of posts during the studied period.
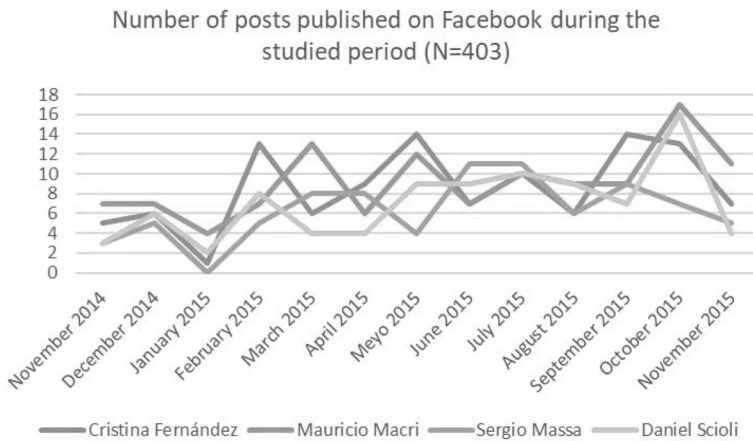
When we analyzed the performances on Facebook of the leaders included in this sample, the first findings revealed that they did not use Facebook with the same intensity nor regularity. Mauricio Macri (n=119, 29.52%) was the most active one on Facebook, especially in October, when the general elections took place. The peak of Scioli (n=91, 22.58%) was also in October. However, in November, when he contended in the ballotage against Macri, his activity on Facebook was similar to his lowest rate of publication during the studied period. Sergio Massa (n=82, 20.34%) didn't use this social platform neither regularly nor skillfully: he didn't use the platform close to electoral dates, such as August and October, and in November when he was not a candidate for the ballotage, practically he was not on Facebook. Fernández (n=111, 27.54%) used this digital channel frequently, especially in those months when she wanted to

propagate the public measures she had taken while in office. December and January (summer holidays in Argentina) are the months with the least activity in all cases.

When we examined the status of the messages that Argentinean political leaders published on their fan pages on Facebook, we found that 59% of the post (n=238) contained emotive words or expressions; meanwhile, 41% of Facebook posts (n=165) that were part of this sample did not contain any emotion. The image 1 is a screenshot of a post from Cristina Fernández Facebook in which she says: "Kids from Villa Lugano tell me about their projects of #robotica". This is an example of a message without any emotion in it.[2]

Image 1. Cristina Fernández during an informal visit to a school in the surroundings of Buenos Aires.

Source: https://www.facebook.com/CFKArgentina/photos/los-chicos-de-villa-lugano-me-cuentan-sus-p royectos-de-rob%C3%B3tica/978737465524122/.

Cristina Fernández was the least emotive one: 56% (n=62) of her posts did not communicate any emotions, while 44% (n=49) of the messages that she published on Facebook had emotive content. Macri communicated emotions in 55% (n=65) of his posts, while in 45% (n=54) he didn´t include any emotion in his posts. Sergio Massa was emotive in 73% (n=60) of his messages, while in 27% (n=22) of his posts he decided not to include any emotion. On Scioli's Facebook official account we could find emotive content in 80% (n=73) of his messages and non-emotive expressions in 20% (n=18) of his Facebook messages. With this figure, Scioli was the political leader who published emotive contents the most. In the following example (Image 2), we can see Scioli expressing gratitude to his voters, the day of the elections after knowing that there was going to be a ballotage between him and Mauricio Macri.

Image 2. Daniel Scioli, in a massive event, after knowing the general election´s results.

The second question of this article is in relation to the description of the most popular emotions in the messages that Argentinean political leaders published on their fan pages on Facebook. The presence of emotions in the political messages on Facebook of the studied leaders was not exclusive as each post can contain more than one affective word or expression.

The most popular emotions that political leaders communicated were positive: hope (27% n=64), pride (20% n=47), feeling safe (19% n=45) and gratitude (8% n=19) were the most expressed emotions, and all of them are social emotions (Castells, 2012; Damasio, 1994, 1999).

The most mentioned negative emotion was indignation, which is also a social emotion and it was present in 7% (n=17) of the posts. Fear (5% n=12), anger (5%, n=12) and sadness (2% n=5), all negative and primary emotions (Damasio, 1999), were less popular, even less than happiness (6% n=14), which was the least mentioned positive and primary emotion in the studied sample.

Nevertheless, as we can see in table 1 not all the politicians communicated the same emotions:

Table 2. The most mentioned emotions by the studied political leaders on Facebook.

Cristina Fernández		Daniel Scioli		Mauricio Macri		Sergio Massa	
Emotion	%	Emotion	%	Emotion	%	Emotion	%
Pride	48%	Security	29%	Hope	37%	Hope	26%
Hope	19%	Hope	26%	Hapiness	16%	Security	22%
Gratitude	8%	Pride	23%	Security	14%	Frustration	18%
Fear	6%	Gratitude	8%	Gratitude	10%	Anger	11%
Anger	5%	Fear	7%	Pride	9%	Gratitude	7%
Security	5%	Hapiness	2%	Frustration	5%	Pride	6%
Frustration	4%	Anger	2%	Fear	3%	Fear	4%
Hapiness	3%	Frustration	2%	Sadness	3%	Hapiness	3%
Sadness	2%	Sadness	1%	Anger	3%	Sadness	1%
Other	1%	Other	1%	Disgust	0%	Surprise	1%
Disgust	0%	Disgust	1%	Surprise	0%	Other	1%
Surprise	0%	Surprise	0%	Other	0%	Disgust	0%
	100%		100%		100%		100%

Pride in Cristina Fernández, who communicated this emotion much more than the other studied politicians (48% n=23 of her emotive messages had pride), was related to two motivations. Firstly, it was in relation to the role that she had in the Argentinean scenario when this research was conducted: Fernández exhibited pride for national government performances. Moreover, pride was in relation to patriotism: "We have patriotism and we are proud of having it," she stated in the post that exemplified (image 3) the way in which she communicated this emotion. Patriotism´s pride was also in relation to the public measures she had taken during her period, as some public service companies were nationalized and part of the international debt was cancelled (Peregil,2012). Then, hope was present in 19% (n=9) of her emotive messages and gratitude in 8% (n=4). Then, she communicated negative and primary emotions, such as fear (6%, n=3), anger (5%,n=2,45) and indignation (4%, n=2). The presence of primary happiness (3%, n=1,47) and sadness (2%, n=1) were not substantially present in her messages.

Image 3. "We have homeland and we are proud of it".

Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner agregó 3 fotos nuevas al álbum 25 de Mayo de 2015, Día de la Patria.
10 h · ☀

Tenemos Patria y estamos orgullosos de ella.

Me gusta · Comentar · Compartir

👍 A Lorena Sarquis, Franco Bianco y 85 536 personas más les gusta esto.   Más recientes ▾

↱ Compartida 12 417 veces

A similar situation happened if we look at Scioli's case and his messages containing pride (23%, n=17 of his emotive messages had pride): proud of being part of "a national project". "I have been with this project since its beginning," posted Scioli on a Facebook message on June 11th 2015 "because I am proud of it," he added at some point in the text (https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10153439732588787).

Scioli, along with Fernández, preferred pride of being part of the same political project, and Scioli evoked security of being himself the continuation of the *kirchnerismo* period, the one that had begun with Néstor Kirchner's term (2003-2007)

Meanwhile, feeling safe is the emotion that Scioli preferred most and evoked in 29% (n=21) of his emotive messages: in 2014, results of local polls highlighted that citizens asked for security, it was one of the principal worries in the national concern ranking, along with

inflation and economic issues (Graña, 2014). Then, when Scioli appealed to his followers to feel safe if he was elected president, he was going to solve security problems. Scioli, but also Massa (22%, n=13 of his emotive posts communicated feeling safe), and Macri (14%, n=9 of his emotive messages triggered feeling safe) took this issue for electoral promises.

In the following example (Image 4), we can observe in the text how Scioli communicated the feeling of safety

Image 4. "Security was, is and is going to be a priority for me. For this, I carried out the greatest recruitment of security agents ever".

Source: https://www.facebook.com/pg/CFKArgentina/photos/?tab=album&album_id=956701417727727.

Macri was the politician who used hope the most (37%, n=24): hope for a better future in a dismaying present (see image 5), the same as Massa did (26%, n=16). Massa also tried to communicate hope for a better future, "A fair change", was his political motto, trying to attract the vote of the ones who hoped for a different future without denying the achievements of the former government. Moreover, when Scioli appealed to his followers' hope (in 26% n=19 of his emotive messages): this appellation was in relation to persuading the undecided voters, to those who Scioli invoked to have hope for a better future but as a continuation of a promising present. The same performance was run by Fernández, who decided to include hope in 19% (n=9) of her emotive messages on Facebook.

Image 5. Macri was the one who prioritized hope in his emotive content. In this post, he announced the closing event of his electoral campaign. The name of the event was: The celebration of hope (the title of the post).

Mauricio Macri
7 h · @

ACTO DE LA ESPERANZA

El 19 de noviembre hacemos el cierre de la campaña presidencial para el balotaje en la ciudad de Humahuaca, Jujuy, en las escalinatas del Monumento a los Héroes de la Independencia. Queremos que sea una fiesta. Queremos que toda la alegría y el entusiasmo que la gente empieza a sentir con el cambio llegue a todo el país. Queremos que sea el gran acto de la esperanza que nace en todos nosotros.

Cierre de la campaña
Jueves 19 de noviembre - 18:00
HUMAHUACA

Source: https://www.facebook.com/search/posts/?q=macri%20acto%20de%20la%20esperanza&epa=SEARCH_BOX.

Happiness is a primary emotion and Macri used it the most (16%, n=10 of his emotive posts contained happiness): the expression of happiness belonged to Macri: "the happiness revolution" was his electoral campaign slogan, and the political merchandising he used during the presidential campaign was used for expressing happiness: balloons, music and party cotillion decorated his political venues and electoral presentations.

In 18% (n=11) of his emotive posts, Massa used indignation and, with this percentage, he is the only one of the studied sample that preferred to include a negative emotion on top of the most ranked emotions. In his messages, he appealed to his followers' indignation in relation to the broken promises by the government in office. In the image 6, Massa said that if

pensioners are not paid, it is because the government doesn´t want to pay them. Massa based on pensioners a great portion of this digital communication because he used to be the director of ANSES, the official institution that administers pensions and benefits for this population group.

Image 6. Example of the indignation that Massa expressed on his Facebook messages during the studied period.

Gratitude was expressed by politicians for their supporters, citizens that followed the candidate expressing their backing and expressed their encouragement to go on in the same direction (Fernández -8%, N=4 and Scioli 8% n=6, as they were leaders of the official party at the moment of this study) or to change it (Macri -8% N=6,5%- and Massa, -7% n=4- both opposition candidates).

In this studied case, fear, a primary emotion, was used but very scarcely by Scioli (7% n=5), Massa (4% n=2) and Fernández (6% n=3), who communicated fear in some of their Facebook messages with the aim of increasing the pre-existing political polarization that characterized the country (Svampa,2005): they evoked fear of the consequences of having a center-right leader, Macri, as president, who was the one who least used fear (3%, n=2) among the Facebook messages of studied leaders. Furthermore, Macri was the most positive of the sample, preferring significantly positive emotions. On the contrary, Massa was the one who communicated negative emotions the most, because indignation was the third most mentioned emotion followed by anger (11%,n: 7), an emotion that politicians used in polarized contexts, as previous studies have pointed out (Esteve, Valle, Wanless-berk, & Mai, 2018; Lakoff, 2016).

The results indicated that not all the emotions received the same interaction, as we can observe in the table 3:

Table 3. The ranking of the communicated emotions that received more interaction during the studied period.

The most liked emotions			The most commented emotions			The most shared emotions	
Emotion	%		Emotion	%		Emotion	%
Pride	25%		Hope	28%		Hope	30%
Security	23%		Pride	17%		Pride	19%
Happiness	17%		Security	17%		Security	18%
Gratitude	14%		Gratitude	14%		Happiness	10%
Fear	7%		Happiness	10%		Gratitude	9%
Frustration	5%		Fear	6%		Fear	6%
Anger	5%		Anger	4%		Frustration	4%
Hope	2%		Frustration	4%		Anger	3%
Sadness	1%		Sadness	1%		Sadness	1%
Other	0%		Other	0%		Other	0%

As we can see, positive emotions generated more interaction than negative ones. On average, 25% (n=12) of the posts with pride were liked by followers, 23% (n=10) of political messages communicating feeling safe received likes while 17% (n=11) of the posts containing hope were liked by political leaders' online supporters. Along with this, we found coincidences among the most commented and the most shared ones and similarities in the percentages of interaction: in both cases, the ones that received the most engagement were hope (28% n=18 of the messages with hope were commented and 30% n=20 were shared), pride (17% n=8 of the posts communicating pride were commented and 19% n=9 were shared) and feeling safe (commented in 17% n=7,9 of the cases and 18% n=8 of the messages with feeling safe were shared by politicians followers).

Amidst negative emotions that received an impoverished interaction, fear was the emotion that generated more, but still poor, interaction: on average, one post containing fear was liked (7%), shared (6%) and commented (6%).

Discussion and conclusions

The study of political communication in the digital space has been accumulating many academic articles from different approaches in recent years, that collaborate to understand how politicians communicate strategically on their social media accounts and the ways in which citizens interact with those messages and with those politicians. In this research, we studied the digital communication that Argentinean political leaders published on Facebook, the most popular social media in the country, during a highly politicized and polarized period in the local context; taking into special consideration the role that emotions play in this scenario.

According to the content analysis of the texts published by Argentinean politicians on Facebook from November 2014 to November 2015, we could find that emotions played an

outstanding role in the digital communication that these studied politicians displayed on this social platform. In general, Argentinean leaders preferred to publish emotive content than non-emotive content, confirming a tendency identified in recent studies that sustain that political communication along with politicians are getting increasingly emotive with their messages (Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019), as these messages are easier to understand and remember than those ones that don't include emotions in them (Holtz-Bacha, 2013; Lang, 1994; Ortega, 2011). Furthermore, social media not only promote instantaneity and urgency (Castells, 2009; Maarek, 2014), but also their emotional architecture gets on well with simple emotive content that generate interaction among users (Karen Wahl-Jorgensen, 2014).

Although Facebook was widely used by more than 50% of Argentineans, who additionally spent more than four hours daily on social media, politicians did not consider this situation as an opportunity for communicating frequently with citizenship. Even more, in general they did not use this digital channel more frequently, taking advantage of this channel to get known in different contexts. As we could see Massa, Macri and Scioli, occupied political places in Buenos Aires, Argentina´s capital city, and these three ones were not well known in other regions of the country (I Profesional, 2014). In this sense, they lost an opportunity to interact, in a low cost and a disintermediated manner, with other audiences (Maarek, 2014). However, during electoral months, clearly politicized moments, Macri and Scioli, the ones that were in the opposite extremes of the polarization scheme, used Facebook more frequently, suggesting a propagating use of this channel, reproducing old habits of political communication of the top-down model instead of the horizontal model that social media promote (Waisbord, 2015). However, the digital silence of Scioli during November 2015, before the first ballotage in Argentina, is inquisitive. Though, it can be said that as this studied period was the beginning of a widely use of Facebook by political leaders as a channel for publishing their messages throughout the digital space, a professionalized use of this social platform had not been achieved yet.

According to RQ1, we observe that political communication of Argentinean leaders on Facebook is emotive, following a tendency that was observed in different studies (Bene, 2017; Borah, 2016; Gerbaudo, 2016): leaders are becoming more emotional in their messages so as to connect with their digital audiences (Valenzuela, 2011; Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019), as a way to be known, remembered, shared and commented (Aragón et al., 2013; Toret, 2013), along with the architecture of social media that collaborates to this trend of simplification of political content (Karen Wahl-Jorgensen, 2014) and a personalization of political communication, as every social media channel works as a private official communication (Bennett, 2012) or propagation channel (Couldry, 2014; Tarullo, 2018a). However, comparatively they don´t have the same performance. Three of the four studied politicians preferred emotive posts: while Fernández, who was not a candidate, preferred rational messages so as to spread and publicize her achievements as president; Macri, Massa and Scioli, the three ones that were presidential candidates in the election that took place in 2015, favored emotional content to communicate with their digital audiences. In this sense, polarization and politicization that are inherent to electoral periods (Bastos & Mercea, 2017) at least in the case of Argentina (Lodola et al., 2017) would reinforce the presence of emotional content in the case of the candidates' digital communication on Facebook so as to have the attention of a digital and fluid public (Bauman, 2003), amplifying the public space (Papacharissi, 2015). While Fernández, who at the moment of this study played an institutional role, preferred non emotive

messages, using Facebook as a personal/institutional channel to broadcast her personal/institutional achievements.

In relation to RQ2, when Argentinean politicians communicate emotions, they prefer to trigger positive and social emotions, such as gratitude, hope, feeling safe and pride and these chosen emotions were in relation to their political communication strategy, a similar strategy that has been used in different contexts and as previous research has described (Bene, 2017; Gerbaudo, 2016; Lakoff, 2016; Papacharissi & Fatime Oliveira, 2012).

Negative primary emotions, such as anger and fear, the ones that were present in other digital political communication flows (Bastos & Mercea, 2017; Brader, 2005), were not popular in the political communication that these leaders displayed on Facebook during the studied period. Hence, this pattern is different to the one that scholars recognized in recent political campaigns in the digital sphere: communication on Facebook was not emotionally negative, even when the scenario was highly polarized (Esteve et al., 2018), and this indicates an outstanding difference with other studies that demonstrated that politicians had used negative feelings so as to draw the attention of digital audiences and obtained the replication of these messages containing negative emotions (Esteve et al., 2018). Furthermore, anger and fear were not used by Macri´s communication on Facebook, different to other center-right and right-wing leaders that in other polarized contexts privileged both emotions to achieve their electoral goals (Huddy et al., 2007). Furthermore, Macri was the most optimist of the sample, privileging hope and happiness in his messages and mottos. Then, even though political communication is becoming increasingly emotional and this tendency is global, the kind of used emotions vary in relation to the context where the emotions are evoked. In this case, the variables that influence the inclusion of positive or negative emotions in political messages and specific emotions used can be part of future research of the topic.

The third research question analyses the digital interaction that political emotive messages published on Facebook received during the period of this study, trying to recognize which were the emotions that generated more interaction among digital political supporters. We measured interaction using the categorization used by Aragon et. al. (2013): likes (support interaction), comments and shares. Different to the button Like that just generates a "support interaction" (Aragón et al., 2013), the function of sharing that Facebook has for interacting with the posts is the one that collaborates in amplifying audiences (Aragón et al., 2013; Kalsnes & Larsson, 2017) and reaching new publics, as the shared posts reach as many digital walls as clicks they receive. Moreover, to comment a post could be seen as the starting point for digital conversation about general public issues (Valera-Ordaz, Calvo, & López-García, 2018). We could observe that amongst positive emotions, hope is the one that generated most shares and comments, while pride was the most liked one. In this sense, these findings are similar to a previous research that studied television audiences in relation to the presence of emotions in political communication. This study recognized that hope makes participation grow along with the interest of knowing about the general context and the trust that the expected events will eventually occur (Just et al., 2007).

Amongst negative ones, that were not popular in the communication that leaders displayed on Facebook during the studied period, fear was the emotion that generated most engagement in electoral participation, as has been identified in previous research (Miller & Krosnick, 2004; Tarullo, 2018a; Valentino et al., 2008; Weeks, 2015). Therefore, the most shared positive emotion is hope and the most shared negative emotion is fear and, as Manuel Castells

(2009) states, hope and fear are the two sides of the same coin as both emotions breed more interaction followers on Facebook.

Moreover, the use of emotions could give the idea that politicians were trying to have their messages shared, as a way of spreading their communication (Graham et al., 2014). Regarding the absence of intermediaries along with the versatility, velocity and low cost that characterize social media (Maarek, 2014), politicians digital followers become replicators of political messages (Guadagno et al., 2013), reproducing, instead of a communication scheme, a propagation scheme (Tarullo, 2018b). However, as content with hope has also been the most commented one, the evocation of this hope and the interaction it generated among digital citizens suggest the idea of the conformation of an emotional public sphere (Lunt & Pantti, 2007), as participation is promoted by emotions (Brader, 2006; Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019), creating an affective public (Papacharissi, 2015). In this sense, the content of the comments should be examined in future studies to analyze the interactions of these digital flows and their incidence in this emotional political communication scenario.

This article has limitations. Firstly, the analysis of the visual posts can add more information to understand the phenomenon of political communication on social media, as the presence of visual elements is fundamental in the architecture of these platforms (Russmann & Svensson, 2017). This can also influence the interaction that posts achieved, and this was not studied either. Moreover, comparison between periods (electoral –non electoral) can be deeply studied to examine variables that influence digital political communication performances in those more polarized and politicized moments (Lodola et al., 2017). Regarding to this, this research can be enriched if these findings are studied in relation to more recent political communication campaigns, understanding the permanent transformation of the digital political communication campaigns (Bossetta, 2018) A bigger sample can be collected for using automatized sentiment analysis (Groshek & Al-Rawi, 2013; Ortigosa et al., 2014) and comparing results with this research in which collection and analysis was done manually.

Even though this research explored the first steps of using Facebook as a political communication channel in a polarized and politicized moment in the Argentinean context, and digital performances are versatile and change incessantly (Castells, 2009) further research of this use in recent periods can collaborate to have a wider idea of this phenomenon in Argentina.

Notes

[1] Macarena Arostegui, teacher of statistics at UNNOBA, collaborated with the analysis of the collected data.

[2] With the aim of exampling the content and the results of the article, we included screen captures and we also included the link to the post to achieve the original.

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