

Politiske partier på Facebook

Et casestudie af hvordan Venstre og Alternativet bruger Facebook til at opnå indflydelse

Danish Political Parties on Facebook

A case study of how Venstre and Alternativet use Facebook in order to achieve influence

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Abstract

Contempt for politicians is a growing issue in Denmark and people are no longer meeting their politicians face-to-face the way they used to. Social media offer a new way for political parties to communicate with voters. This thesis investigates how two political parties use Facebook to achieve influence in this environment. The research question asked is:

- How do Venstre and Alternativet use their Facebook page outside election campaigns in an attempt to gain political influence?
 - Which types of posts do the parties make and with what content?
 - Who are the parties trying to influence and how?

This thesis is a two-case case study of Venstre and Alternativet. Venstre is a center-right party which is Denmark's oldest party and is currently in government. Alternativet is a center-left environmentalist party in the opposition which is Denmark's newest party with only 7 months in parliament at the time of the gathering of the empirical data.

The empirical data used to answer the above questions are two-fold: 1) Facebook posts for the month of January 2016 and 2) interviews with one person from each party which works with their party's Facebook page daily. The posts are used to answer which types of posts the parties make and with what content and the interviews are used to supplement this knowledge and add information. This makes it possible to answer who the parties are trying to influence and how. Together this information can help answer the question of how the parties use Facebook to try to achieve political influence.



The posts are first analysed quantitatively on the basis of: Number and timestamp of posts, number of shares and likes. Next a content analysis is made: First the posts are coded by subject and type, next a framing and legitimization analysis is performed and finally a word analysis of pronouns is made. The interviews undergo a critical common-sense analysis which thematized the posts in a way so as best to answer who the parties were trying to influence and how.

The study suggests that Venstre uses Facebook primarily as a news channel to communicate their positions on issues to their followers. Alternativet uses Facebook for both communication of positions on issues but also to attempt to involve people in the movement and the party, and perhaps even change their actions. As such the answer to the research question is that Venstre primarily try to achieve influence through influence on attitudes, where Alternativet apart from this also attempt to create a movement where members or followers live out these positions on issues.

Both informants give varied comments about who their target audience is. But overall the findings indicate that both parties focus on current supporters, and that in reality it was the messages that are of importance as these would attract the right type of audience, meaning those who mostly support their opinions.

Content wise the parties both differ and look alike. On differences it is worth noting that Venstre makes about one post a day, communicate very action-oriented and positively about their own actions and opinions, and have a tendency to communicate with their audience in the classical way where they speak *to* them. Alternativet on the other hand makes about three posts a day, communicate a lot about their stance on issues, often through negative positioning of opposing opinions, and have an including communication style.

The results are not unambiguous for either of the parties and the results are therefore an overall reflection of the analysis created.

Based on the data and methods used the results of this thesis, can be used to give an idea of how the two parties use Facebook and with what goals, but the results cannot be used to say anything about the effect of this communication.