Politicians’ Posting Strategies on Facebook: The Case of Hong Kong

Xiaodong Zhang

1 Introduction: Elections in Hong Kong

1.1 The electoral system

Since the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong from the UK to China in 1997, the core keywords of politics in the territory have been “Basic Law” and “One country, two systems.” With the “Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR)” as its de facto supreme law rather than the normal Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, Hong Kong has a different administrative system from that of Mainland China. However, while Hong Kong has not adopted the one-party state system of the Mainland, Hong Kong’s system of government, and especially its election system, also differs from those of democratic states. Baum (2000) noted that the Basic Law retains some key features of the late colonial regime, including a strong, appointed Chief Executive and a weak, mainly advisory/consultative legislature—an arrangement popularly referred to as “executive-led government.” Hong Kong has a combined election system for its unicameral parliamentary legislature: the Legislative Council (LegCo).

Since Hong Kong’s LegCo became a fully elected assembly in 1998, the proportion and political prominence of directly elected seats has grown (Carey, 2017) . Currently, half of the total 70 seats in the chamber are directly elected by Hong Kong’s citizens in five geographical constituencies under a proportional representation system. Thirty seats are indirectly elected by 28 groups representing different professional interest groups; i.e., the “functional constituency (FC).”[(1)] In 2016 the total number of voters in FCs was 239,724,[(2)] while there were 3,779,085[(3)] registered voters overall. The remaining five seats are elected through the District Council (Second) FC, which is also treated as one FC. However, since all voters in Hong Kong are contained in this FC, it is a de facto direct election.[(4)]

The history of Hong Kong’s FCs dates back to the first legislative election in Hong Kong in 1985 (under British rule). Hong Kong’s semi-democratic system is rooted in colonial corporatist traditions, which continue to be manifested in the FCs in both the executive and legislative branches of government (Yeung, Chiu, & Kwok, 2017). As one of the world’s leading international financial centers, it is not surprising that economic elites exert a strong influence on Hong Kong’s politics. Many business leaders believed that they had the experience and ability to deal with Beijing’s appointees but lacked the confidence to bargain with an elected government (Cheng, 2001). Table 1 summarizes the outcomes of all six legislative elections (not including by-elections) since the handover in 1997. The results of geographical constituencies vary while the results of FCs do not—the latter guaranteeing the pro-establishment camp about 25 seats. The FCs favor the pro-establishment camp, which prefers not to confront the Chinese authorities and disturb the stability and prosperity of Hong Kong (Cheng, 2001).

In the directly elected constituencies, the electoral system changed several times. The new proportional representation system has made mutual vetoes more frequent, which also makes it hard to propose

Table 1. Election outcomes of all six legislative elections in Hong Kong (by-elections are not included)

	Geographical constituencies			Functional constituencies[a]		
Year	EST	DEM	Others	EST	DEM	Others
2016	16	19	0	24	10	1
2012	17	18	0	25	9	1
2008	11	19	0	25	4	1
2004	13	17	0	22	8	0
2000[b]	8	16	0	25	5	0
1998[c]	5	15	0	25	5	0

[a]Includes the District Council (Second) functional constituency
[b]Six seats belonged to the Election Committee in the 2000 election
[c]Ten seats belonged to the Election Committee in the 1998 election

alternative policies in the legislature and perpetuates the "executive-dominant" nature of the system (Ma & Choy, 1999).

Consequently, the structure of the Hong Kong LegCo is quite different from that of legislatures in liberal democracies: A change of ruling parties is almost unthinkable, and the pro-democracy camp is consigned to permanent opposition that is vocal but largely impotent (Baum 2000). Despite this lack of uncertainty regarding the overall outcome, the direct elections are administered in a free and fair way by a professionally neutral civil service (Baum, 2000). This fixed ruling-opposition camp structure affects many aspects of Hong Kong's politics, especially electoral strategies on both sides.

In contrast, the election of the Chief Executive of Hong Kong, the head of the government, is limited to a smaller group of FC voters: the 1,200-member "Election Committee." The Chief Executive is effectively immune from LegCo oversight and accountability and enjoys powers similar to those of the former British governor (Cheng, 2001).

1.2 Electoral reform and the "Umbrella Movement"

The pro-democracy camp has consistently called for reform of the electoral system to correct this pro-establishment bias. A series of electoral reforms has indeed taken place, resulting in a gradual increase in the share of directly elected seats in the LegCo. However, the most contentious question of electoral reform, and indeed of Hong Kong politics in general, is whether and how to organize direct elections for the Chief Executive and all seats in the LegCo.

The reforms for the 2012 election were indeed judged a success despite that the proposed introduction in 2017 of a direct Chief Executive election caused a huge political split in Hong Kong. Although both camps supported the reform, agreement broke down over the method of nominating candidates. The nomination method approved by the National People's Congress Standing Committee (NPCSC) in 2014[(5)] allowed only those candidates to stand who had been nominated by the Election Committee with support from at least half its members. The new method was derided as a "fake direct election" by the pro-democracy camp and its supporters, and later became a major cause of the Umbrella Movement.

In 2014, the Occupy Central Movement, which came to be known as the Umbrella Movement, called for reforms to the election systems for the Chief Executive and the LegCo. Several mainly young protesters

occupied several major city intersections from June 26 to December 15, 2014, attracting worldwide attention. Many young politicians who had been involved in the 2014 movement, so-called “umbrella troopers,” stood in the 2015 local elections and the 2016 legislative election. The 2016 election is considered by some scholars to mark the emergence of localism in Hong Kong and the institutionalization of post-Umbrella Movement activism (Kaeding, 2017; Lam & Cooper, 2017; Lincey & Lim, 2017).

1.3 The 2016 oath-taking controversy and the March 2018 by-election

During the oath-taking ceremony for elected candidates of the LegCo on October 12, 2016, a dozen elected pro-democracy candidates used the occasion to protest by adding to or modifying the oath. Controversy followed about which of the politicians should be allowed to retake their oaths; a judicial review ensued and then, most importantly, the NPCSC announced its controversial interpretation of Article 104 of the Basic Law(6) to the effect that elected legislators must swear allegiance to Hong Kong as part of China. Six legislators(7) were disqualified.

In 2018, by-elections were held to fill the empty seats caused by the oath-taking controversy. Four by-elections were held on March 11, 2018, three in geographical constituencies and one in an FC. In November 2018, after Lau Siu-lai gave up her appeal and supported Lee Cheuk-yan, another by-election for a seat in Kowloon West was held. In the by-elections the pro-establishment camp scored a major victory, seizing two geographical seats and one FC seat from the pro-democracy camp.

1.4 Electoral campaigning on Facebook

In Hong Kong, campaign rallies (over 50 people) and parades (over 30 people) need to be authorized by the police department in advance. Labor-intensive face-to-face campaigning, along with constituency services, personalized campaigns, local issues, and negative campaigns, still play an important part in Hong Kong elections (Ma & Choy, 2003).

Since the 2000s, politicians and political groups have also quickly realized the potential of the Internet as a campaigning tool. Facebook is the most popular SNS in Hong Kong, used by 80% of the population (Newman, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos, Levy, & Nielsen, 2017). Politicians in Hong Kong use Facebook as their main platform for online campaigning. Politicians use Facebook in varying degrees to disseminate messages and increase engagement among the more than 1.4 million users who follow or like their pages. Facebook serves a variety of facilitating roles in Hong Kong’s political and media system: as a carrier of information, a promotional channel, a mobilization tool, and a meeting space for like-minded individuals (Yung & Leung, 2014).

2 Related work

Social media has been widely used as a platform for electoral campaigns in recent years, and politicians’ online campaigning strategies have naturally attracted the attention of scholars. Kreiss (2016) explored how Obama’s staffers used Twitter to influence the agendas and frames of professional journalists, as well as to appeal to strong supporters. He argued that online political campaigns have influence over other

actors' definitions of the situation and their consequent actions through well-timed, resonant, and rhetorically effective communicative action and interaction.

Research has also addressed the use of Facebook in electoral campaigns. Johnson and Perlmutter (2010) were pioneers with their study: "The Facebook Election." Borah (2014, 2016) contributed several works about the use of Facebook in U.S. presidential election campaigns, using theoretical concepts from functional theory, political advertising, emotional appeals, and social endorsement to conduct a content analysis. She found that incumbency played a role in the choice of strategies and political discourse happens within two broad topics: policy and character.

Outside the United States, Bene (2017) analyzed 7048 Facebook posts during the Hungarian general election campaign of 2014 and found that citizens are highly reactive to negative emotion-filled, text-using, personal, and activity-demanding posts. However, online electoral campaigning strategy research on Facebook in East Asian states is rare and my work will contribute to filling this gap.

Enli and Moe (2013) demonstrated that digital media is part of the total campaign mix and does not function in an isolated way. Vergeer, Hermans, and Sams (2013) suggested that parties in opposition have more extensive networks on social media than those from ruling parties. Casero-Ripollés et al. (2016) conducted a qualitative study of the campaign strategies of Podemos, a new Spanish left-wing populist party founded in 2014, which rapidly achieved successes in both European and Spanish parliament elections. They suggested that Podemos's campaign strategy in 2014 European elections showed that adopting the rules and criteria of mainstream media is not the only possible response. Political leaders and new grassroots parties can also be active agents toward achieving their goals. Furthermore, they argued that Pablo Iglesias' (the Secretary-General of Podemos) use of social media to expand the message in viral disseminations, and the appeal to emotions and/or message simplification, all played key roles, which created a two-way street mediatization of politics.

While Spain, as a fully independent western democracy, has a totally different political structure from Hong Kong, the case of Podemos in the 2014 European and 2015 Spanish parliament elections shares two common features with the pro-democracy camp in Hong Kong: a position strongly at odds with the status quo and a lack of traditional political resources. Social media makes it possible to mobilize supporters efficiently in an inexpensive way, which permits candidates and parties to produce and disseminate their messages, launching processes of self-mediation (Cammaerts, 2012). Political actors can bypass the mainstream media using digital platforms (Schulz, 2014). This makes social media vital for resource-poor opposition or emerging political forces, like Podemos or the pro-democracy camp and localist politicians in Hong Kong.

3　Research questions (RQs) and method

This paper focused on the geographical constituencies in the March 2018 by-elections. Thirteen candidates competed for three seats. The pro-democracy and pro-establishment camps officially supported one candidate, respectively, in each constituency. Most other individual candidates could not get even 3% of the votes.

Table 2. Election outcomes in the March 2018 geographical constituency by-elections

Candidate	Camp	Constituency	Vote share
Gary Fan Kwok-wai(8)	DEM	NT[a] East	44.57%
Bill Tang Ka-piu	EST	NT East	37.08%
Vincent Cheng Wing-shun	EST	Kowloon West	49.91%
Edward Yiu Chung-yim	DEM	Kowloon West	48.79%
Judy Chan Ka-pui	EST	Hong Kong Island	47.17%
Au Nok-hin	DEM	Hong Kong Island	50.70%

[a]New Territories

Table 2 lists all six major candidates supported by the two major camps. Three of them—Gary Fan Kwok-wai, Bill Tang Ka-piu, and Edward Yiu Chung-yim—had experience as LegCo members. The most notable candidate was Edward Yiu Chung-yim, one of the six disqualified legislators, who won the pro-democracy primaries and changed his constituency from the “Architectural, Surveying, Planning, and Landscape FC” to “Kowloon West” for a re-challenge. Nevertheless, he was defeated by Vincent Cheng Wing-shun by the narrow margin of 2,419 votes, marking the first time the pro-establishment camp had won a geographical seat in a LegCo by-election.

Voter turnout in the geographical constituencies by-elections was 43.13%, much lower than the 2016 LegCo election (58.28%) but similar to the previous by-election in 2016 (2016 New Territories East by-election, 46.18%). In all three constituencies, the pro-establishment camp significantly increased its share of the vote compared to the 2016 LegCo election.

I sought to answer the following RQs:

RQ1: Do candidates from ruling parties and opposition parties show different trends when choosing topics on social media?

RQ2: Do candidates from ruling parties and opposition parties have a different structure and emphasis in message posting?

RQ3: Do candidates from ruling parties and opposition parties adopt significantly different strategies in distinct periods (after/before debate)?

To answer these questions, I collected all Facebook posts made by the six major candidates during the 30 days before the election (from February 10 to March 11, 2018). Data (638 posts) were collected in October 2018. All candidates used Facebook actively in the 30 days before the election, posting at least 2.7 posts on average every day.

For RQ1, I manually extracted political keywords from the collected posts. “Political keywords” means topics with political significance, such as the name of a political event (e.g., DQ(9)), a political value (e.g., democracy), or a policy issue (e.g., education). A special group of keywords I set was criticism of the opposing camp; i.e., negative campaigning. Negative campaigning is likely to contain a wide variety of topics for attacking every aspect of a rival candidate or their camp with the aim of worsening the public image of the opponent rather than talk about the topics themselves. I grouped them into four keywords: criticism of the rival candidate (*Rivalry*), criticism of the rival camp (*Camp*), criticism of the government of Hong Kong (*HK*), and criticism of the central government in Beijing (*Mainland*).

Regarding the next question, previous research has investigated the differences in message-expanding methods and posting strategies between opposition or new parties versus government parties (Bawn & Somer-Topcu, 2012; Casero-Ripollés, Feenstra, & Tormey, 2016; Vergeer, Hermans, & Sams, 2013). To answer RQ2, I assigned each post to one of the following nine categories depending on its purpose:

1. Call for votes (*Call*)
2. Support from others (*Support*)
3. Statements: Making statements like clarifying fake news but not including political views or other special features (*Statements*)
4. Sharing information from mass media or other Facebook pages, etc. (*Share*)
5. Negative campaigning against opponents (*Negative*)
6. Holiday blessings[(10)] (*Blessings*)
7. Political views (*Views*)
8. Campaign updates: Reporting or announcing the live situation or information for campaigns (electoral or not) both online and offline (*Campaigns*)
9. Other: Affairs without political significance, like blessings for the victims of traffic accidents (there was a bus accident with 19 deaths in Hong Kong on February 10, 2018[(11)]) (*Other*)

A post can have multiple purposes like reporting the live situation of an offline political gathering while thanking other politicians for their support. Such posts will be classified into only one category by its most notable purpose.

Another key feature of online message posting in Hong Kong is the choice of language. Cantonese is the prestige variety of Yue Chinese, a major variety of Chinese that has more than 80 million native speakers and is the dominant language in Hong Kong. Since Cantonese is mutually unintelligible with Mandarin, it has naturally become a symbol of Hong Kong identity. Although Cantonese is no doubt the dominant spoken language, written Cantonese is not being as standardized as Mandarin and has no official status in Hong Kong. However, written Cantonese is still widely used not only in Hong Kong but also other Cantonese-speaking areas in Southern China such as Guangdong and Macau.

I used a dummy variable set to 0 for posts written entirely in Mandarin[(12)] and 1 for those containing some written Cantonese.[(13)] Posts only containing common individual words in Hong Kong[(14)] that differ from Mandarin were not counted as written Cantonese.

Lastly, for RQ3, Borondo et al. (2012) performed a time-series analysis of user activity on Twitter during the 2011 Spanish Presidential electoral process, dividing the whole process into six periods: the entire campaign, polling day, debate, voting time, waiting for results, and the announcement of results. They identified the debate between the two candidates on November 7th as the key point in Twitter. They found the time series of the accumulated tweets mentioning political parties or candidates presented piecewise linear growth. I similarly set the first TV debate held on February 21, 2018 by Now TV as the first key point and the start of last week prior to election day as the second key point, dividing the whole 30 days into three periods: Period 1 (before debate) for 2/10–2/20, Period 2 (midterm) for 2/21–3/4, and Period 3 (last week) for 3/5–3/11. Additionally, since "call for votes" posts surged particularly in last three days, I also add Period 3B (last three days) for better comparison.

Scholars working on “semi-democracies” are confronted with a major problem: Do theories and methods developed for “full-democracies” work? By answering all three RQs, this research contributes to provide a review of candidates’ political Facebook use in Hong Kong, a “semi-democratic” state, while most related works are for full-democracy regimes. The evidence from Hong Kong could help us improving the understanding and check the efficiency of related theories for cyber-democracy in hybrid regimes and states.

4 Data analysis and results

Table 3 show the most extracted keywords (at least three times) for each candidate and their frequency in each period of the election.

Negative campaigning is an important topic for all candidates of both camps, and criticism of Hong Kong and the central government is only and heavily used by pro-democracy candidates, as expected. Regarding the results in general, pro-establishment candidates have more keywords but less frequency for each, but show one core topic: For example, Tang focused on traffic, Cheng focused on budget, and Chan focused on negative campaigning. Pro-democracy candidates, in contrast, tend to have fewer keywords but use each more frequently, meaning that they focus on a narrower set of topics. Nevertheless, all candidates put great energy into negative campaigning. Another notable finding here is that negative campaigning by candidates of both camps significantly increases during the election period: It was relatively rare in the 11 days before the debate, quickly increased in the 12-day midterm period, and was heavily used in the last week compared to other top-rated keywords.

Table 4 shows the keywords used most often by the two camps. Besides negative campaigning, the two camps favored different topics but still had some common concerns (although they adopted opposing views on those concerns). Pro-democracy candidates focused most on democratization, while their opponents focused most on development and maintaining the status quo.

Additionally, all candidates wrote the vast majority of their posts (more than 82%) in pure Mandarin. Perhaps surprisingly, I found no overall significant differences between the camps in the frequency of using written Cantonese. The candidate with the second most posts in Cantonese, Bill Tang Ka-piu, is considered a solid supporter of the central government.[18] Incidentally, two candidates from the pro-establishment camp wrote three posts in English talking about the rights of non-Chinese-speaking ethnic minorities.

Table 3. Top keywords for candidates

Keyword	Times	Before debate	Midterm	Last week
Gary Fan Kwok-wai: posts with keywords = 26, number of keywords = 12				
Criticism (HK)	7	2	3	2
KMB[15] Labor dispute	5	3	1	1
Criticism (mainland)	5	2	3	0
Criticism (rivalry)	4	0	3	1
Democracy	4	0	3	1
Budget	4	0	3	1
Ma Liu Shui reclamation[16]	4	1	3	0
DQ	4	3	1	0
Juxtaposed controls[17]	3	2	1	0
Criticism (camp)	3	2	1	0
Edward Yiu Chung-yim: posts with keywords = 30, number of keywords = 23				
Criticism (HK)	6	0	5	1
Criticism (camp)	6	1	0	5
Criticism (mainland)	5	0	3	2
White elephant	5	0	4	1
Criticism (rivalry)	5	0	2	3
Democracy	3	0	2	1
Environment	3	0	2	1
Budget	3	0	2	1
Au Nok-hin: posts with keywords = 53, number of keywords = 22				
Rule of law	12	5	5	2
Criticism (rivalry)	11	2	5	4
Criticism (camp)	10	1	2	7
Democracy	9	0	5	4
Criticism (HK)	7	4	3	0
DQ	5	1	4	0
Criticism (mainland)	3	0	2	1
Housing	3	0	3	0
Environment	3	0	3	0
Violence during voting in Aberdeen	3	0	0	3
Bill Tang Ka-piu: posts with keywords = 37, number of keywords = 25				
Traffic	6	3	0	3
Criticism (camp)	4	0	0	4
Criticism (rivalry)	4	0	3	1
Rationality	3	0	2	1
Budget	3	0	3	0
Vincent Cheng Wing-shun: posts with keywords = 36, number of keywords = 18				
Budget	9	1	8	0
Criticism (rivalry)	6	0	3	3
Criticism (camp)	5	0	3	2
Local fair	4	4	0	0
Judy Chan Ka-pui: posts with keywords = 38, number of keywords = 24				
Criticism (rivalry)	9	0	3	6
Criticism (camp)	6	1	2	3
Budget	4	0	4	0
Occupy central	3	0	0	3
Women	3	0	0	3

HK: Hong Kong, DQ: disqualifications following the 2016 oath-taking controversy.

Table 4. Top-keyword comparison of the pro-democracy and pro-establishment camps

Pro-democracy camp: number of keywords = 36, total frequency = 179		Pro-establishment camp: number of keywords = 47, total frequency = 134	
Negative campaigning			
Criticism (rivalry)	20	Criticism (rivalry)	19
Criticism (camp)	19	Criticism (camp)	15
Criticism (HK)	20	Criticism (HK)	0
Criticism (Mainland)	13	Criticism (Mainland)	0
Others			
Democracy	16	Budget	16
Rule of law	15	Traffic	6
DQ	11	Rationality	5
Budget	8	Ethnic minority	4
KMB labor dispute, white elephant, environment	6	Local fair	4
		Education, disadvantaged people, KMB labor dispute, youth, sports, housing, occupy central, women	3

HK: Hong Kong, DQ: disqualifications following the 2016 oath-taking controversy, KMB: Kowloon Motor Bus Co.

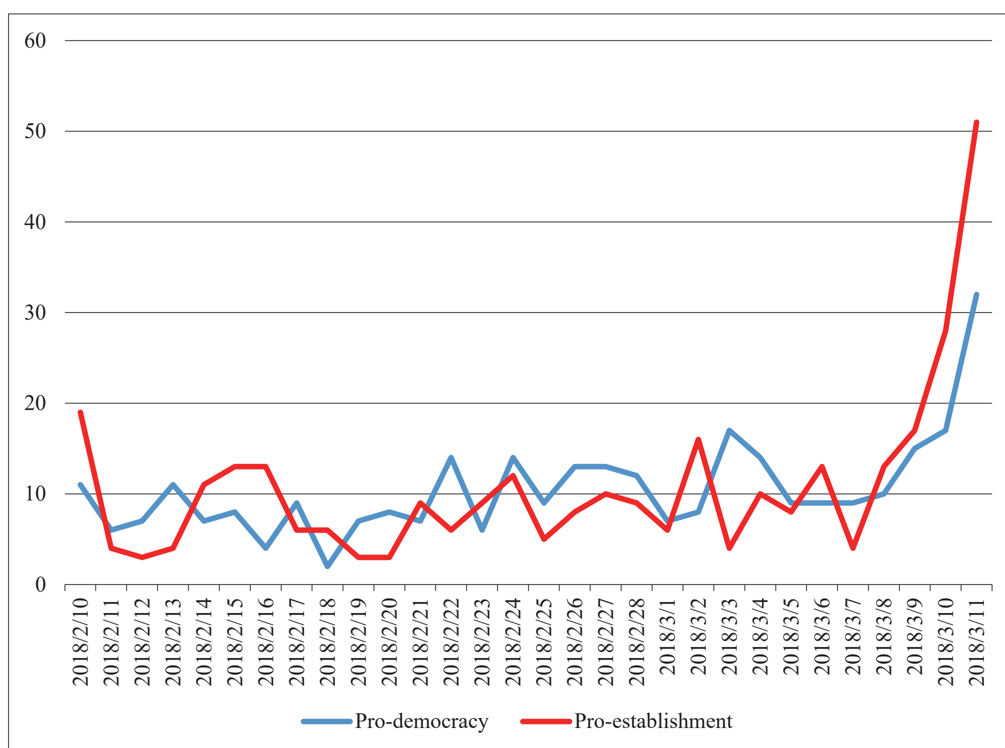

Fig 1. Number of posts every day

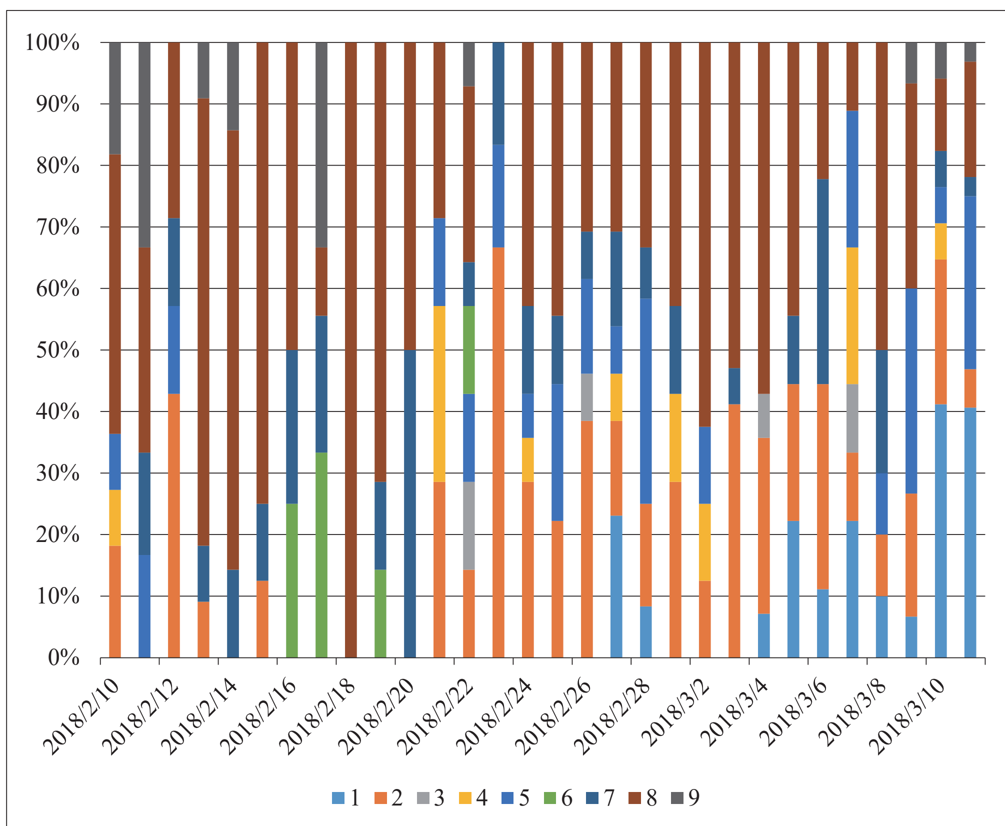

Fig 2. Share of categories of posts by pro-democracy candidates

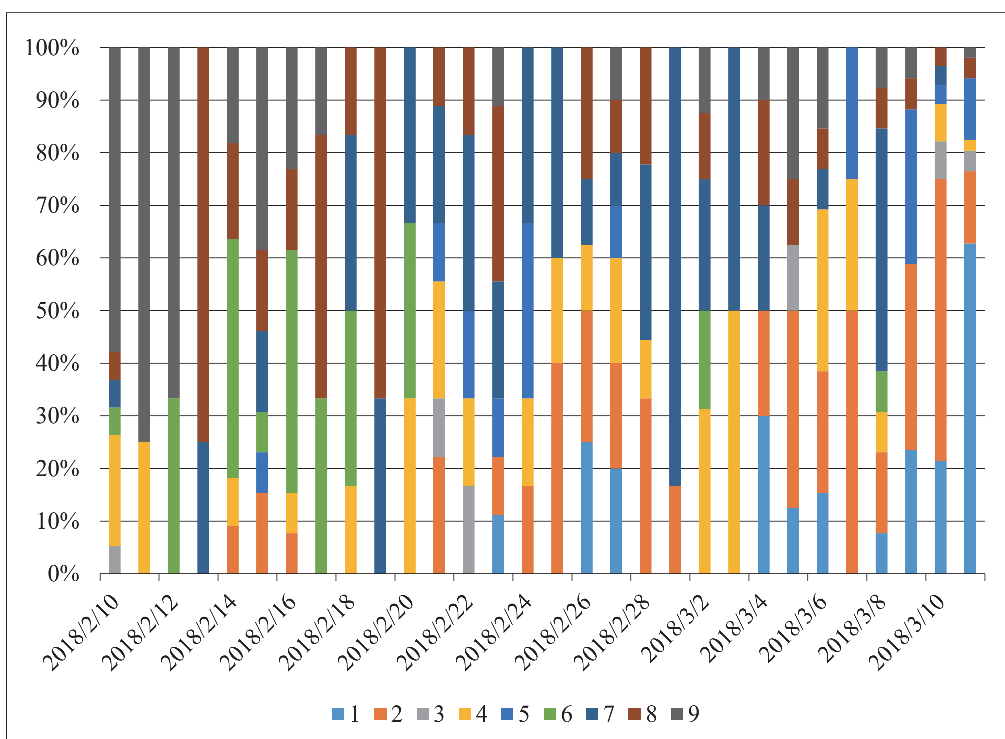

Fig 3. Share of categories of posts by pro-establishment candidates

Table 5. Share of varieties of posts by pro-democracy candidates during the three periods

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Pro-democracy camp, number of posts = 315									
2/10–2/20	0%	9%	0%	1%	4%	6%	16%	53%	11%
2/21–3/4	4%	28%	3%	4%	11%	1%	8%	40%	1%
3/5–3/11	27%	16%	1%	3%	18%	0%	8%	25%	3%
3/9–3/11	33%	14%	0%	2%	23%	0%	3%	20%	5%
Pro-establishment camp, number of posts = 323									
2/10–2/20	0%	5%	1%	11%	1%	22%	9%	19%	32%
2/21–3/4	8%	16%	2%	16%	8%	3%	29%	13%	5%
3/5–3/11	34%	28%	4%	7%	10%	1%	6%	5%	5%
3/9–3/11	44%	29%	4%	3%	13%	0%	1%	4%	2%
All six candidates, number of posts = 638									
2/10–2/20	0%	7%	1%	6%	2%	15%	13%	35%	22%
2/21–3/4	5%	23%	3%	10%	10%	2%	17%	28%	3%
3/5–3/11	31%	23%	3%	5%	13%	0%	7%	14%	4%
3/9–3/11	39%	23%	3%	3%	17%	0%	2%	11%	3%

Figures 2 and 3 show the shares of categories of posts, and Figure 1 shows the number of posts every day by each camp. Most significantly, the number of posts and share of “Call” increased rapidly in the last two days, both of which make sense. Variations in the shares of categories support the division of the election period using the TV debate day and the week prior to election day as key points. In the pre-debate period, “blessings,” “campaigns,” and “other” were most frequent, suggesting a relatively relaxed environment. Then, following the debate day on February 21st, “support” and “negative” appeared and increased significantly, likely the result of politicians criticizing opponents and defending their own actions in an open debate. Finally, “call” became the most frequent category on March 4th, eight days before polling day.

Comparing the kinds of posts produced by the two camps in actual numbers (Table 5), the pro-democracy camp produced significantly more “campaigns” posts while the pro-establishment produced relatively more posts in the “support” and “share” categories. The two camps shared an overall similar structure, especially concerning changes in post categories from period to period. Combining these results with the extracted keywords introduced earlier (see Table 4) reveals that both camps behaved similarly in variation over time for criticism (*rivalry*) and criticism (*camp*) keywords.

Pearson correlation coefficients for the number of daily average posts in each category were adopted to further explore posting strategy in a time-series view (Table 6). The results further underlined the earlier finding about changes in the shares of different post categories over time. Significant negative correlations existed for period and average posts before the debate, besides sharing (Category 4), holiday blessing (Category 6; significant positive correlation), campaign updates (Category 8), and others (Category 9). Next, there was no significant correlation between period in the middle period, making it a complex period for all kind of contents. In the last stage, the sprint leading up to election day, results for the last week and the last three days were similar: Call for votes (Category 1) and negative campaigning (Category 5) had

Table 6. Pearson correlation coefficients results for number of daily average posts in each category. Dependent variables are time period (dummy, posted within the selected group = 1, results in four groups) and camp (dummy, pro-democracy camp = 1).

	Before debate		Midterm		Last week		Last three days	
Category	Period	Camp	Period	Camp	Period	Camp	Period	Camp
1 (Call)	−.833**	−.213	−.569	−.333	.764**	−.205	.739**	−.261
2 (Support)	−.758**	.027	.182	.253	.516	−.305	.494	−.292
3 (Statements)	−.759**	−.275	.213	.030	.447	−.542	.434	−.565
4 (Share)	−.361	−.628*	.214	−.692*	.153	−.652*	−.052	−.567
5 (Negative)	−.774**	.254	.197	.473	.629*	.028	.730**	.132
6 (Blessings)	.582*	−.430	−.452	−.462	−.646*	.023	−.698*	−.366
7 (Views)	−.333	−.166	.302	−.446	−.083	.798	−.632*	−.053
8 (Campaigns)	.010	.846**	.081	.925**	−.106	.743	.037	.678*
9 (Other)	.390	−.330	−.474	−.368	−.175	.586	−.041	−.190

*p < .05; **p < .01.

strong positive correlations while political views (Category 7) was negatively correlated in last three days. This suggests that a common sprint strategy that uses simpler slogans, shorter stories, and negative campaigning is valuable. However, significant correlations between average posts and the other independent variable (i.e., camp) were not revealed. Apart from the fact that the pro-democracy camp posted more campaign updates and fewer sharing ones (very tiny amounts for all periods), both camps shared similar posting strategies.

In sum, the proportion of negative campaigning was quite similar between the two camps in the March 2018 by-election, if one consider criticism of local and central government as a core political view of the pro-democracy camp rather than simply a campaign tactic.

5　Conclusion and discussion

In this study, I investigated differences and commonalities between ruling and opposition camps in Hong Kong, a city state with fair and free elections but lacking suspense regarding electoral outcomes because of the election law and Hong Kong's special status as an SAR of China.

My findings suggest that, in answer to RQ1, the pro-establishment camp focused on development and status quo while the pro-democracy camp placed more emphasis on further democratization. Overall, both camps focused on local affairs in their Facebook posts. These results are similar to results obtained by Conway, Kenski, and Wang (2015) in their study of Twitter use in the 2012 US Presidential election, which suggested that candidates and parties placed similar emphasis on issues. While the opposition pro-democracy camp in Hong Kong focused heavily on resisting the central government, pro-democracy candidates also tended to focus on a narrower set of topics. In this sense, the pro-democracy camp showed more local awareness and dissenting opinion during online political campaigns.

Addressing RQ2, the findings showed that all candidates from both camps put great energy into negative campaigning. Previous work in the United States suggests that incumbency could have also played a role in

the choice of social media strategies: Incumbents attack less (Borah, 2016). My data on Hong Kong showed a different situation: The overall strategies between two camps differ greatly, but both made many attack. One probable cause is the election system: The ruling pro-establishment camp has often been voted out in direct elections, hence there is almost no advantage to incumbency. Apart from common criticisms against the opposing candidate and camp, pro-democracy candidates criticizing the local (Hong Kong) and central (Beijing) governments also formed an important part of their message. Thus, this negative campaigning against government by pro-democracy candidates is a core political view rather than common negative campaigning tactic. Additionally, as found in previous work on Europe (Bene, 2017), memes, negative content, and mobilizing posts also played a key role in Facebook political communication in Hong Kong for both camps.

The two camps did not differ significantly in their use of written Cantonese. All candidates in the by-election basically used Mandarin for their Facebook posts. Possible explanations for his could be that politicians prefer to use the official language during a LegCo election, and perhaps they wish to appeal to voters who cannot understanding Cantonese very well.

In answer to RQ3, I found that the two camps showed a similar chronological development in their Facebook campaigning, and they shared an overall analogous structure, especially concerning the changes in post categories from period to period.

Despite that, there were also some differences. Based on a study of elections in Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, Bawn and Somer-Topcu (2012) suggested that government parties do better in elections when they take relatively extreme positions to offset the popularity costs of making ideologically unappealing choices when in power. On the other hand, opposition parties perform better by taking more moderate positions (Bawn & Somer-Topcu, 2012). However, my findings suggest that in Hong Kong, the Pro-Democracy camp's online campaign heavily relied on taking extreme positions with appeals to voters' emotions and message simplification in negative campaigning against the Beijing and Hong Kong governments, while the pro-establishment camp generally adopted relatively moderate positions calling for rational thinking. Both these strategies can probably be attributed to the unfairness of the electoral system for opposition parties and the fixed ruling-opposition structure in Hong Kong.

The pro-democracy camp also had significantly more posts reporting or announcing the live situation or information for campaigns (electoral or not), both online and offline (Category 8). Just like Casero-Ripollés et al.'s (2016) findings concerning Podemos, opposition and younger populist candidates pay more attention to synergistically combining online and offline tools than their counterparts, merging their communications into a hybridized environment. In contrast, the pro-establishment camp had relatively more posts about support from other politicians, elite bureaucrats or social celebrities, and sharing information from other sources. These findings reflect the advantage of electoral resources enjoyed by the pro-establishment camp, and underline that the pro-establishment camp is favored by professional or special interest groups with an interest in the election results of FCs.

This research has a number of limitations and needs further refinement. First, there is a question regarding the generalizability of the findings. Hong Kong is in many ways a unique case regarding the relationship between the opposition camp and the central government under the one-party, two-system

regime, especially after enactment of the Hong Kong national security law in 2020. Second, the dataset only contained posts by six candidates in one by-election, limiting the persuasiveness of the results concerning strategic differences and effectiveness. A possible solution for this point would be to redo the study at the next (and/or formal) full LegCo election, which would furnish much more data. However, the manual coding approach adopted here would not be scalable to a very large number of candidates and Facebook posts, requiring a new approach such as topic modeling. Moreover, given the unprecedented scale of the 2019 Hong Kong anti-extradition bill protests, further research should consider the influence of this series of protests on politicians in the upcoming LegCo election. In addition, further work to compare Hong Kong and other semi-democracy regimes, such as Singapore, should be completed.

Notes

(1) https://www.legco.gov.hk/education/files/chinese/Exhibition_Panels_Supplementary_Notes/Composition-of-the-LegCo.pdf

(2) https://www.voterregistration.gov.hk/chi/statistic20163.html

(3) https://www.voterregistration.gov.hk/chi/statistic20161.html

(4) Unlike the geographical constituencies, only the elected members of District Councils can become nominees and nominate candidates.

(5) http://www.npc.gov.cn/npc/cwhhy/12jcwh/2014-08/31/content_1876904.htm, in simplified Chinese.

(6) Members of the LegCo must swear to uphold the Basic Law and swear allegiance to the Hong Kong SAR of the PRC.

(7) Sixtus Leung Chung-hang, Yau Wai-ching, Leung Kwok-hung, Nathan Law Kwun-chung, Edward Yiu Chung-yim, and Lau Siu-lai.

(8) Personal name structure for Hong Kong politicians in this paper is: English given name (if any) + Surname + Chinese given name.

(9) "Disqualify" and "DQ" in this paper refer to the disqualifications following the 2016 oath-taking controversy.

(10) I originally classified holiday blessing as a part of others, but since February 16th is the Chinese New Year plus the earlier Valentine's day, holiday blessing posts are common and were thus made an individual category.

(11) https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/law-crime/article/2132850/least-nine-dead-40-injured-hong-kong-double-decker-bus

(12) e.g., " 請盡快到票站，投票支持阿舜 " by Cheng Wing-shun, means "Please come to the polling place ASAP, vote for Ah-shun (nickname for Wing-shun)"

(13) e.g., " 我忍唔住搵紙巾印左幾下雙眼 " by Au Nok-hin, means "I can't help but wipe away tears from my eyes with tissue paper." Underlined bold parts are in Written Cantonese.

(14) e.g., " 僭建 " in Yiu Chung-yim's post, equivalent to " 违建 " in Mandarin, means 'unapproved construction'.

(15) The Kowloon Motor Bus Co.

(16) Ocean land fill in Ma Liu Shui.

(17) Juxtaposed controls for high speed railway between the mainland and Hong Kong.

(18) He has a portrait of Karl Marx in his office, according to a photo in one post by his opponent Fan Kwok-wai.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Baum, R. (2000). Democracy deformed: Hong Kong's 1998 legislative elections – and beyond. *The China Quarterly*, 162, 439–464. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741000008201

Bawn, K., & Somer-Topcu, Z. (2012). Government versus opposition at the polls: How governing status affects the impact of policy positions. *American Journal of Political Science*, 56(2), 433–446.

Bene, M. (2017). Go viral on the Facebook! Interactions between candidates and followers on Facebook during the Hungarian general election campaign of 2014. *Information, Communication & Society*, 20(4), 513–529.

Borah, P. (2014). Facebook use in the 2012 USA presidential campaign. In *Social Media in Politics* (pp. 201–211). Springer, Cham.

Borah, P. (2016). Political Facebook use: Campaign strategies used in 2008 and 2012 presidential elections. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 13(4), 326–338.

Borondo, J., Morales, A. J., Losada, J. C., & Benito, R. M. (2012). Characterizing and modeling an electoral campaign in the context of Twitter: 2011 Spanish Presidential election as a case study. *Chaos: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Nonlinear Science*, 22(2), 023138. https://doi.org/10.1063/1.4729139

Cammaerts, B. (2012). Protest logics and the mediation opportunity structure. *European Journal of communication*, 27(2), 117–134.

Carey, J. M. (2017). Electoral formula and fragmentation in Hong Kong. *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 17(2), 215–231. https://doi.org/10.1017/jea.2016.43

Casero-Ripollés, A., Feenstra, R. A., & Tormey, S. (2016). Old and new media logics in an electoral campaign: The case of Podemos and the two-way street mediatization of politics. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 21(3), 378–397.

Cheng, J. Y. S. (2001). Elections and political parties in Hong Kong's political development. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 31(3), 346–374. https://doi.org/10.1080/00472330180000211

Conway, B. A., Kenski, K., & Wang, D. (2015). The rise of Twitter in the political campaign: Searching for intermedia agenda-setting effects in the presidential primary. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 20(4), 363–380.

Enli, G., & Moe, H. (2013). Introduction to special issue: Social media and election campaigns–key tendencies and ways forward. *Information, Communication & Society*, 16(5), 637–645.

Johnson, T. J., & Perlmutter, D. D. (2010). Introduction: The Facebook election. *Mass Communication and Society*, 13(5), 554–559.

Kaeding, M. P. (2017). The rise of "localism" in Hong Kong. *Journal of Democracy*, 28(1), 157–171. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2017.0013

Kreiss, D. (2016). Seizing the moment: The presidential campaigns' use of Twitter during the 2012 electoral cycle. *New Media & Society*, 18(8), 1473–1490. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444814562445

Lam, W., & Cooper, L. (2017). *Citizenship, identity and social movements in the new Hong Kong: Localism after the Umbrella Movement*. Routledge.

Lincey, Q., & Lim, T. W. (2017). The rise of localist young activists in Hong Kong. *East Asian Policy*, 9(2), 100–107. https://doi.org/10.1142/S1793930517000204

Ma, N., & Choy, C. (1999). The evolution of the electoral system and party politics in Hong Kong. *Issues & Studies*, 35, 167–194.

Ma, N., & Choy, C. K. (2003). The impact of electoral rule change on party campaign strategy: Hong Kong as a case study.

Party Politics, 9(3), 347–367.

Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Kalogeropoulos, A., Levy, D. A. L., & Nielsen, R. K. (2017). *Digital News Report 2017*. Retrieved from https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Digital%20News%20Report%202017%20web_0.pdf

Schulz, W. (2014). Mediatization and new media. In *Mediatization of politics* (pp. 57–73). Palgrave Macmillan.

Vergeer, M., Hermans, L., & Sams, S. (2013). Online social networks and micro-blogging in political campaigning: The exploration of a new campaign tool and a new campaign style. *Party Politics*, 19(3), 477–501. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068811407580

Yeung, R. L. K., Chiu, F. T. C., & Kwok, J. Y. C. (2017). Corporatist governance in Hong Kong: The case of the sports and arts functional constituency. *Asia Pacific Journal of Public Administration*, 39(3), 163–176. https://doi.org/10.1080/23276665.2017.1361632

Yung, B., & Leung, L. Y. M. (2014). Facebook as change? Political engagement in semi-democratic Hong Kong in its transition to universal suffrage. *Journal of Asian Public Policy*, 7(3), 291–305. https://doi.org/10.1080/17516234.2014.922147

［査読を含む審査を経て、2021年4月2日掲載決定］
（一橋大学大学院社会学研究科博士後期課程修了）