

Electoral Campaigns in the Digital Age:
The Impact of Social Media and Design Communication on the 2018
“Lebanese Parliamentary Elections” campaigns

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by
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Abstract

Technology is altering human communication and their lifestyle. It helped in spreading information and made it more focused for serving human needs. This technological revolution was known as the “information age” which had a dramatic impact on our culture, in terms of making life much easier. The digital revolution changed a lot in the ways we communicate and we interact. Living in the digital age, people are being exposed to a brand-new power; the digital power. Social media gives the opportunity to bring politics closer to people and creates an atmosphere that is incredibly informative and easily accessible. Digital media and social media created a visible influencing platform that is also informative which targets people and manipulates their actions. This research aims to study the influence of social media and design communication in the 2018 Lebanese parliamentary election campaigns, mainly the one of the civil society coalition “Kollouna Watani” to assess its effectiveness in directing people’s voting choices. The research findings proved the importance of social media in electoral campaigns. The results confirmed that social media as a tool of communicating political content do affect voters but cannot direct their voting decisions. The findings support the need to better understand the importance of building a well-studied campaign ahead of time while planning the design content.

Keywords: Political Campaigns, Political Ads, Social Media, Elections, Lebanese Parliamentary Elections, Civil Society, Visual Media, Design Communication

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to all the Lebanese dreamers and survivors who are fighting for a better future.

Shall we believe that we can make change happen?

Shall we vote for change?

Change is coming!

The introductory part presents background information about the topic, some general information about political and electoral campaigns and the role of digital media in this field.

Introduction

In democratic countries, citizens participate in the formation of their governmental structure. In other words, during elections voters express their preferences and thus take part in the political decision-making process. During elections or even before, political parties conduct electoral campaigns that work on manipulating and guiding voters' intentions and decisions.

Political campaigns are market-oriented; their goal is to affect voters.

Campaigns create a structure that works systematically to facilitate electoral choice. Their main goal is to achieve triumph and success. Campaigns usually appraise the cost along with accurate expectations on voters' intents and predilections. Campaign specialists focus their target on the voter reach and the fundraising process; they also rely their business mostly on different networks such as social media platforms and test the success of their campaigns by collecting records of votes (Nickerson & Rogers, 2014).

Social media invaded the political existence as a powerful engaging tool that provides a broader perspective and hence political campaigns depend more on this network to promote themselves online.

Social media is a double-handed chain, it can bring down systems, but it cannot replace them. The main problem is that it's not credible enough to people due to disinformation and negative publicity. On the design level, the communicative design is the main power and the significant content that enriches social media.

This research examines the influence of social media and design communication in the 2018 Lebanese electoral campaigns, mainly the one of the civil society coalition “Kollouna Watani” to assess its effectiveness in directing people’s voting decision making. The study aims to fulfill the following objectives:

- Understand the history of political campaigning on the international level.
- Investigate the effect of social media in the Lebanese elections landscape through the case of “Kollouna Watani” coalition.
- Develop a design guideline that could be used in future electoral campaigns.

In order to meet these objectives, this paper will present a review of literature within the fields of political campaigning and political marketing along with design communication to explore the impact of social media on Lebanese voting behavior.

In order to collect information pertaining to the topic under-study, a literature review was conducted to explore the theme of “Political Campaigning in the Digital Age”.

Literature Review

Political campaigns are market oriented. In political electoral campaigns, competition is one of the main aspects that encourages political parties and candidates to give their best in their advertising strategies by hiring advertising/ marketing agencies to better direct people’s intentions. The short-term contributions of advertising (either positive or negative) are essential in electoral campaigns (Pinkleton, Nam-Hyun Um, & Erica, 2002). Advertising is the visible representation of a strategic business framework. It is one of the most powerful mass media tools to communicate effective messages with the receiver. Advertisements target and manipulate people’s emotions and actions, and persuade them with the ideas they are presenting on short run considerations (Hulbert, 1968). Advertisements and design communication are very important in targeting people. They are very essential for the success of any business or campaign. People nowadays are aware that it is necessary to build a good strategy in communicating messages they want to present.

In fact, political campaigning gives voters a clear vision on how they should direct their choices and influences them to participate in the choice making during elections. Voters exposed to such campaigns are attracted to the information they receive. In other words, the psychological factors play an important role in casting their ballots. The impact of campaigning is based on a defined thematic agenda and well-issued strategy that focuses on promoting the best imagery and performance; the advertisements are presented in an overwhelmingly monitored scheme. Campaigning is very effective in directing and manipulating people’s voting intentions and

influences their decision-making outcomes (Abbe, Goodliffe, Herrnson, & Patterson, 2003).

Seeking all probabilities to be elected, candidates stress on revealing their campaign image in an honest, intelligent, controlled and competing approach (Mueller & Stratmann, 1994).

The section below will focus on political campaigning and political marketing in the election process.

Political Campaigning & Political Marketing

Political Campaigning is a term used to describe an act held by organizations that represent an electoral movement which works on influencing voters and directs them to specific candidates or parties during elections. Political campaigns have fixed strategies not only they target voters who have similar visions to their own, they also try to change attitudes of those who oppose their ideas or may be neutral to their political views. Such campaigns work on influencing voters' emotions through advertisements and real-life material so that they create strong means of persuasion, (Granato & Wong, 2004).

Marketing provides resources for focusing proficiently on customer satisfaction and creating an exchanged profit out of it. A political marketing strategy develops a relation between the political candidate's values and voters' needs. The importance of political marketing leans in delivering significant ideologies that lead to satisfactory voting decisions. Marketing aspects enable participation and engagement between candidates and voters (O'Cass, 1996). During the last decade, it was noticeable that political marketing and campaigning were growing in a considerable approach. The factors contributing to this growth and to the increase in the political campaigning awareness are related to the lessening of political parties, the regression of parties' empathy, and to the rising of electoral instability. These factors were a result of the uprising of

heavy media usage, political consultancy, television advertisements and the development of personalized and permanent political campaigning (Strömbäck, 2007).

Political campaigning creates knowledge about political candidates, independent candidates, political allies, and electoral lists in order to enlighten voters' intentions (Brady, Johnston & Sides, 2006).

Visuals are equally important to words and are of great importance to electoral campaigns (Robinson, 2010).

The next section will present a historical overview of successful political campaigns that marked the history of political communication.

Historical Background of Political Campaigning

Historically, fighters during wars used to translate their ideas into messages and signs “semiotics” conveying meaning(s) within a specific code and context (Issa, 2016). The handwritten messages or visuals helped people to express and to promote their ideas visually, which is equivalent to advertising nowadays. The translation of activists' visions and aims into practices enables to fill the institutional vacuum in the community. At the same time, the most valuable resources that activists mobilize are memories of and claims to their history. They create a kind of political awareness and national identification and a culture of return that can be seen through their reactions (Al- Hardan, 2012) which is translated in our social life through different means.

The socio-political aspects of a culture act as productive and powerful engine creating different directions of emotional frames example youth, gender and crises. Semiotics and politics are assumed to occupy different spheres in an intertwined direction (Mejcher-Atassi, 2013).

Since World War II, numerous writers have classified three stages of political campaigning; “pre-modern, modern and postmodern”. They also identified them as the phases of telecommunication and television revolutions. The phases differ in the analysis between authors but mainly they indicated the backgrounds of the development in the advertising and media technology after the war (Strömbäck, 2007).

U.S Presidential Campaigns versus the Nazi Brand

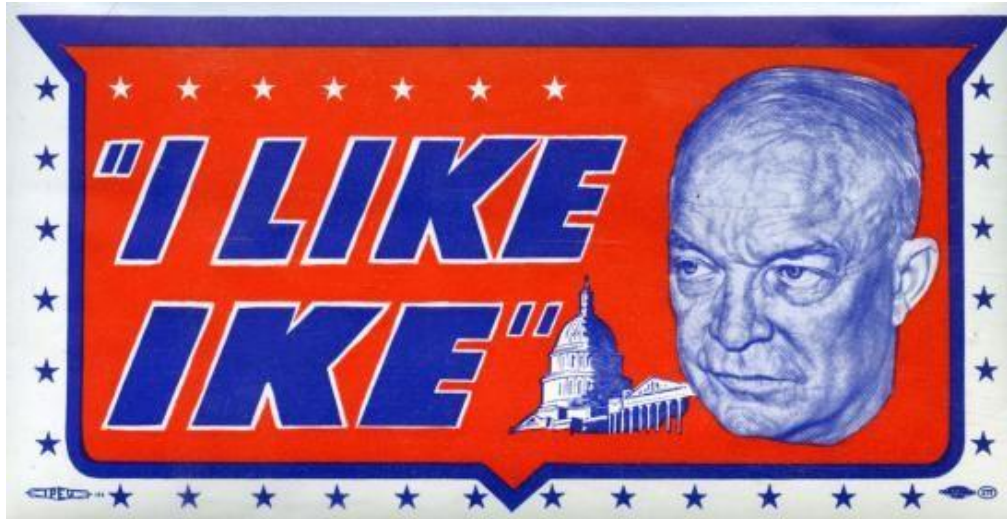
Eisenhower’s 1952 presidential campaign

The 1952 Eisenhower presidential ad campaign titled “Eisenhower Answers America” was marked as the first television presidential campaign that held a substantial significance of a strategically televised politics. This political and advertising pragmatism-based campaign relied on TV and radio to stimulate voters to act and vote for Eisenhower. The televised commercials of the campaign focused on the importance of making change in the political system and that there were no room for war anymore (Wood, 1990).

Mason posited that “The activism that Eisenhower inspired achieved unique strength in the twentieth-century US politics; no other personally focused political organization had success at such a scale” (MASON, 2013). His political campaign focused on his desire and personality. This led the way to his powerful success.

He revealed his political messages in an engaging and entertaining manner where he had a catchy slogan “I like Ike,” that turned into a song manipulating Americans to support him through ethos, pathos and logos; which are appealing to speaker’s characters, emotions, and facts (Christiansen, 2018).

Eisenhower's 1952 campaign poster



Reagan's 1984 presidential campaign

The presidential 1984 campaign for the American Hollywood actor Ronald Reagan was considered a magical manipulation that communicated and successfully lead voters to elect him as a president of the most commanding country. He was very successful in appealing to the American voter's super-ego (Lösche, 1985).

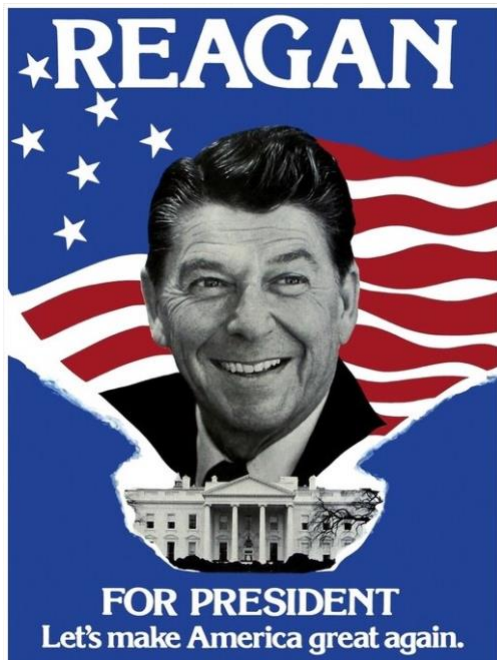
Johnstone wrote,

“Among Ronald Reagan's contributions to American life has been a legacy that is at once political and moral. He has bequeathed a vision of the political process in which the values and forms of democratic decision-making have been replaced by activities and expectations geared more to entertainment than to wise judgment”. (Johnstone, 1995).

Reagan's campaign offered solutions to many living problems and policy proposals; he made it simple by suggesting the lowered taxes and federal outflows to reviving the local economy. Reagan proposed an ethical guidance program promising to strengthen and renovate the country's spiritual growth. His campaign can be labeled as a rejection of the country's path.

His intentions were reflected clearly in his advertised campaign signifying the dream of creating a better society (Shogan, 2004).

Ronald Reagan 1980 campaign poster



Obama's 2008 presidential campaign

Barak Obama's presidential campaign was considered as one of the most powerful campaigns in present history along with the strongest assembled team that worked in an innovative and brilliant way. Their performance was based on all means of new media techniques and a channeled messaging campaign that brought the candidate closer to his voters (Rho'Dess, 2011).

Michaelsen claimed,

“Obama's marketing strategy drew in people of all types, convinced them to support and vote for Obama. The Obama campaign carefully crafted a strategy to achieve brand recognition, and then never strayed from their core message” (Michaelsen, 2015; 34).

The presidential campaign strategy was impressively able to signal the capability in engaging, influencing, and stimulating voters. The campaign was held on different platforms such as websites, TV channels, Social Networking Sites (SNS) and mobile applications. Followers were involved in the funding of the campaign by donating a minimal amount of money (1\$) as a contribution. This technological shift in political campaigns was an evolution with respect to previous campaigns.

This straightforward comprehensive campaign encouraged users or voters to engage more openly and interact easily with candidate's team online activities. Obama's political campaign tactics made a huge success in delivering positive visual and verbal communicating skills (Abroms, Lorien & Lefebvre, 2009).

Trump's 2016 presidential campaign

Donald Trump generated an outstanding success during the 2016 presidential elections. The controversy on his social media pages created news that made it questionable to people, which was worth trading to trigger voters that were with or against him. The attention trump gained during the elections was mainly because of his behavior covered by the media, even his opponents used to write about him. His digital victory was a result of his earned media and the buzz created on his social media pages mainly Twitter and Facebook. Followed by Obama's campaign achievement and the importance of social media in leading to this success, Donald Trump was aware and invested twice more than Obama in his campaign. Trump's digital marketing management team claims that the money spent on his campaign "paid media" and his unsettled behavior lead to the attraction of two different target groups and eventually his political supremacy. Twitter was the most powerful channel of communication that helped him engage with voters and brought him this controversial attention optimizing his victory (Vlatković, 2018).

Trump raised his voice on social media by sharing his passion in an entertaining manner. His campaign cost billions of dollars but it generated the success they wanted and actually made him the president of the United States of America (Sillito, 2016). Trump's victory was mainly because of the outstanding performance that his team played in collecting information about more than 50 million Facebook users according to the Cambridge Analytica team. They were reading voters' minds and targeting them according to their profile preferences and the micro targeting was by tailoring the right message to the right voter (Matthew, Nicholas & Carole, 2018)

The Russian interference in the U.S 2016 presidential elections concentrated on manipulating the public opinion in the States mainly through social media. Russian machinists established a cyber proficiency beyond surpassing their troll's paid use and attacking the nation for the sake of their propaganda. Social media presents an innovative tool, yet it is hard to rely on it solely (Bossetta, 2018).

The Nazi Propaganda

The Nazi German dictator Adolf Hitler wrote in his book "Mein Kampf" about the propaganda he practiced during his times. He stressed on the importance of engaging people with a strong and powerful self-marketing strategy. He aimed to introduce people to a new purpose that matches his security power that he always fought for (Hitler, 1925). As part of his brand image, Hitler illustrated theoretical and practical storytelling propagandas expressed through narrative patterns to highlight his ethics and charisma to reveal a harsh brainwashing manipulative consequence that gave him the power he wanted. Hitler's public persona and his appearance were very important as he always strived to influence his followers with his

personality and genuine charismatic power so that they perceive him at that time with the “image of the heroic leader”. The appeal of Hitler’s personality, public speeches and skills, in addition to his political messages made his political success (Takala & Auvinen, 2016).

The Nazi propaganda after Hitler shaped its dimensions with a non-memory biased, and it relied on prompting social biases to manipulate and affect decision-making experiences. It used a stimulus response approach. The Nazis brand included comprehensive marketing tools such as radio, movies, posters and the press. Posters were creatively designed under some psychological drivers yet functioning maliciously, for the favor of perceiving the political power in the German population and they had creative people working on the manipulative posters of great messages and slogans (Narayanaswami, 2011).

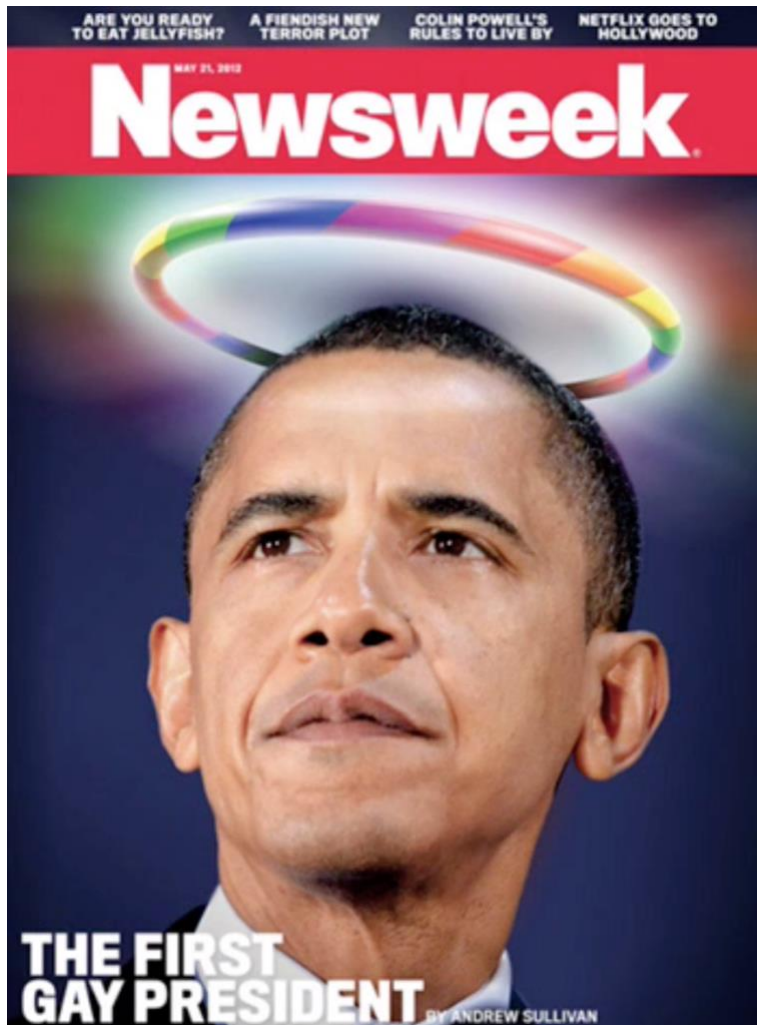
One great example is the Obama campaign visuals that were widely known for the ‘halo’ graphic, portraying him as a savior and symbol of hope.

Obama “hope” campaign visual, *Huffington Post*, October 13, 2009



The Obama “hope” campaign was created by the artist Shepard Fairey who used the iconic symbolism of hope to gain voters’ interest (Arnon, 2009).

Obama 'halo gay' campaign visual, 2016



The “halo” phenomenon in Obama’s campaign chattered negative news. The Newsweek magazine cover described him as the first gay president.

The Trump campaign started by revealing an inverted red triangle that symbolizes the Nazi concentration camps. According to the campaign team, this symbol was used as an “Antifa symbol” reflecting on the campaign. (Smith, 2020).

Trump 'inverted red triangle' campaign visual, 2016



Symbols are since ever a powerful communicative tool that reflects ideological and cultural realities. Symbology empowered technological aspects through the usage of cultural messages (Poon, 2018) and hence generating power when campaigning.

The next paragraph will deal with data about design communication and the importance of politics of image in the electoral campaigning process as a powerful visual source to manipulate voters' intentions.

Design Communication

Design is the action of altering a given element into a distinguished one by creation and intervention. It reveals a concern for inventing valuable process of outcomes. Design is an understanding communicated through mutual knowledge and principles of interaction that investigates the social community and creates solutions for visual or idealized problems. It takes place with the support of systems, strategies, and techniques to achieve a redesigned interactivity with new shaped communication possibilities. Design combines the power of a concept and the standards of communicational patterns to achieve the success of manipulating keenly any strategical approach. The design is an interactive reflection of viewers' emotions and intentions, so it has to be examined in the context of intervention and practiced in the social world (Aakhus, 2007).

Advertising Design Communication

"Promotional Design" or what is also known as "Advertising Design" is fundamentally multifaceted and sometimes misleading because of the remarkable diversity of creative possibilities and the bulky consumer and conservational features shaping the efficiency of advertising. Advertising is the visible representation of a strategic business framework. It is one of the most powerful mass media tools that communicate effective messages with the receiver. Advertisements target and manipulate people's emotions and actions and persuade them with the ideas they are presenting on short run considerations (Hulbert, 1968).

Many studies have been conducted to discover the relationships between consumer decision making and advertising communication in order to understand the impact aspect in terms of structure, intentions and outcomes. Advertising communication design stays subjective and instinctive in its development and relies on different approaches such as positioning,

message characteristics, presenter characteristics and message emotions (Burke, Rangaswamy, Wind & Eliashberg, 1990).

Now, online advertising is gaining more popularity. It is divided into two different categories: the classified advertising and the display advertising. Classified advertising is the kind of information that appears on the browser that does not require algorithmic search. Display advertising does not include search engines and can be targeted according to different mechanisms. The biggest advertising online companies such as Facebook, Google and Microsoft stress on the importance of targeting, privacy and antitrust to generate the online marketing power and make it effective (Goldfarb, 2014).

Brand Building

Brand building is considered a long-term influencing path. The brand provides an emotional connection that can live in the perceiver's memory and expectations (Medveschi & Frunză, 2018). Brand experience should focus on empowering the image along with formulating strategies to enhance emotions and alter the behavior (Kim & Chao, 2019). Politicians have to engage their brand niche assuring loyalty and creating consumer security programs out of their political image in order to attract followers' beliefs and support (Van Ham, 2001).

The political image is perceived as reputation building and is approved fitting some independent norms of rationalities and reasons. Power, proficiency, leadership potency and integrity in political images are all exposed to conversant criticism and experienced mentoring. Political branding and identity positioning by image support are technically considered a distinctive value

that helps understand and affect citizens' perceptions and can be truly productive in the field of political marketing (Scammell, 2015).

Digital Media and Politics

Digital media is an independent subsystem, a transmission belt and a communication tool between voters and leaders in the political arena (Schroeder, 2018). Nowadays, the political communication shifted to online platforms which are said to be the tools of negotiation and circulation. This shift and the balance between the traditional and new media technologies is called the hybrid system (Schroeder, 2018).

According to Michaelsen,

“The internet brought about very important marketing advantages for presidential candidates. First, the Internet revolutionized campaign communication by allowing candidates to communicate with the masses for a fraction of the price of expensive advertisements and mailed campaign materials. More significantly, the internet gave candidates a greater ability to control their campaign message and image” (Michaelsen, 2015; 27-28).

For instance, during Iran's 2009 elections, a significant use of innovative digital media tools by the state's users; both individuals and government, was noticed. Voters were using social media intensively and several new patterns of communication took place as a result of this new online technology approach (Akhavan, 2013).

Thus, the term social media represents the age of interactivity and online broadcasting of messages and information between users through different sources, it presents a communicational platform where every user has the ability to raise a voice and share his opinion regarding any issue (Manning, 2014). Social media networks include Facebook, Twitter,

LinkedIn, Instagram, Youtube, Flickr and Tumbler. Websites and blogs are social media tools that generate information and allow to interact with users. All our lives became digital, billions of users engage daily through different social media networks and this played an important role in our lifestyle. Social media empowers people and gives them voice and the ability to broadcast views, it acts as a multiple individual voice. It plays an important role in influencing public opinions and strengthening these voices (UNESCO, 2012). Social media provides a broader perspective and hence political campaigns depend more on this network. Nowadays social media holds power in advertising and in promoting ideas especially for digital native voters (Gad, 2015).

Social media gives people the capability to unite in crisis and to fight against their governments (Gad, 2015). Different factors affect the role of social media such as the age “young people are most likely to use social media more”, gender, and education and hence the reach and the target audience may be limited sometimes. It fundamentally changed the ways in which candidates and parties conduct their campaigns and fundamentally how citizens get exposed to political information (Boulianne, 2016).

Social platforms give users the ability to filter and choose what they want to see and to have more access to political information (Shirazi, 2013). People use social media extensively to follow candidates and get information about parties and groups. The systematic use of social media in electoral campaigns is a real intelligent tool that drives users or voters to engage with the messages intended. It helps parties and candidates to identify who are their followers and to estimate the number of supporters they have. These platforms give also the opportunity to disseminate news without going to traditional ways and this is powerful since they are offering the good arguments, the interesting ideas and the daily trends and updates. In political campaigns

people often look for credibility. This can be reached on social media by the use of the sharable and interactive content that makes candidates closer to people. This platform is mainly beneficial for emigrants who can't communicate with their candidates and who are deprived from their right to vote just because they are outside their country, for example during the 2018 elections and for the first time, Lebanon launched the overseas voting for its citizen living abroad (UNDP, 2018). Thus, social media helps to cross borders and boundaries and is of interest for both the emigrant and the political parties undergoing elections. Turkey, Egypt and Libya are examples of the countries that experienced the external voting (Mencütek, 2015).

Michaelsen wrote, "As more and more technology became available to candidates, their strategies and tactics became far more complex and advanced. Once the railroad was invented, candidates were expected to make more personal appearances; once the radio became commonplace, candidates had to deliver engaging verbal rhetoric to every American's living room; and with the advent of the television, candidates had to create a consistent image that melded their overall message, policy stances, and personal qualities through carefully crafted visual advertisements. And more recently, with the many advances in Internet technology, candidates have had to expand the role of online tools in the campaigns" (Michaelsen, 2015; 32).

Impact of Social Media on Voting Behavior

Recently, the use of social media in campaigning has been given a major attention. As alluded to earlier, one great example is the Obama's 2008 presidential elections which generated a huge success. Social Networks often advertise for the capability to deliver the political information that serves actual knowledge about the candidates and the campaign in relation to their voters' perceptions and political choices. Different political behaviors and viewpoints are revealed according to these accessible technological media techniques. Interactive social

networks can synchronize exposure to the campaign information in the wider media and social environment, it functions as a visual surface that filters the political material in a biased manner yet shielding specific types of incentives of the decision process (Sokhey & McClurg, 2012).

Another tricking tool is the Cambridge Analytica scandal which is the temptation to use technology for the favor of extracting personal information and data from platforms such as Facebook in the context of political campaigns. Artificial intelligence and the technological development are new data engines that could change the communication targets to “many to many”, the manipulation begins with one person then another then another. Contextual advertising is nowadays based on the information revealed by users and their personal data which made political targeting easier and précised (Boldyreva, 2018).

Social media impacts elections as it is being greatly used in shaping the political viewpoints and attitudes, it also affects the voter’s choice during elections. Social media has proven in many different countries that it can be an attractive source of manipulation to any election process by overpowering voters or audience and discrediting campaigns. Social media also accelerates the assignment of paid political advertisements that target specific audience groups and desired voters. When examining social media dynamics, it is important to study what is accepted or not in the political campaigning process and to highlight the tactics for building effective strategies. Social media is now an essential aspect in the dynamic and regulation challenges of the elections. Observing social media and studying its influence differs from the conventional media tools such as the television, printed media “newspapers” and radio. Social media is sophisticated; it is molded by unauthorized or informal institutions mainly party followers, social society endeavors and independent individuals as well as governmental organizations, political parties and media actors (Goldzweig, Lupion & Meyer-Resende, 2019).

2018 Electoral Campaigns in Lebanon

With an estimated population of 6.86 million inhabitants from eighteen different religious sects in an area of 10,452 square kilometers, Lebanon is a mosaic of confessional communities, ethnic groups and other minorities.

During its history, many eras have shaped the current political system such as the Ottoman occupation, to the French mandate followed by the civil war between 1975-1990 and the Taef agreement. The Taef managed to return the political stability to the country with equal distribution in terms of numbers of parliamentary seats and to give a greater role to the Parliament and to the Council of Ministers. Taef has maintained the traditional distribution of the three presidencies and it also noted the establishment of a committee headed by the President of the Republic in order to establish relations between Lebanon and Syria. Post Taef, the civil war sectarian leaders worked on putting rules for their own favor to avoid the rise of secular movements and to preserve their interests, this issue is debatable since back then the secular movements were not that much present in the Lebanese political scene. The electoral laws were put to secure their power that is why during 2013 they postponed the elections for five years since they couldn't agree on an electoral law at that time (El Kak, 2019).

Unfortunately, all this led to the formation of the current political system that is so called a confessional system that failed to cultivate the country. The situation made the living standards dreadful. In the midst of this, the civil society tried in 2018 to break the sectarian boundaries and to secure a participation of independent and qualified members to the parliament.

In fact, the 2018 parliamentary elections were the first in 9 years enabling voters to cast their ballots. 128 MPs were elected after extending the mandate of the 2009 parliament for three times under some security excuses of dodging political emptiness. In Lebanon's history, the 2018

election brought a fundamental adjustment to the representation in the electoral system. A ge-confessional distribution for the 128 candidates took place. Primarily 976 applicants registered for the parliamentary battle and only 597 coped to unite with other candidates or groups and formed 77 lists in 15 districts (Atallah & Zoughaib, 2019). 3,744,245 Lebanese voters were given the chance to vote and fulfill their roles in the creation of a new ruling system for another term of four years marking a new political era in the Lebanese political life (El-Helo, 2018). Lebanese expatriates were able to vote for the first time in the Lebanese history (UNDP, 2018).

Kollouna Watani movement covered 15 electoral districts and was present in 9 lists. This civil society movement presented a new perspective or an alternative to the existing ruling class and to the old political structure in the country that failed in recovering the country politically and economically (El-Helo, 2018).

“Kollouna Watani” was created out of 11 assemblies with 66 applicants 19 of them were women. It is a national, civil and independent initiative that aims to improve Lebanese participation, as the current parliament does not reflect the diversity of the Lebanese society. “Kollouna Watani” campaign adopted a program aimed at improving the political and economic system to strengthen national unity and to improve the state of civil and human rights in the country (El Kak, 2019).

It is noted that various key elements shaped the path such as the 2005 murder of PM Rafic Hariri, the 2006 war that was held by Israel on Hezbollah leading to the garbage crisis protests in 2015. During this period, political diversity was noticed with a wide range of conformists, alternatives and activists. Conformists are those who belong and grant the privilege of one group or party from the traditional organizations, the alternatives are there to fill the breakdown and gaps in the society and are mainly Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

and activists who embrace a radical and progressive mentality in their civil society. Social media holds here an important responsibility in delivering the messages to help voters make informed decisions. Hopes for change started in 2016 with the Beirut Municipal Elections when the “Beirut Madinati” list provided an alternative of new members with fresh visions and anticipations against all the political parties as a reaction to the disrespectful living conditions. The campaign was supported by the liberals who are free from any political affiliation, and the list lost by a small margin (Harb, 2018).

In this context, different independent groups example Lihaqqi and Libaladi united and joined the alliance to take this electoral battle. The coalition, which managed to nominate 66 candidates all over Lebanon, aspired to nominate 128 candidates in the upcoming parliamentary elections. Despite the fact that most of the opposition forces were able to unite all over Lebanon using "We are all our nation “as a slogan; the campaign was not able to gather these forces on a much narrower level. In fact, the movement did not succeed in framing a clear and understandable electoral platform because the civil society, unlike political parties, does not band its voters together on clear and specific principles, creed, identity or political reforms, but is characterized by a wide diversity among its various factions. Social media platforms were used in the parliamentary elections as a tributary of electronic media that sought to influence public opinion and crowd across groups or pages (El Kak, 2019).

Campaign visuals



During the campaign period, political parties and applicants normally enjoyed freedom of speech, yet with some limitations as reported by the civil society members where they were denied by the power of the big political affiliations in some districts. Main parties founded a visible appearance at the beginning of the groundwork period mainly via banners and billboards all over the country along with direct meetings with voters, tours and paying for media appearances. The majority of independent candidates, small parties and postulants from the civil society lacked these resources that needed financial outcomes and shifted instead their presence to the concentrated use of social networks. Significantly, the media coverage created a substantial power to cope with the new dynamics. Candidates dedicated a lot of efforts in their campaigns to explain the new voting system techniques and the new proportional law with preferential vote to their supporters so that it was observed that 95% of the voters, as stated by the European Union center, had a good understanding of this mechanism on the election day. Lebanon possesses an active and multicultural media system which reflects the denominational

and confessional system in the country. It is also an exceedingly partisan atmosphere with lots of newscast, print and digital media supporting themselves or controlled by different factors.

Lebanese Media have a major challenge in the inadequate advertising space, it is hard to have a stable and self-sufficient financial state due to the difficulty in the national and international funding systems taking into consideration that the fixed campaign budget limit is 150 million Lebanese pounds according to the electoral law and candidates/lists must clarify their campaign spending and report all their expenses.

Impact of Social Media on the Lebanese Political Interests

Lebanese citizens have embraced social media usage with the start of the Arab spring in December 2010 where protestors relied heavily on social media in their movements. During the recent political era, lots of social media pages and online groups were created to support politicians in the digital arena. Platforms such as Facebook and Twitter were the main boosters of that digital landscape public. One great example is Prime Minister Saad Hariri's Twitter messages and the mass media manipulations he was trying to reveal while he was out of the country for security reasons. Hariri's tweets varied between storytelling about his life and comments on political regional, national and international issues.

This personal exchange via social media platforms creates an open online interactive space that make followers closer to their political leaders and makes knowledge more accessible. This moderately new movement has shaped an influential political medium that allows politicians to stay pertinent and to preserve a powerful challenging atmosphere; it also initiated systems of communication channels in the Lebanese society targeting the public and youth specifically. This behavioral development that was born after a null period of political interference between people and politicians provided new dimensions in the public political field

and imposed new considerations on the political decision-making outlines (Maamari & El Zein, 2013).

In May 2018, Lebanon held its postponed parliamentary elections, the Lebanese media during this occasion served as a lively medium for public discussion and platform for educating voters. Social change and political deployment are reflected through social media the same way it used to be exposed via offline tools and outdated media.

According to Huth,

“Lebanese citizens are increasingly turning to social media platforms to follow election news. It is their way of holding candidates accountable and engaging with them in political debate. However, what the new media lack is the expertise of traditional media. Social media can at times offer misleading or false information about candidates and their campaigns” (Huth, 2018).

On this level, the final report of the European Union Election Observation Mission Lebanon 2018 revealed that:

“Some TV channels indicated they preferred to attract visitors with an interest in election and political information to their news websites or mobile applications and through them to provide another platform for paid-for access for candidates. Positively, state and private monitored broadcast media offered extensive space to voter education and information during their news and TV programs, airing spots produced by the Ministry of Interior, other institutions or by the TV channels themselves. No monitored private TV channels respected the silence period that started 24 hours before the election day, which required them not to cover election campaign topics, events or contestants” (European Union Election Observation Mission, 2018).

The methodology section will present the methods and techniques used in the context of this thesis in order to collect empirical data on the topic under-study.

Methodology

This study employs qualitative and quantitative methods. As for the qualitative part, in-depth interviews were conducted with social media specialists, marketing experts who were in charge of the Kollouna Watani campaign and candidates who used social media in their own campaigns.

The interview method is very important in revealing an understanding of the interviewees' life-world insights and their personal experiences in the field of research that provides in-depth data and interpretation of the explained phenomena. When interviewing, the researcher will be able to collect precise and detailed inspections, record the verbal and non-verbal connotations through several ways of synchronous/asynchronous, technological or computer mediated communication and face-to-face interviews (Opdenakker, 2006).

The interviewees were:

-Alaa Sayegh; who was a candidate in the Kollouna Watani coalition and used social media as main platform to promote himself to voters.

-Assaad Thebian who handled the digital/political campaign of the Kollouna Watani coalition.

-Nada Nassif and Raed Bou Hamdan who worked on the creation of the Kollouna Watani identity and its online campaign.

Since this research paper employs a mixed research method, the data is triangulated with

a survey to study if and how social media influenced voters in the 2018 election. An online survey sample (Google form) was digitally distributed through a link on different online platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook and direct messaging (Messenger and Instagram) to participants who are inside and outside Lebanon and who voted in the 2018 elections. The participants are all Lebanese but of different genders, ages (mainly above 21 which is the voting age in Lebanon), educational and professional backgrounds. The questionnaire was designed with a cover letter that has a descriptive and explanatory introduction deriving the purpose and the outcomes of participating in this research study, contact information and a thank you response. It was piloted to make sure it meets its objectives. The cover letter was followed by nineteen questions that vary between general knowledge, leading, multiple/middle choice and two open-ended questions with clear instructions, layout and order.

Online or internet-based surveys have been used increasingly by researchers lately for a couple of reasons. Such data collection methods are faster more accessible to people on a larger scale. Additionally, this kind of survey (the user-generated) is simpler in terms of the design process and recording the data. On the other hand, the disadvantages of internet-based surveys are that they may not always deliver sufficient guidelines since the participants won't understand or follow the instructions as mentioned (Alessi & Martin, 2010).

Based on the results, a design guideline will be generated for "Kollouna Watani" along with a system documented through diagrams and illustrations that could be used in future campaigns. This guideline will work on fixing the previous communication and disorganization problems that the campaign members faced in the 2018 elections and as revealed in their interviews and it will help in reducing the time that designers take in preparing the political content when creating the visual materials needed for any campaign especially those that have

financial limitations. And since the research study also focuses on the importance of design communication in campaigning, specifically political campaigning, the developed design guideline will present a well-planned design process that fixes previous problems (such as communication, lack of time, lack of human participation and volunteer work etc.).

Hypotheses:

H 1: Social media influences Lebanese voters' choices in electoral campaigns.

H 2: Social media and design communication tend to direct voters' decision making.

Results and Analysis

Data collection helps the researcher to prove or refute the hypotheses, assess the results and most importantly to answer the research questions (Kabir, 2016). In this study, the researcher conducted both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The qualitative part was represented through the interviews and part of the survey, whereas the quantitative method was mainly the numerical values and percentages extracted from the survey.

Quantitative Method: Survey

The quantitative data is a numerical representation that tracks the data through different scales and measurements to answer the “what” of the study and are mainly presented in forms of direct questions. The advantages of such methods and mainly surveys are the following; first, they are standard in their form or design as they can be easily fragmented to deliver the questions in a smooth way to be understood. Second, they tend to be cheaper in terms of producing, third, their results can be easily formed, summarized and presented and finally they can reach a large population to be tested. On the contrary, it is considered inadequate or misleading sometimes. In other words, the participant may understand the questions in a different perspective especially in online surveys, it is subjective and limited since the researcher narrows the questions according to his consideration. Sometimes such methods fail in achieving full honesty where the participants may answer differently or do not stick to the recommendations. And finally, in such methods, participants are not always responsive and, in that case, it may take some time and delay the process (Kabir, 2016).

In this research study, an online survey was created on google forms and sent digitally to more than 200 participants where 187 questionnaires were filled and submitted. The results were also extracted through this platform and are shown in the form of graphs and charts with percentages along with the full answers to the open-ended questions.

The sample was created by a simple layout of basic Cyan color and form that are already built in the google forms' platform system.

Find a Time ☆

Questions Responses 187

ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Dear Participant,

My name is Riham Nasr and I am a master's student in Design at Notre Dame University - Louaize.

For my thesis, I am examining the influence of social media in the 2018 Lebanese Electoral Campaign, mainly the case of the civil society coalition "Kolouna Watani" to assess the effectiveness of their campaign in directing people's decisions.

I am inviting you to participate in this research study by completing the following questionnaire which will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. There are no known risks to your participation. Your responses will remain confidential and unidentified. Data from this research will be reported only as a collective combined total. No one other than the researcher will know your personal answers to this questionnaire. If you choose to participate in this study, please answer all questions as honestly as possible.

Completion and submission of the questionnaire will indicate your willingness to participate in this study. If you would like to have a summary copy of this study and if you require additional information or have questions, please contact me at my email listed below.

Thank you for taking the time to assist me in my educational endeavors. The data collected will provide useful information regarding the topic under-study.

rhnasr02@ndu.edu.lb

ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Dear Participant,

your answers will be helpful in studying the influence of social media in the 2018 parliamentary elections through the case of Kolouna Watani coalition to assess its effectiveness in directing people's decisions. Please take a moment to complete it as accurately as possible.

Thank you for your time.

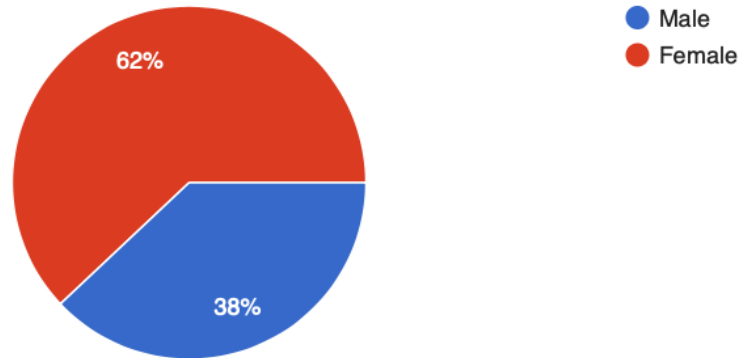
The survey was restricted to the Lebanese population without any geographical or religious considerations but with two requirements that the participants must have voted in the 2018 elections for an average age of 21 years and they should also have social media accounts (mainly Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) to be able to answer the questions.

The language used is simple English that can be easily understood.

Pie Graph 1: Gender Distribution

1. Your gender

187 responses



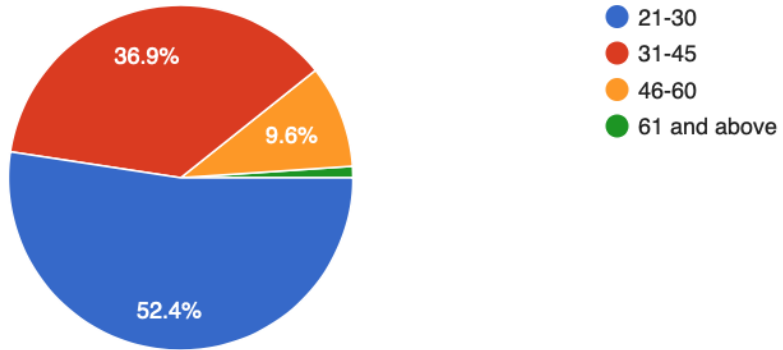
The first set of questions covered demographic information such as: age, gender, educational level, major, residency and work. Out of the 187 respondents, 62% were women and 38% were men as shown in the above pie chart.

The majority of the participants were females who showed more commitment in terms of responding to the researcher's request for their participation in this survey study and who also participated in the 2018 voting mechanism. The gender participation is not of a big deal, it just helps know the background of the participants.

Pie Graph 2: Age Distribution

2. Your age

187 responses



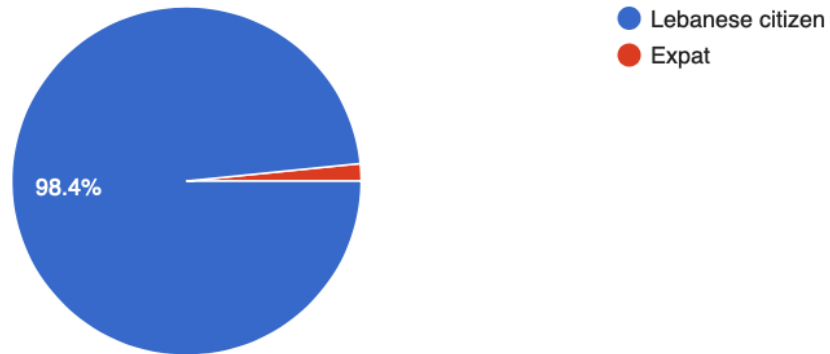
The respondents aged between 21 and above 61 as detailed in the second pie chart. 52.4% were between 21-30 and here there was a condition for the participation which is a minimum age of 21 since it's the required age for voting and participants below the age restrictions are not allowed to vote and hence their answers wouldn't be relevant. 36.9% of the participants ages ranged between 31-45, 9.6% between 46-60 and 1.1% (2 participants) were 61 and above.

Most of the participants were between (21-30) so they belong to the new generation as we call them and they are more likely to be active on social media platforms.

Pie Graph 3: Population Distribution

3. Are you

187 responses



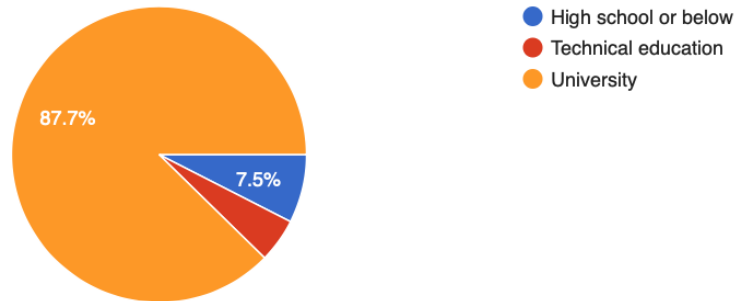
As per the above pie-chart, most of the participants were Lebanese citizens living in Lebanon with 98.4%. While only 1.6% (3 participants) are expats meaning living outside Lebanon.

Here though there was a new tool in 2018 elections which is the emigrants online voting mechanism, only 1.6% used it to vote remotely and hence we couldn't test its effectiveness on a larger scale.

Pie Graph 4: Educational Levels

4. Your level of education

187 responses



As for the educational level, as shown in the graph, 7.5 % of the respondents went to high school only or below, 4.8% conducted vocational education and 87.7% hold university degrees.

The analysis on the educational level also showed that the majority of the participants were citizens who may or may not have completed their university studies at the time of the study, and hence educated people with different perspectives in the political aspects.

University Majors

5. University major 149 responses	Business administration	Radio and TV	Ndu	accounting and auditing	Journalism
	Business Marketing	Interior designer	International business managemen	Optometry	Civil Engineer
Chemistry	Psychology	Masters degree	Agribusiness	Communications	Masters
Interior design	Architecture	Computer Science	Hospitality Management.	MIT	Law
Business management	MBA	Engineer	Computer engineering	Social sciences	Graphic Designer
Graphic design	Business Management	ICT	Compter Science	Personal trainer	Nutrition
Marketing	Business Administration	Medical biology	Electrical Engineer	Business marketing	Accounting
Graphic Design	Graphic designer	Civil engineering	management	B.S Biochemistry	Media Studies
Marketing and advertising	Banking and finance	Mechanic	Educational management	Civil and Environmental Engineering	BS-biology
Advertising and marketing	Fine art				
Architecture	CCE			Financial Engineering	
Biochemistry	Public Relations		Banking And Finance	Computer and Communication Engineer	
Journalism and mass communication	Human resources		Journalism radio tv	Biomedical Engineering	Business Management
Media & Communication	Faculty of law		Human Resources Management	Business	Advertising & Marketing
Financial Risk Management	English lang. & literature/ project management	None		Law	Civil Engineer
IBM	Computer science	Teaching		BA	Master
Civil engineer	MA In Design		Finance and now gemology	sociology	Education and Genetics
Faculty of information Lebanese university	Studio Arts		Business Administration	Business development	Nutrition and Dietetics
Nutrition	Human Resource Management		Journalism and Electronic Media	Sociology	Masters degree in Journalism
Engineering	Environmental health		Human Resource Management		English Literature and Language
	OTHER (16)				Informatics

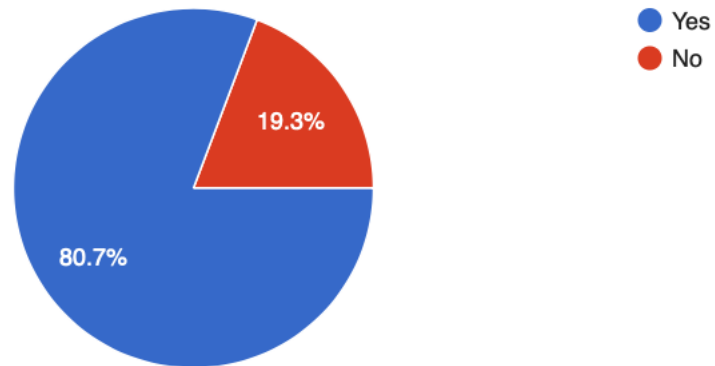
The 5th question was optional about the university majors and revealed the above information.

The results here prove the different backgrounds of the majority of the respondents

Pie Graph 5: Work

6. Do you work?

187 responses



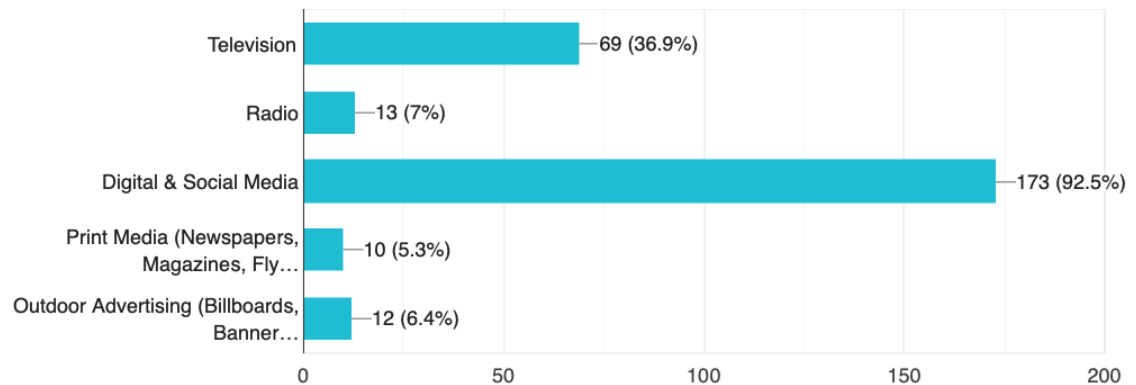
According to the survey, 80.7% of the participants work whereas the rest 19.3% don't, the above pie-chart shows the results.

Also, the majority here is formed of people who work, and this question is also similar to the previous questions that reveal the background of the participants.

Bar Graph 1: Influence of Media

7. What type/s of Media influence/s you the most?

187 responses



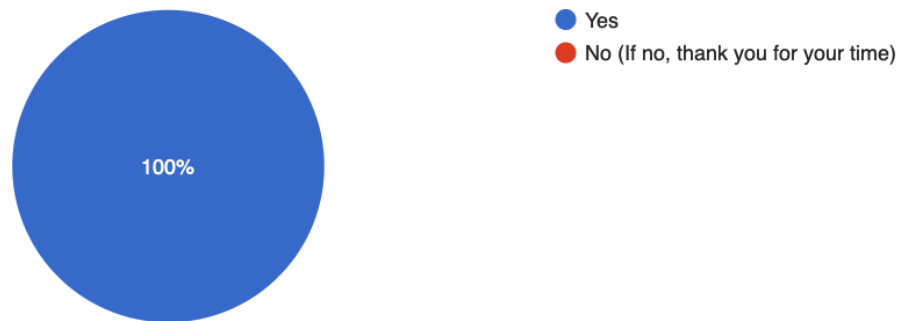
Question 7 tested what type of media influences people the most as a nominal-polytomous question where the respondents had a group of media options where they can choose more than one medium (television, radio, digital & social media, print media and outdoor advertising) to choose from. According to the results displayed in the above bar graph, digital & social media were the highest media influencer for the participants with 92.5% of the responses whereas 36.9 chose television, 7% picked radio, 6.4 indicated outdoor advertising example billboards and banners and 5.3% selected print media example newspapers, magazines and flyers. The analysis on the above question was very important for the outcome of this research study, the highest rate as shown in the above bar graph highlighted digital/ social media as the most important media influencer for participants who might be affected by the age factor since age groups might have different interests in the suggested media preferences. The following factor proves the hypotheses of the research and builds a strong understanding of the effectiveness of social media in terms of position as a supportive political informative influencer which was used

in the 2018 elections and can be a powerful tool if well studied and organized in the near future that can bring success to candidates and can win in the battle of directing voters' decision making.

Pie Graph 6: Social Media Accounts

8. Do you have any social media account/s?

187 responses



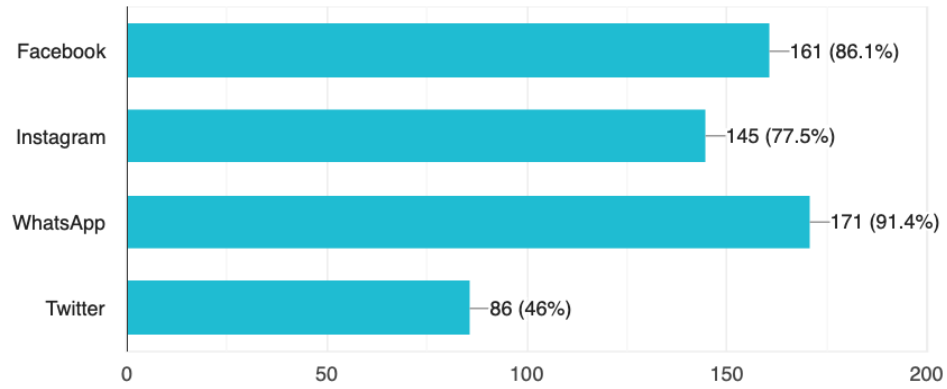
All participants were using social media and active on different platforms 100% voted yes. Question 8 was the second requirement in this survey where the participants will not be able to continue the survey if the answer was “no” since the rest of the answers are linked to this question. A thank you message followed the “No” option to inform the participants that they do not meet the requirements of the survey.

All participants have social media accounts and hence the answers prove that most people in this era are now part of the digital and online world.

Bar Graph 2: Social Media Platforms

9. If yes, which platform/s do you use?

187 responses

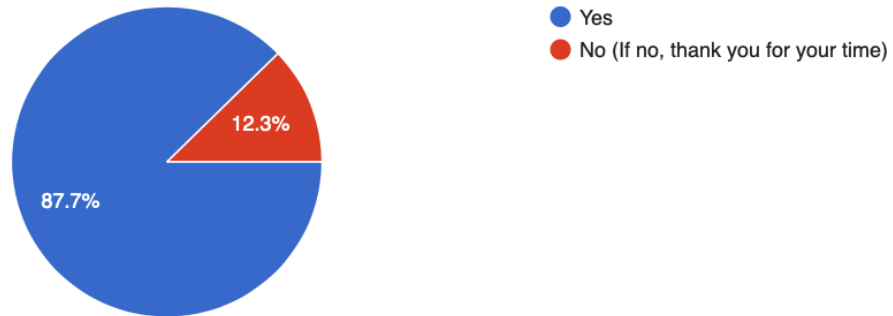


Another question followed asking users to specify which social media platforms they use or are active on. The most common platforms stated were WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. As per the results shown in the bar graph above, the two most used platforms are WhatsApp with 91.4% and Facebook 86.1% then followed by Instagram 77.5% then Twitter 46%. In this question, users were allowed to choose more than one platform in their answers. As shown in the graph, WhatsApp and Facebook are the two most commonly used platforms and hence people are more likely to track the information if received on WhatsApp or followed on Facebook.

Pie Graph 7: Voting Distribution

10. Did you vote in the 2018 elections?

187 responses



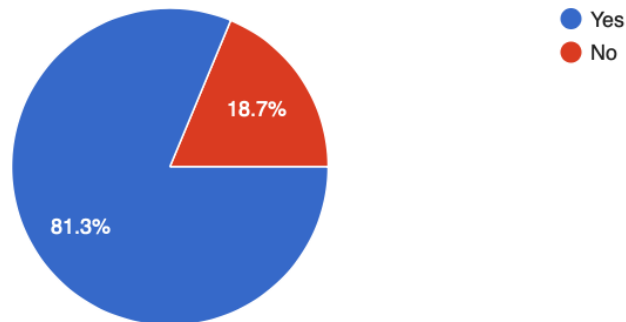
A third requirement for considering the responses is that the participants must have voted in the 2018 elections and consequently participants who did not vote were thanked for their time. As a result, 87.7% of the participants stated that they voted and 12.3% haven't.

Most of the participants voted which means the majority is involved in the political experience and the voting process.

Pie Graph 8: Social Media Campaigns

11. Modern politics is characterized by permanent campaigning with regard to connecting with voters through media platforms. Did your candidate or political party use social media in their campaign?

187 responses



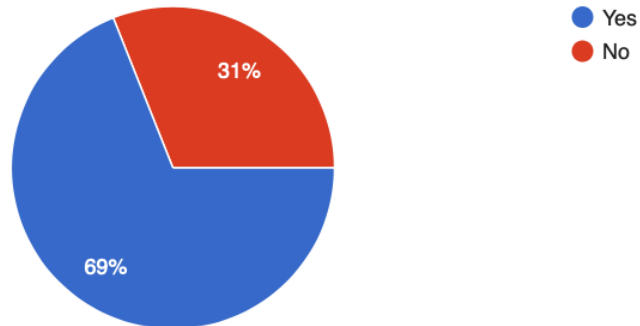
81.3% of the participants stated that their political party/candidates used social media to promote their election programs during the elections and 18.7% said No.

The eleventh question that tackles the use of social media in 2018 proved that most participants noticed the use of their preferred parties for social media to promote their ideas

Pie Graph 8: Following Political Campaigns on Social Media Platforms

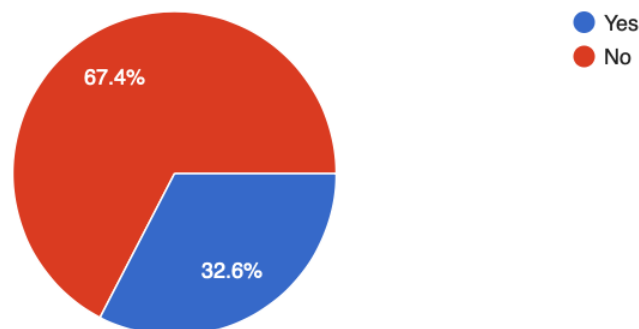
12. Did you follow political campaigns on social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter during the 2018 elections?

187 responses

**Pie Graph 9: Communicating with Candidates on Social Media Platforms**

13. Did you communicate with your candidate/political party through social media platforms during the 2018 elections?

187 responses



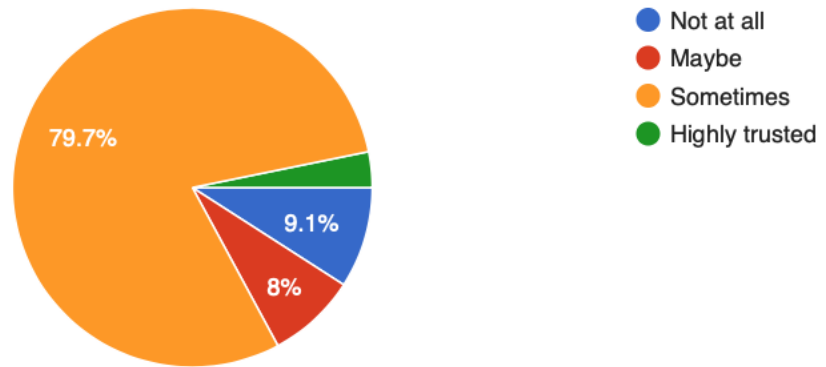
69% of the participants follow their political party/candidates on these platforms while 31% don't, whereas 67% didn't communicate through these platforms by sending messages or commenting to their candidates to get specific information or details, only 32.6% did.

However, results for questions (12 & 13) have shown that voters follow their political candidates/ parties on social networking sites but they are not interested in communicating with them, so it's just a matter of monitoring and getting the information they need.

Pie Graph 10: Trusting Social Media Platforms

14. Do you trust social networks as a source of political information?

187 responses



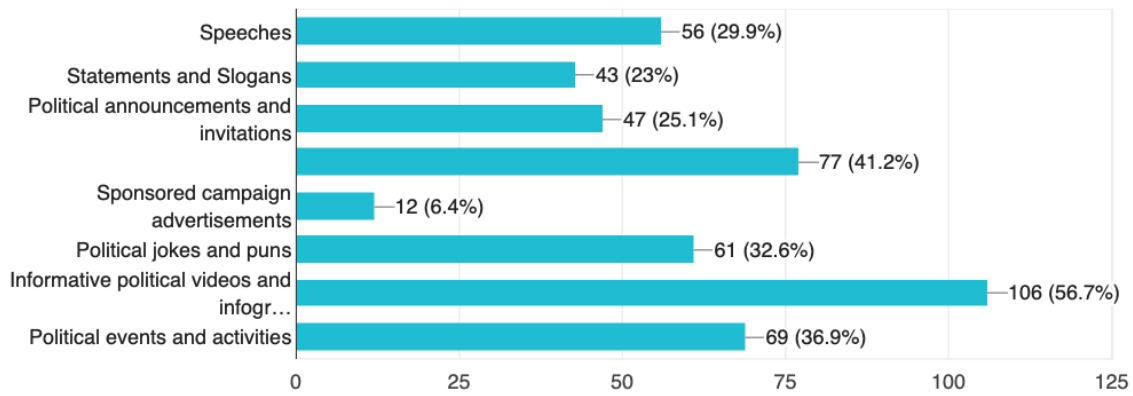
The pie chart above shows that 79.9% answered “sometimes”, 9.1% answered not at all, 8% answered “maybe” and 3.2% picked “highly trusted”.

The following results posit that most of the participants who actually voted do not fully trust these networking sites as around 80% answered “sometimes”, and here the type of content shared determines whether to trust or not to and it's normal since social media have played a double chained factor due to fake information along with reliable ones.

Bar Graph 3: Social Media Content

15. What type/s of social media political content are you interested in?

187 responses



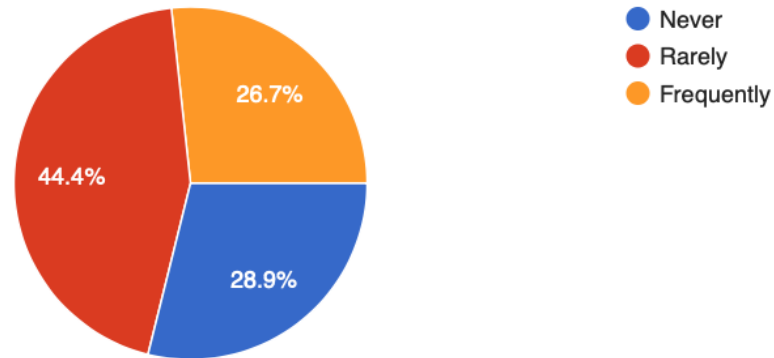
People showed interest in informative political videos and infographics (56.7%) as shown in the bar graph below followed by people's political opinions and sentiments (41.2%) then political events and activities (36.9%) and other types of suggestions presented in the above graph.

The results for this question helped the researcher know better about the most preferred type of content voters are usually interested in and this could help future campaigns to give preference and to enrich their campaign content with.

Pie Graph 10: Sharing Political Content

16. Do you share political content on your personal social media accounts?

187 responses



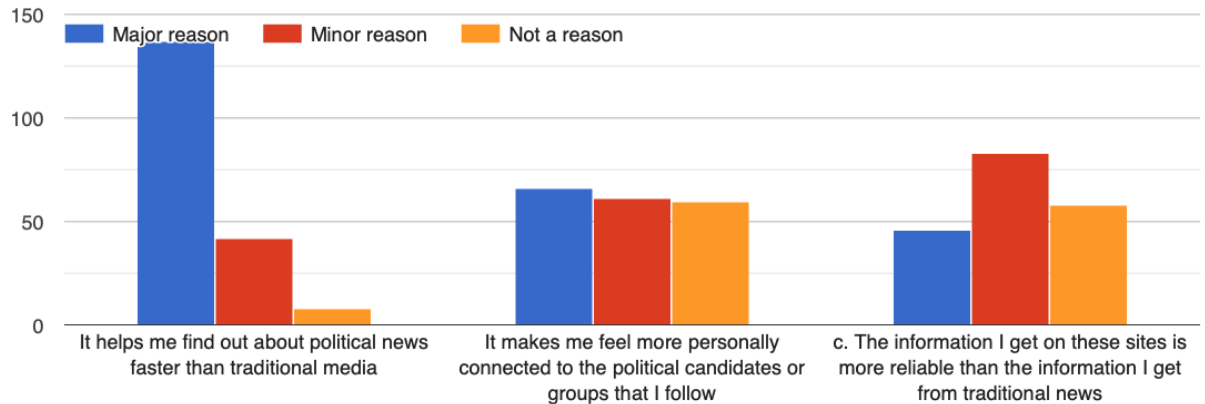
When asked about sharing political content on their personal social media accounts, the answers varied between “rarely” sharing with 44.4% picking this choice, 28.6% “never” and 26.7% said “frequently”.

As per the results, most of the participants rarely share political content on their personal accounts which also assures that people are mostly interested in receiving the political information without expressing it.

Bar Graph 4: Reasons of Following Social Networking Sites to get Political

Information

17. People follow political campaigns or organizations on social networking sites for a number of reasons. Please tell me if each of the following is a MAJOR reason why you follow political candidates or organizations on these sites, a MINOR reason, or not a reason at all for you.



137 participants agreed that it helps them find out about political news faster than traditional media, 66 respondents agreed that it helps them feel more connected to their preferences and 83 participants considered the information they get on these sites is not more reliable in comparison with traditional media.

Most of the participants consider social media a tool that brings political information faster than any other type of media and makes them feel more connected to their parties, yet they don't fully rely on these sites. Therefore, it was, and still is challenging to build a trust base between these sites and the user.

The last two questions were open-ended questions where participants had to answer. The first was: "Do you think that the digital platforms have dominated over print material such as billboards, brochures, posters etc. in the field of political communication?"

18. Do you think that the digital platforms have dominated over print material such as billboards, brochures, posters etc. in the field of political communication?

187 responses

Yes
Yes
yes
Sure
Yeah, sometimes to gain time
No
Definitely
Yesss Sure ye
Of course

The answers varied between supporters and opponents where more than 107 responses agreed that social media have dominated over print material. Some of the answers claimed that it has dominated because of some factors such as its accessibility, speed and access. We live in a digital age “rather than waiting for the latest issue of a newspaper to drop”, online news is easier and market focused, closer to the audience. Others also focused on how SM is a tool that serves campaigns with financial limitations, it limits pollution and helps sustainability and most importantly, it is cost-efficient. Some of the supporters claimed that they agree to a specific extent but not fully due to the limited reliability of SM. Opposite opinions on this issue were traced where some of the respondents believe that it hasn’t dominated where 6 voted no and the rest have different visions such as how convincing and trustworthy print material are. One participant thinks they work in parallel.

The second question; “Did you rely personally in the 2018 elections on social media to get political information and did it affect your voting decision making?” received the following responses:

19. Did you rely personally in the 2018 elections on social media to get political information and did it affect your voting decision making?

187 responses

No
Yes
no
Yes
Yesss sure
Not really
Somehow.
No it didn't
No

Answers on the last question of the survey revealed the participants’ personal point of view and their previous experience in 2018 elections. Most of the answers about relying on social media to get information were “yes” to some extent. Some mentioned that it only helped them watch what’s going around and somehow get the information they need about their preferred party, but when asking if it truly directed their decision making most of the answers were “No” and their choice was already made based on their preferences and political beliefs.

Some of them considered that it did support their decision. Despite this fact, it wasn't enough because most of the people who voted were not on social media.

It can be deduced that social media as a tool may be helpful in terms of communicating with voters as claimed by the respondents. However, it can’t really affect the voting decision.

The first section of the questionnaire gave an understanding about the background of voters so that the researcher can design a system to target Lebanese voters in future elections to optimize the use of social media electoral campaigns (questions 1 to 6). The results also showed that social media is considered as a very influencing tool in promoting political content (question 7) and hence it verifies the first hypothesis (that social media does have an influence on voters) and gives a proof that this tool is very effective especially that many users are active on these platforms (question 8) and political campaigns are also heavily used by almost all politicians for self-promotion (question 11). As for people's trust towards these networking sites and the political information they disclose, people showed a weak trust so we can tell that until this date social media has failed to build the needed trust (question 14). Social media proved to act as a supportive tool that voters check on to receive the political information they need because of its accessibility and fast pace yet it did not play an effective aspect in their decision-making. The last two open-ended questions reflected the personal opinions of the participants about their 2018 electoral experience. The answers on both questions generated a big percentage of voters who agreed that social media dominated over print material at some point yet they revealed that such tool supports but cannot drive or direct their political decision and hence refutes the second hypothesis about the voting decision making (Social media and design communication tend to direct voters' decision making).

Qualitative Method: Interviews

A series of structured interviews was conducted with a tailored set of questions, for the candidates and the marketeers. Three interviews were conducted via email (E-interviews) sent to the interviewees in a word document form where they answered in writing, and the fourth

interview was conducted through a skype call recorded then transcribed. The data collected from the four interviews is used to extract the similar and opposite points of views to help in building the design outcome.

Starting with the candidate interview, Sayeg developed a campaign with the help of a volunteer team of experts, they adopted a guerilla campaign based on two things; the political program/ plan that was developed in a participatory manner, and the work of volunteers on the ground. They presented a unified visual identity among all coalition candidate members reflecting people's voice, the voice of changes. Sayeg claimed that the coalition made a social and digital buzz because for the first time there was an efficient alternative for change. They confronted the lack of support from traditional media since they couldn't afford a presence on tv stations and tv shows. According to Sayeg, social media was the only means of communication they had along with the offline and door-to-door practices. Social media was the cheapest communication tool they had in the absence of coverage from traditional media.

As he claimed, they didn't rely mainly on the coalition's social media platforms that were mainly Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, instead and coming from different political groups they were promoted on their personal group platforms more than the coalitions platforms along with their offline efforts. According to the candidate, they relied more on organic reach than on paid advertisements.

To Sayeg the campaign was successful as he said,

“On the campaigning level, it was good in terms of reach but the conversion rate from online reach to real voters was questionable. For example, Lihaqqi made a higher conversion higher as a grassroot than online, to elaborate on this, we can say that on our Facebook platform we had 7,000 like but we got 12,000 votes in Shouf-Aley because of the real grass root work

which was not the same on the coalition level. So yes, it was successful but not enough and we could have been more effective. If we had better grass root movements in all areas along with the online efforts, it would have made a better viral effect and a conversion rate of supporters.

Assessing the effect of social media on the voting behavior in general, he claimed that it was good since people are interested in seeing the unified image of sects, their plans and visions. Social media and the campaign's online presence benefited from this matter in a positive way and kind of affected the behavior, yet they couldn't really shift these digital voters into real voters during elections.

The candidate revealed that he is somehow still active on the platforms created during the elections and that he definitely recommends political campaigns to be held on social media platforms but not only! He believes offline is also very important. He thinks that they also have to uplift their content in the future to a more engaging one, more online debates, more live interviews, to communicate more with voters and that they should shift their content more into people's visions, interests and recommendations in terms of candidates.

As for the three marketing experts, they tackled the strategic thinking and performance of the campaign. Nassif and Thebian were handling the communication part of the coalition campaign "Kolouna Watani" coordinating between the political bureau and the committee as Thebian pointed out that : "there was no branding umbrella so we opened a small sector of 3-4 members (Nada, Tatiana and I who have previous experience in communication, marketing and advertising) and we used to ask for help from other volunteers when needed," whereas Bou Hamdan was also a member in the communication team but mainly Shouf-Alay districts.

The key people or marketing experts brainstormed basically everything together especially the creative offline/online/media campaigns. The team included a group volunteers,

with more and less expertise in campaigning and communication such as creative designers, videographers and video editors, social media specialists, content creators and copywriters, media buyers, and strategists. The distribution was based on the specialization, the time availability, and the location as the campaign had decentralized tasks in the different Lebanese regions. The strategy was based on maintaining the position of Kollouna Watani as a serious and trustworthy political alternative. They tried to reflect the objective on the creative, the tone of voice and in the communication tactics and stunts; they were trying to reach people through online platforms because there was no budget for traditional media (television) as they had a very high cost. It was a mix of three things: first they were trying to highlight their candidates and second, they aimed to reveal their political program and third they wanted to show the achievement of uniting as a civil society under one umbrella which is the coalition (coalition of 9 out of 15 areas in Lebanon). These points were considered their strongholds as a strategic planning, yet they still took the advantage of things happening around on daily basis to build their communication among.

Electoral campaign ads

FACEBOOK LIVE
f LIVE
علاء الصايغ
مرشح عن قضاء عاليه
لجنة
كلنا وطني
الشوف - عاليه

الانتخابات النيابية ٦ أيار ٢٠١٨
يحق للناخب/ة التصويت لللائحة واحدة فقط. ووضع إشارة كذا أو 00 مقابل إسم اللائحة
يمكنك أيضا التصويت لمرشح واحد ضمن اللائحة التي اخترتها بوضع علامة كذا أو % في المربع المقابل
للمرشح الذي تفضله على أن يكون من الفصاء عينه الذي تصوت فيه

لندعم سويا حملة لائحة "كلنا وطني" في الشوف و عاليه
وستمتع بعرض ليديع ابو شقرا في التياترو فردان. في ١٣ نيسان ٢٠١٨ الساعة ٨.٠٠ مساء
سعر البطاقة \$١٠٠ يعود ريعه الى دعم الحملة

According to the interviewees, the campaign platforms were Facebook that counted the most, Instagram and Twitter focusing on official pages and activists' personal accounts. The campaign faced many financial challenges with a minimal budget for social media with around 20,000\$ estimated budget for Facebook and Instagram ads. The campaign's resources were weak, mainly online fundraising and activists' contributions. This led to the insignificant minimal spending rate on advertisements, even social media ones, with some outdoor panels donated from supporters.

The online launching of the campaign was marked by live videos and online streaming. They went live on the offline launch of the coalition (Tahalof Watani) and shared first the

political campaigns/parties/movements that were part of the coalition. When launching the candidates' lists, they also went live then shared videos for candidates of each district highlighting the headlines of their political program. Teasing campaigns were also created by the coalition's political groups spreading messages to attract voters.

Offline campaigns and print materials were supporting the online; each district had its own print material such as flyers and printed electoral programs. Door-to-door visits helped the campaign to reflect the genuine aspect. Sometimes the print material was unified among all districts and sometimes each district was creating its own along with t-shirts and caps from the central team for the coalition volunteers to wear on the day of elections all under the same branding umbrella.

The three interviewees also agreed that the limitations the campaign faced were financial and human mainly: Compared to traditional parties they had scarce amounts of money. Also, due to internal tensions and lack of human resources (a small team running a huge campaign) they couldn't afford recruiting a team of digital experts to handle the campaign. As for the design limitations, only few volunteers were working on the designs of the campaign which in fact needed more resources. As Thebian stated, they recruited one designer with a very minimal salary but definitely that wasn't enough. Second the branding color was somehow a problem since colors are dominated by Lebanese political parties, they had to find one that isn't used by any of them.

Better design practices could have given the campaign a professional/high budget look and feel, the imperfect designs were part of the storytelling.

First time voters were the main target audience in the campaign since it was meant for them to feel that they now have an option in electing a deputy who represents their ambitions in

this country especially when it comes to civil rights which was not approached by any other lists/parties. The campaign aimed to build a trust feeling with voters because most of the people didn't believe their votes will make any change and they won't make a difference.

The campaign addressed a set of messages: from hope, to power, to trust in this alternative, and by sending positive vibes that change is coming and that for the first time the independent sectors united under one coalition.

Taking all challenges into consideration the campaign was successful in the eyes of the three interviewees. According to Nassif: "We were competing with people who have power, money and human resources to find their way easily to the parliament and yet we managed to provide what we believe was the good alternative for our target audience". Bou Hamdan noted: "The objectives of the campaign included the electoral victory for sure, but we want to achieve an objective beyond statistical results, in creating awareness about the movement, and redefining politics in terms of participatory approach of decision making, program-based politics, people-funded campaigns and grassroots political activism. On this level, the campaign was successful". Lastly Thebian assured what other interviewees stated highlighting the lack of appearance on traditional media that they faced. He added:

"One of the things I remember that we couldn't also afford print billboards so what we did is that we took photos of existing billboards of other candidates and we photo-shopped the photos to make them look like they were branded Kollouna Watani and this post went viral with lots of shares. People noticed that we did it on purpose because we don't have budget, others thought that we really printed these billboards".

On the design level, they did not have complicated designs but more often templates for social media. The struggle in design happened with the logo especially with the number of

stakeholders involved in every decision. Creativity is all what matters, sometimes out of the blue things might go viral for unknown reasons. The designs were simple yet attractive; they addressed political information in direct messages. Besides social media, the visual identity of the campaign helped maintain a solid foundation of awareness raising through posters, social media posts, and print materials.

Social media helps in building an authentic relationship between parties and voters, yet it still depends in Nassif's opinion if campaigns should only be held on social media or not. Bou Hamdan claims that by the time, social media will be playing a bigger role in political campaigns with the technological development and the new digital tools of defining and studying online users by demographics, interests, behavior, etc... However, the offline tools will remain efficient as well specially to prove the seriousness of the campaign. Thebian considered that it is "yes and no" depending on people's awareness in using these tools and as he claimed; "Although social media is doing great, social media is not only Facebook and Instagram, it's WhatsApp and now Tiktok is trendy. Therefore, it is about how we use these platforms in a very clever way to reach people and this needs resources, time and lots of preparation so this should always be considered in future campaigns and how to do branding in a populist premise, not just political. In addition, offline should also be given importance in the regions for example to be present on WhatsApp groups to talk about your campaign since no one will do that for you".

For a better campaign performance in the coming elections, Nassif recommended the following:

First, set a clear work scheme: In 2018, we struggled with taking even the small decisions because we had to refer to an entire bureau (15+ persons). Setting clear: content/ reporting/ decision making rules, accelerates the work especially in the stressful times of elections.

Second, plan: A communication strategy is key to the work environment and how to manage things.

Third, many people get excited to work in elections but:

- 1- excitement is different than finishing a task
- 2- Experts are the ones you are after.

We were lucky in 2018 to have experts excited to work yet I see that we could have had better chances and communication have we had more cash and connections.

Fourth, always review the validity of media buying: When it comes to politics, buying an engagement can make or break the connection with the audience. Never do it randomly and never do it without a clear plan and purpose.

For Thebian, task dividing is very important; to work more on creative ideas and the preparation should no longer be reactionary but well prepared.

Lastly, Bou Hamdan recommended more research as research is a key element to improve performance of political campaigns, and to run quantitative and qualitative studies to learn more about the audience preferences and the best practices to reach and convince voters to take actions towards the voting ballots.

After analyzing the data collected from the interviews, it was clear that the Kollouna Watani's communication strength was social media as it is the main platform they could express themselves equally with other political parties. Yet the financial and human resources limitations affected their presence and the possibilities of directing voters' behaviors in the electoral ballots.

Developing a well-studied communication strategy based on research and planning ahead of time as revealed may help design communication in any electoral battle. From this finding, the

researcher decided to come-up with a campaign design communication strategy that could be followed in the coming elections and that tackles several negative inquiries that took place in the 2018 elections on the design/marketing level.

The design outcome section will explain the design/marketing process from execution to the final development of the campaign design and communication strategy.

Design Outcome

This research investigated social media's influence on voting behavior of Lebanese adults aged between 21 – 61 and generated an understanding on the importance of design communication in campaigning in the Lebanese context. The study implemented qualitative and quantitative methods to gather valid data with respect to the case study. This chapter highlights the development of a “guideline campaign design concept” taking into consideration the challenges and the weaknesses of the past campaign that were revealed in the data collection section.

1. Recapitulation of the Main Key Findings

The design outcome process explains the development of the new campaign road map from the brainstorming stage to the final output and the new campaign design implementation. The findings directed the suggested solutions to produce a stronger communication strategy along with a creative marketing and visual plan with key messages and an innovative digital hub. After analyzing the insights from the interviews, it was clear that the Kollouna Watani's communication strength was social media where candidates were able to express themselves equally with other political parties. Yet the financial and human resources limitations affected their presence and the possibilities of directing voters' behaviors in the electoral ballots.

The survey findings revealed that most participants considered that social media can drive political information much faster than other tools. The disparity between social media and traditional media is that social media deliver information in a speedy manner whereas traditional media are still the reference for reliable information. When asking if social media truly directed the survey respondents' decision-making, most of the answers were "no" and their choices were already made based on other considerations.

In the 2018 elections, the civil society was embarking for the first time in the electoral / political life and its audience is considered the one that is very affected by the social media phenomenon.

2. Divergence and Convergence with the Literature Review Themes

Based on the findings presented in chapter four, it was deduced that social media is the future. SNS have already altered the world of communication and especially political communication.

Gad (2016), Shirazi (2013) and Boulianne (2015) also assured that social media filter users in a wide reachable manner, so that organizers can target more voters and deliver the image and message they aim to give during elections. In the digital age, social media influences our visions, beliefs and actions. We are taken by the power of the image and what it represents; simply social media information may change reactions and intentions of people.

Politically social media can create politicians; one great example is the case of the American president Donald Trump who used social media networks mainly Twitter to share his passion in an entertaining manner (Sillito, 2016). His campaign budget was about billions of

dollars but it generated the desired success and actually made Trump the president of the United States of America. In the Arab world, social media created political awareness, it led in a way or another to the Arab spring (Gad, 2015), another example is the October 17th Lebanese revolution where social media played a vital role on different levels from networking to coverage.

3. The Challenges

The researcher's main intention was to address the weaknesses of the previous campaign and propose an alternative design communication plan with a marketing concept and a creative design process. The aim is to make politics simpler to understand and easier for individuals to run in an attempt to empower people and to break down many barriers faced over these platforms. The campaign needs a competitive edge in the market of creative ideas especially with the financial limitations that the different interviewees stressed on while tackling the limitations part.

Following the data analysis section and taking into consideration the information pointed out by the interviewees, the weaknesses in the past campaign were:

- 1- The weak influence on voting decisions
- 2- The people who have long been affiliated to certain political parties and believe in their political stances and doctrines, or benefit from them through jobs, networking, services and are somehow resistant to change
- 3- Centralization of management decisions that complicated the process
- 4- Lack of experts (all are volunteers) which affected the professional execution of different tasks
- 5- The reactionary design work (not well planned and prepared)

The proposed design outcome shall provide a detailed understanding of the importance of the electoral marketing based on the aim of a creative marketing and design strategy that can make the process of organizing a campaign and affect voters simple and straightforward.

4. Aim and Objectives

4.1 Aim:

To create a campaign guideline including a creative design communication structure based on a marketing strategy for the civil society's 2022 electoral campaign.

4.2 Objectives

- Develop a full campaign guideline (design communication and marketing strategy)
- Suggest media/design solutions with creative concepts and messages to be adopted in the 2022 elections.

5. Digital Design Concept

Based on the existing literature about the topic that highlighted the importance of social media and design communication in directing voters' intentions and on the findings of the interviews and questionnaires pertaining to the case study of the Kollouna Watani coalition, we can come to an understanding that social media and design communication are very essential in political campaigns. They must be given the highest importance during elections since this means proved to be a potential medium to alter voters' choices.

Developing a well-studied communication strategy based on research and planning ahead of time as revealed may help in any electoral battle. From this finding, the researcher decided to

generate a cost-efficient creative design communication structure with a well-studied marketing strategy for the civil society's 2020 electoral campaign. Civil society should be apart from all the ruling powerful political parties to prove that even without budget, influential campaigns can be designed and conducted with good reach that can be translated in the election ballots.

5.1 Marketing Strategy

Utilizing the daily activity of users, social media is playing an important role during elections. The electoral communicational marketing concept along with the design communication are strategically considered successful key elements in any political campaign. The communication strategy's framework should include the following; micro-targeting, motivational aspects about the use of social media and most importantly marketing the values, visions and ideologies of the candidates. The earlier research described the digital/ social media participation as a fruitful one during the 2018 elections; this can be deduced from the analysis of the findings (see chapter 4).

Figure 5.1: Lessons learned from the 2018 campaign slide

Lessons Learned from the 2018 Campaign:

1- Plan the campaign ahead of time

The earlier the better! Assembling the campaign strategy and creating the brand identity/visual communication guidelines ahead of time will help maintain a longer lead time.

2- Staff the campaign executive team and make sure they have enough experience in the required field

Recruit! The expert human participation is all what is needed to make the campaign successful since they're the ones who are presenting the campaign's digital appearance (experts could be also volunteers, that's why it is important to plan ahead of time and communicate with these supporters, more people can be involved in the political process).

Volunteers should be Recruited – Trained – Equipped

3- Start a well studied donation program and keep it transparent

Since the civil society is always facing financial limitations, it is very important to allocate a budget for the whole campaign and find several fundraising sources while planning ahead for the campaign.

**Figure 5.2:** Understanding the 5 (W) s of the campaign slide

Understand The 5 (W)s of the Campaign

Who - What - When – Where - Why

Who: are the candidates?
are the voters?

What: are the objectives, visions and missions of the candidates?
are the voters' expectations from the campaign?

When: are you going to start promoting your candidates?
are you going to start reaching out to your voters?

Where: are you going to promote your candidates? *(select your platforms)*
are you going to communicate with your voters?

Why: are you campaigning for these candidates?
are you targeting these voters?



Figure 5.3: Building a successful campaign slide

Build A Successful Campaign by:

- Starting at grass-root
- Choosing the right staff
- Building a well studied campaign marketing strategy
- Reaching out to voters
- Keeping the campaign simple, focused and transparent
- Informing the public
- Looking better than other campaigns
- Keeping the audience engaged
- Being professional! How to look and what to say
- Updating websites frequently in an entertaining and informative manner (post videos, commercials, press release)
- Speaking to existing voter concerns
- Overwhelming supporters with the campaign activity
- Developing an overarching branding identity
- Showing your unique campaign values in a creative visual perception

**Figure 5.4:** Strategic goal of the developed campaign slide

Strategic Goal of the Developed Campaign:

- The strategy must lead to the implementation of the targeting tactics that optimize the chances of the civil society's coalition on the election day.
- Developing a strong digital political landscape with public opponents of strong character branding structures based on low-cost tools.
- An easy and detailed representation of recommendations to follow in the upcoming elections.
- Embrace an engaged online community with a rich content and a powerful presence.
- It will channel the online enthusiasm into a scored digital success.

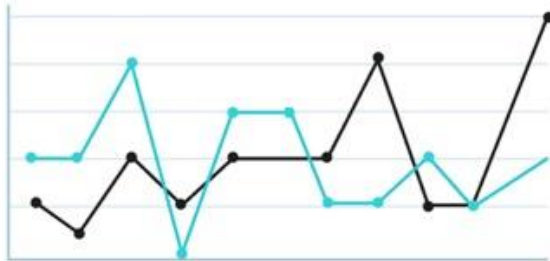


Figure 5.5: Competitor campaign analysis slide

Competitor Campaign Analysis

When campaigning, it is essential to do the competitor analysis in order to understand the weaknesses and strengths of the other campaigns.

In 2018, the main challenge in the civil societies' digital battle was the financial one which was at the same time the strength of all the competitor political campaigns except them. This issue can be solved as mentioned earlier by planning a fundraising system ahead of time.

**Figure 5.6:** Fundraising system slide

Fundraising System

Big Donors

Online Gala (*Meet & Greet on communication platforms example zoom*)

Tagging and challenging them to participate (*For a cause*)

- . Celebrities
- . Influencers
- . Political Influencers
- . Potential Donors

Small Donors

Online Donation Platforms (*Fundly, GoFundMe etc.*)

Reach out to these donors through

- . SMS
- . Email
- . Social media platforms



Figure 5.7: Voters background analysis slide

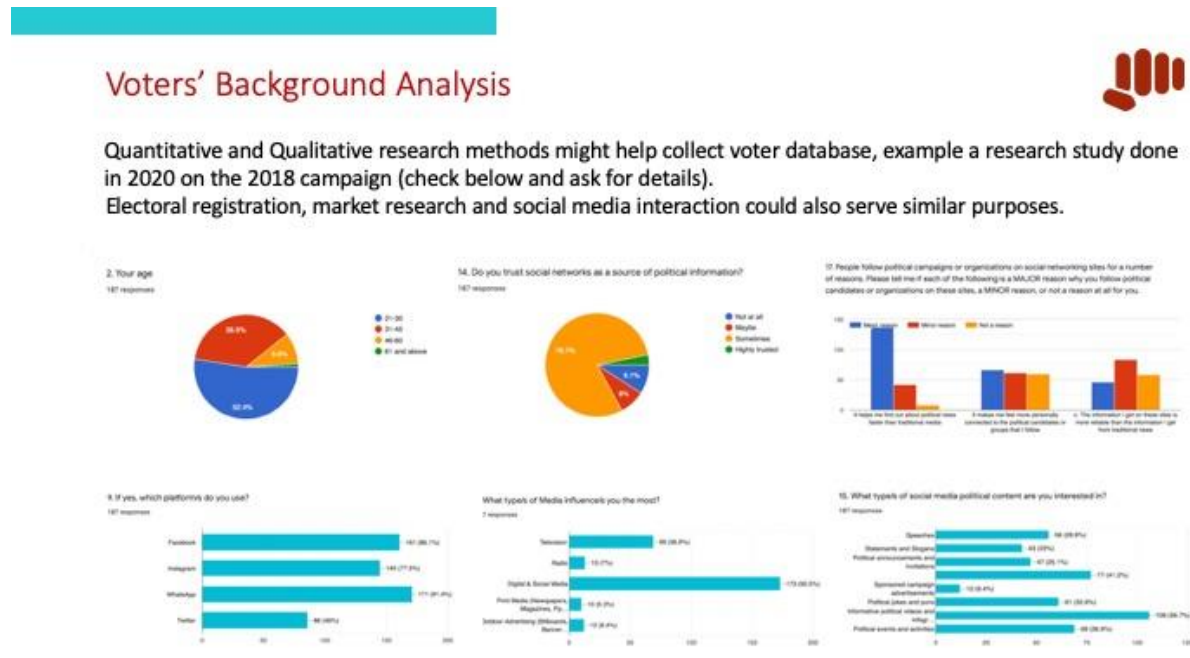



Figure 5.8: Voters background analysis slide



Figure 5.8: Social media platforms slide

Go Where People Are

Let your campaign be everywhere online



WhatsApp - Facebook - Instagram - Twitter - TikTok - Messenger
LinkedIn - Pinterest - Snapchat - YouTube - Flickr - Goodreads - Tumblr
Skype - Zoom - Botim

Figure 5.9: Campaign anatomy slide

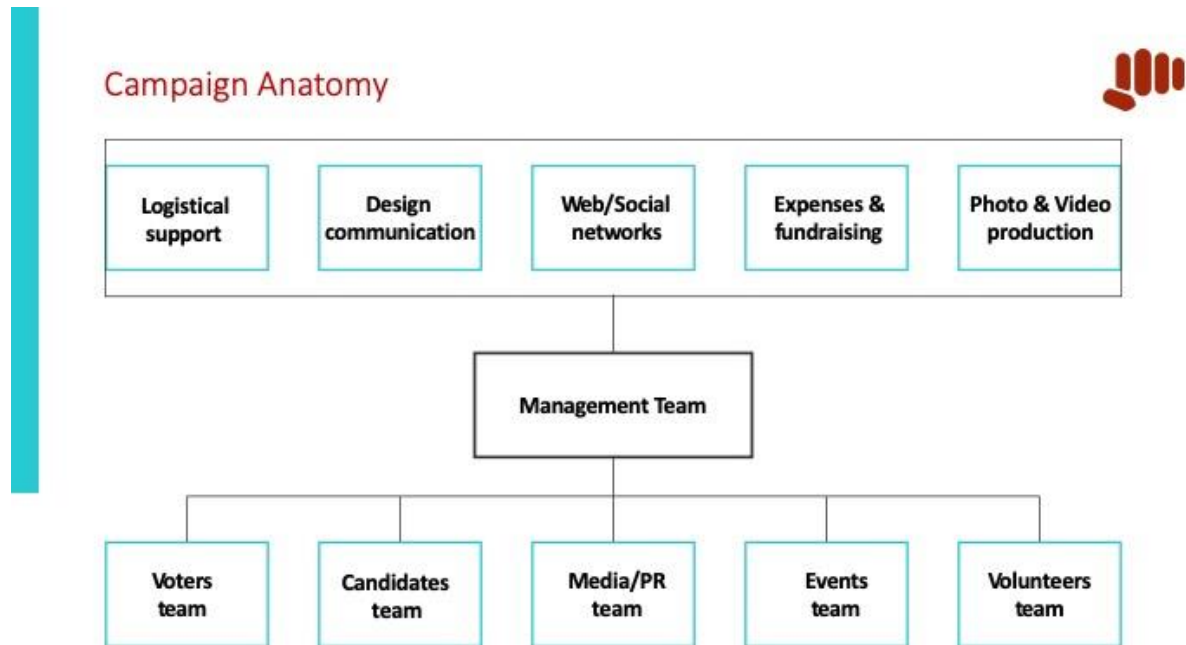
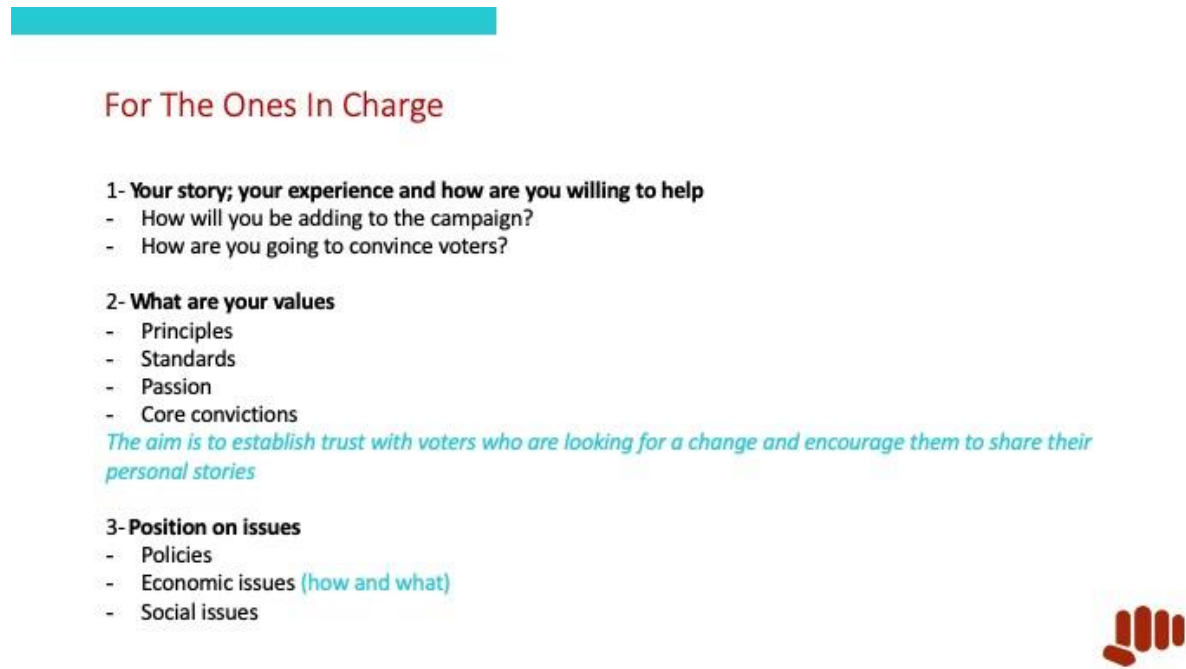


Figure 6.0: Campaign anatomy slide


For The Ones In Charge

1- Your story; your experience and how are you willing to help

- How will you be adding to the campaign?
- How are you going to convince voters?


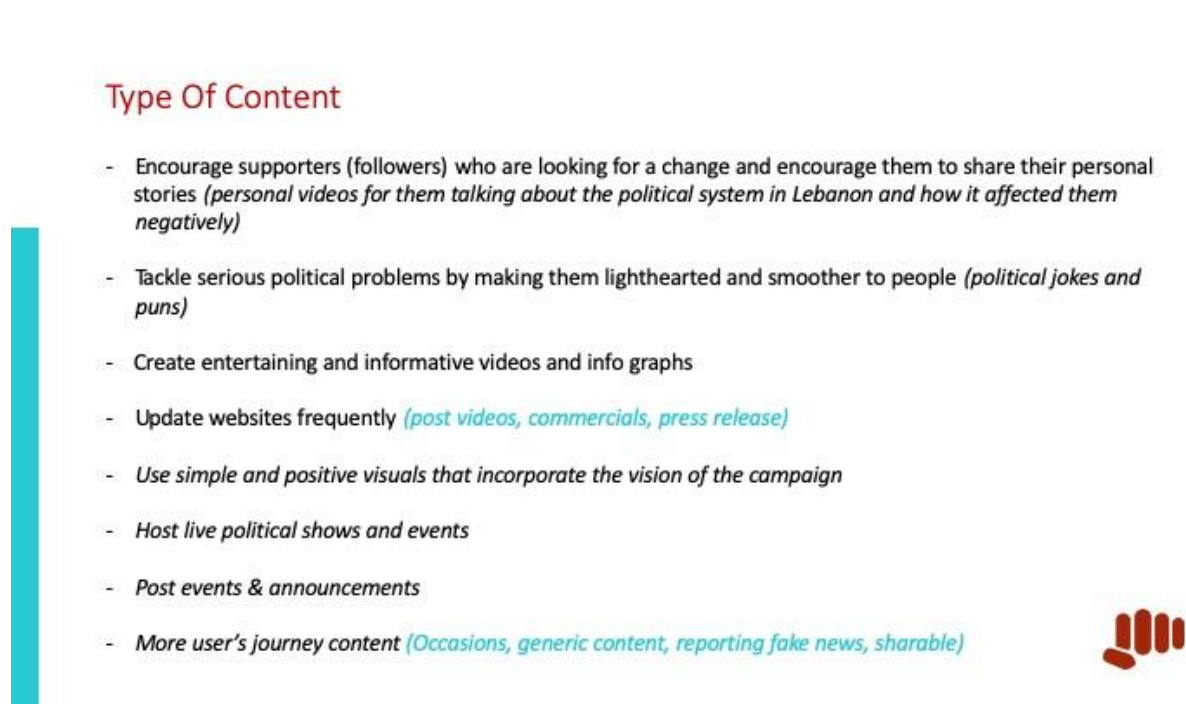
2- What are your values

- Principles
- Standards
- Passion
- Core convictions

The aim is to establish trust with voters who are looking for a change and encourage them to share their personal stories

3- Position on issues

- Policies
- Economic issues (how and what)
- Social issues


Figure 6.1: Type of content slide


Type Of Content

- Encourage supporters (followers) who are looking for a change and encourage them to share their personal stories (*personal videos for them talking about the political system in Lebanon and how it affected them negatively*)
- Tackle serious political problems by making them lighthearted and smoother to people (*political jokes and puns*)
- Create entertaining and informative videos and info graphs
- Update websites frequently (*post videos, commercials, press release*)
- *Use simple and positive visuals that incorporate the vision of the campaign*
- *Host live political shows and events*
- *Post events & announcements*
- *More user's journey content (Occasions, generic content, reporting fake news, sharable)*




Figure 6.2: Design communication slide

5.2 Visual Identity

Based on the academic background and the personal experience of the researcher who was involved in the volunteer work of the Kollouna Watani 2018 campaign and taking into consideration her previous experience in building the visual identity of this specific campaign, particularly the logo and other design material, the aim of this study is to create a new campaign identity with a new name while maintaining the look and feel of the first campaign.

Logo:

The brand image in campaigning is very important to provide recognition (Kohli & Suri, 2002), and by brand image we are talking about the name, logo and slogan. These three components are the very basic tools every political campaign must have. Starting from the future campaign name and logo, the researcher (who is a designer and as mentioned earlier created the

logo of the Kollouna Watani 2018 campaign), and after taking into consideration some campaign members' points of view, found out that the future civil society campaign might not hold the same name and could be presented in a different representation.

The first step was to come up with a catchy campaign name as a key element to communicate with voters and to be used in the electoral lists. In order to stimulate the memory and build a strong campaign name, the researcher used the latest Lebanese revolution name which is October 17th spelled ١٧ تشرين in Arabic and the old campaign's name Kollouna Watani to end up naming the developed campaign model "Kollouna 17 Teshreen". Stressing on the main message "change is coming" that the civil society always talks about to improve the political and economic situation. There was no better name than 17 Teshreen which was a turning point in the Lebanese political system, and Kollouna 17 Teshreen gives the feeling of the previous campaign name by mutating the feeling of belonging especially to the civil society.

Logos usually enhance the memory and help memorize the brand (Kohli & Suri, 2002), and in electoral campaigns it is very important to have a well-designed logo. Updating the logo with a transformation in the identity is essential for any coming electoral campaign for the civil society, yet it is also important to keep the old identity's spirit so that supporters can relate to the previous campaign. The logo change is mainly in the content and not in the style.

The new logo for the new name "Kollouna 17 Teshreen" was designed following the previous logo's "Kollouna Watani" color and style. It was important to improve the 2018 campaign identity by keeping the previous colors but adding a new revolutionary color in order to give the campaign model a new taste. Keeping the cyan color was very critical because it was challenging in the 2018 elections to find since most of the colors are already taken by other political parties. Check the old logo (see figure 5.1).

Figure 6.3: The civil society’s coalition logo “Kollouna Watani” that was used in the 2018 elections



A new branding identity was created by using similar colors and same style with an alternative font and an additional icon. The logo is created in Arabic since it is what the electoral market needs.

Figure 6.4: Creating the new logo for the civil society that they can use in the upcoming elections. “Kollouna 17 Teshreen” is an uplifted dynamic logo that kept the previous logo identity (same style and colors) with few modifications.



The major purpose was to create an identity that reflects the previous visual branding identity of Kollouna Watani coalition for the new campaign’s name “Kollouna 17 Teshreen”. The researcher presented the new logo as shown in figure 5.2 by adding a symbol and changing the

font while keeping the look and the feel of the old logo. Though the campaign name has been modified, people can still relate to the previous one mainly when recognizing the word Kollouna and the colors.

A hidden emblem is created as a symbolism to the shaddeh ّ above the letter L in Kollouna which represents the connotation of the fist that signifies power and revolution. This icon conveys a strong visual message that change is coming. The semiotic representation of the fist icon reveals a message that gives supporters the feeling of empowerment as telling them “change is coming”. The typography offset in the logo also gives the feeling of power, this representation in the logo created a base for the visual identity that was inspired and developed out of it.

Charles Peirce claimed,

“A sign, or representamen, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the Interpretant of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its object. It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the ground of the representamen.” (Peirce, 1931).

The fist icon is designed in an abstract way to communicate the revolutionary behavior; the red color links the revolution concept with the power of change. On the other hand, the use of the icon in the campaign branding is also intended to develop many visual representations out of it. As Peirce explained semiotics and the sign representation, the fist sign in the above logo

represents the rampage and protesting phenomenon that recalls the memory of the October 17th revolution.

Figure 6.5: The symbol/ sign in the (J) letter that represents the fist and the revolutionary connotation. It also serves as a branding icon signifying “change is coming” in the proposed campaign model.



Logo Grid

Figure 6.6: Structuring and spacing of the logo according to a geometric grid system that gives the feeling of perfection to the logo. Architecting the above logo was based on minimal geometric structure and more of alignment to obtain visual balance.



Logo Typefaces

The font used in the logo is Lalezar in regular weight and the subtitle is GE Great Bold. It is expressive and functional and most importantly it offers a bold and strong visual appearance that assists the power of change as a concept along with the red typography offset in the background. The typeface fits the communication needs of the current logo due to its mechanical open curves and thickness, it signifies power and change since the slab and bold font reflects confidence and stability.

Figure 6.7: Lalezar font shape display and glyphs that is used in the main structure of the logo.

A	B	C	Č	Ć	D	Đ	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	Š	T	U
V	W	X	Y	Z	Ž	a	b	c	č	ć	d	đ	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p
q	r	s	š	t	u	v	w	x	y	z	ž	ء	ي	و	ه	ن	م	ل	ك	ق	ف	غ	ع	ظ
ط	ض	ص	ش	س	;	,	ذ	د	خ	ح	ج	ث	ت	ب	أ	Ă	Â	Ê	Ô	Ů	U	ă	â	ê
ô	ơ	ư	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	ı	۲	۳	ε	ο	ϒ	ν	λ	ϑ	ι	·	'
?	'	"	!	"	(%)	[#]	{	@	}	/	&	\	<	-	+	÷	×	=	>	®
©	\$	€	£	¥	¢	:	;	,	.	*	?	‘	’	!	ı	ı	ı	ı	ı	ı	ı	ı	ı	ı

Figure 6.8: GE Great Bold font shape display and glyphs that is used in the subtitle of the logo.

أ ب ت ث ج ح خ د ذ ر ز س
ش ص ض ط ظ ع غ ف ق
ك ل م ن ه و ي
١ ٢ ٤ ٥ ٦ ٧ ٨ ٩ ٠

Identity Colors

The identity colors used follow the same color palette of the 2018 campaign with an additional revolutionary color, which is the red. The reason behind using the old colors, specifically cyan is because it was challenging according to the interviewees to find a color that is not taken by other political parties to assign legally for the electoral lists. The usage of the red revolutionary color (as observed in most of the visuals created for the Lebanese October 17 revolution) is a connotation that gives an emotional denotation of the tremendous power behind the campaign reflecting the “revolution in the parliament” concept.

Figure 6.9: The branding colors of the campaign, “cyan” the old campaign’s list color, black and red representing the revolutionary colors.



Figure 7.0: The slogan “البرلم ينتفض” meaning “The parliament is revolting” evokes a feeling of connection with the Lebanese 2019 - 2020 revolution and recalls the powerful movement of change that the researcher is trying to highlight in this campaign. The iconic context of the slogan is powerful in building the brand’s identity with a strong emotional catchphrase that tells voters an important message that is “change can also happen in the parliament if voters’ unite against all the traditional politicians in the voting ballots”.

Slogan

البرلمان ينتفض

The use of photography in campaigning enhances the communication and serves the visual representation of the campaign better (Marland, 2012). All photos should be taken with legal protection and approval of the ones photographed (for that reason, the researcher decided not to include real photos in the proposed designs). It is important to shoot candidate portraits of different body angles, personal informal photos, with different audiences, live photos of the candidates from different events/places. All photos should be high resolution and clear.

5.2 Teasing Campaign Ad:

Figure 7.1: A teaser Ad that provokes a cryptic message for viewers to keep them questioning the possibilities that the visual is promoting. The above teaser ad is what people will be looking for before the election date. The campaign will be posted everywhere in an engaging manner, and people's responses will be tracked accordingly. The visual implies the slogan as a heroic element using the same font of the logo, fist sign and same branding colors. The wall background symbolizes the revolution walls where protestors spray messages while revolting.

Teaser Ad:



5.3 Digital Advertisements/ Social Media Content:

Figure 7.2: A social media visual advertisement that relates the elections to the Lebanese revolution in a direct manner. The revolution fist that represents change signifies in this visual that change is coming and people are going to vote to the right candidates this time “Revolution will happen in the parliament”. The visual is designed in line with the branding identity making the text the heroic character as the identification of power.



Figure 7.3: A social media visual advertisement that signifies a new meaning of power, the social economic power. The message behind the digital ad highlights the economic collapse that happened in 2019-2020 when the Lebanese pound lost against the dollar because of the political leaders. The significance of the visual amplifies a wider emotional representation that reminds the Lebanese people of their struggles during this time and helps empower the value of the campaign.



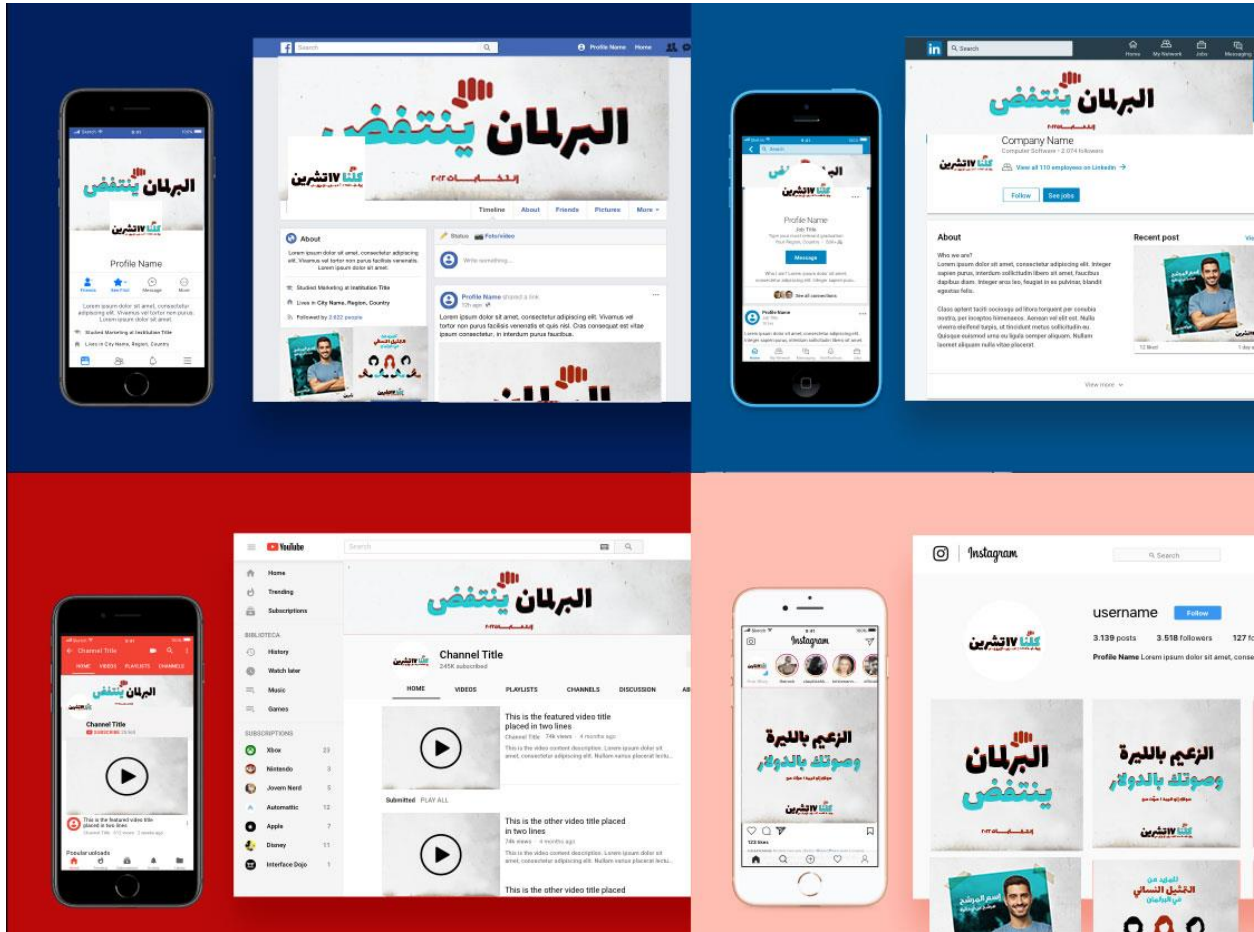
Figure 7.4: Gender empowerment visual of women highlights another social issue where women are not well represented in the parliament. The visual shows power to improve women's status in the parliamentary elections by signifying the silhouette of women bonding together. Gender equality and the importance of women's participation in the political field is crucial for the development of any political campaign since it is an ongoing fight that unfortunately we still call for in our society. Such kinds of visuals attract different sectors and empower the overall campaign.



Figure 7.5: Candidate announcement template; photo, name, in which district and the Kollouna 17 Teshreen's logo/branding. The visual represents a poster of the candidate taped on the wall as an illusion of the purpose and how they used to announce candidates. The use of social media political campaigns to promote candidates generates different positive aspects such as reducing the visual pollution that we encounter during elections because of all the billboards, banners and posters that the potential candidates use to market their campaign offline and hence reducing pollution and sustainability.



Figure 7.6: The look and feel templates of some of the campaign’s social media platforms.



This chapter draws a conclusion on the main key elements of the whole study.

Conclusion

This thesis revealed the importance of social media as a main tool in electoral campaigns these days. The big question was if social media has an impact in manipulating voters' intentions and behavior. The findings showed a standing performance of the digital tools for supporting voters' decisions rather than changing them. The use of social media in political campaigns brings different positive aspects such as reducing the visual pollution that we encounter everyday (lots of billboards and banners during elections) for sustainability and it requires less budget, hence it is affordable for the civil society. For sure, social media has made it easier for voters to access all the political information they usually need during elections. It is also simpler in terms of campaigning and reaching voters, but in the end, voters initiate their voting decisions based on previous political beliefs and different preferences.

The following paper cured its objectives by shedding lights on the history of political campaigning, stating the effect of social media in the Lebanese elections' landscape and developing a creative design model to be used in the upcoming elections.

The powerful statement that design communication creates when campaigning is a combination of inspiring connotations and symbolism of the semiotic elements/designs. These connotations mutate the messages behind the campaign in order to attract voters. In other words, the outstanding creative execution of the campaign design elements play an important role in the success of any digital campaign during elections. In relation to the 2018 visual material and as

mentioned in the methodology chapter, there was a gap in the strategic thinking and action of the campaign. The designs created in the past campaign lacked the semiotics and connotations of political empowerment. The visuals were somehow weak in their design structures.

This paper provided a structured design strategy and a powerful visual identity inspired from the October 17th revolution. The developed campaign was designed based on the data collected from the empirical work and the interpretations of people's responses towards this topic. This gave a clear vision (strategy & branding identity) on how the future civil society's campaign should be handled.

However, further studies should tackle this topic in the Lebanese context since the studies are very scarce in Lebanon.

Social media and design communication are very powerful in the era of globalization and in the field of technological communication so how powerful could they be in forming political leaders?

This section gives an overview on the limitations of this research study along with recommendations to design future campaigns

Limitations and Recommendations

The limitations in this thesis were the following; first, the topic is considered new in the field. Second, the personal involvement of the researcher in the 2018 Kollouna Watani campaign as a designer since it will be perceived as a biased interference.

While working on this dissertation Lebanon was passing through tough times, starting with the October 17th revolution followed by the economic breakdown and lastly the pandemic that isolated people and made them stuck at home. These circumstances that the country and all the Lebanese people were passing through caused few delays in the process especially with the interviews since the chosen interviewees are icons in the revolution and it was hard to catch upon, then came the virus to make it even harder physically and psychologically.

As for the recommendations, we should be aware in the future that digital tools can make a huge difference. Instead of using these platforms as a communication/ information tool, we should believe that SNS have the power to build a political war during elections. We should start building psychological profiles for all the voters in the country out of these platforms by exploiting people's assets to target the designed audience effectively. It is time to start using these platforms seriously and believe that the power of image and design communication can act as a winning card for the political marketing favor!

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey Questions

Dear Participant,

My name is Riham Nasr and I am a master's student in Design at Notre Dame University -Louaize.

For my thesis, I am examining the influence of social media in the 2018 Lebanese Electoral Campaign, through the case of the civil society coalition "Kollouna Watani" to assess the effectiveness of their campaign in directing people's decisions.

I am inviting you to participate in this research study by completing the following questionnaire, which will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

Your participation in this research project is voluntary. There are no known risks to your participation. Your responses will remain confidential and unidentified. Data from this research will be reported only as a collective combined total. No one other than the researcher will know your personal answers to this questionnaire. If you choose to participate in this study, please answer all questions as honestly as possible.

Completion and submission of the questionnaire will indicate your willingness to participate in this study. If you would like to have a summary copy of this study and if you require additional information or have questions, please contact me at my email listed below.

Thank you for taking the time to assist me in my educational endeavors. The data collected will provide useful information regarding the topic under-study.

rhnasr02@ndu.edu.lb

ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Dear Participant,

Your answers will be helpful in studying the influence of social media in the 2018 Lebanese parliamentary elections stressing on the case of Kollouna Watani coalition

to assess its effectiveness in directing people's voting choices. Please take a moment to complete it as accurately as possible.

Thank you for your time.

1. Your gender

- Male Female

2. Your age

- 18-30 31-45 46-60 61 and above

3. Are you

- Lebanese citizen Expat

4. Your level of education

- High school or below Technical education University (Major)

5. Do you work? If yes specify in which field

- Yes ----- No

6. Do you have any social media account/s?

- Yes No (If no, thank you for your time)

7. If yes, which social media platform do you use the most?

- Facebook Instagram WhatsApp Twitter

8. Did you vote in the 2018 elections? (If no, thank you for your time)

- Yes No

9. Modern politics is characterized by permanent campaigning with regard to connecting with the voters through media platforms. Did your candidate or political party use social media in their campaign?

- Yes No

10. Did you follow candidates on social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp or Twitter?

- Yes No

11. People follow political candidates or organizations on social networking sites for a number of reasons. Please tell me if each of the following is a MAJOR reason for following political candidates or organizations on these sites, a MINOR reason, or not a reason at all for you.

- a. It helps me find out about political news faster than traditional media
- Major reason Minor reason Not a reason
- b. It makes me feel more personally connected to the political candidates or groups that I follow
- Major reason Minor reason Not a reason
- c. The information I get on these sites is more reliable than the information I get from traditional news
- Major reason Minor reason Not a reason

12. Do you think the digital platform system beats the printed material example billboards, brochures, posters etc. in revealing the political messages and affecting your voting intentions?

- Yes No

In either case specify why: (Optional)

13. How did social media political campaigns affect you on the personal level. Would you rely on it to get the political messages and did it affect your voting decision-making? (Optional)

Appendix 2: Interviews

Interview with Alaa Sayeg

Q: Did you have a professional team handling your campaign?

A: Yes

Q: What was the marketing strategy adopted?

A: It was a guerilla campaign based on 2 things: The political program and a political plan developed in a participatory manner and the work of volunteers on the ground.

Q: What was the visual identity adopted based on the marketing strategy?

A: It was a unified visual identity among all coalition candidate members.

Q: What was the visual communication “as propaganda” adopted?

A: It wasn't really a propaganda, it was more of recommendations from people. You were part of this campaign and you saw people were talking about us more than we expected. We encountered the lack of coverage from traditional media and we couldn't afford our presence on tv stations and tv shows.

Q: Why did you choose to promote your campaign through social media?

A: As it was the only means of communication, since first we couldn't afford the traditional media fees, second, we chose social media and offline media and guerilla marketing and our

presence next to people door to door etc. and social media was the cheapest communication tool we have in the absence of our ability to appear on televisions.

Q: Did you rely only on the coalition social media platforms or did you have an offline campaign as well?

A: No there were many groups among the coalition, Lihaqqi was one of these groups and we were posting on our group platforms more than on the coalition platforms. And we had offline efforts as well, door to door /phone calls etc.

Q: Can you tell us about the platforms that were used for the campaign?

A: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

Q: Were there any paid advertisements running on your platforms, tell us more about the budget set and the financial status of the campaign?

A: It was very limited, and on our group platforms there was paid advertisements and we relied on organic reach.

Q: Was the overall campaign successful in your opinion even though only one member of the coalition made it to the parliament?

A: On the campaigning level, it was good in terms of reach but as conversion rate from online reach to real voters, it was questionable. For example, Lihaqqi as a grass root made a conversion higher than online. To elaborate more, on our Facebook platform we had 7,000 like but we got 12,000 like in Shouf-Aley because of the real grass root work which was not the same for the

coalition. So yes, it was successful but not enough and we could have been more successful if we had better grass root movements in all areas along with the online efforts. It would have made a better viral effect and a conversion rate of supporters and people who liked our content and the political norms of the coalition of online to real voters offline.

Q: How do you assess the effect of social media on the voting behavior in general?

A: In general, it was good since people are interested in seeing the unified image and sects with plans and visions and to get to know these candidates more so social media helped in this aspect and it was positive and affected the behavior yet the behavior can't really shift into real voters during elections. Also because of the triggers of the offline ground and the budget was a limitation as well that could've created better behavior.

Q: Are you still active on the pages you created for the elections?

A: Yes, not very active but somehow still active.

Q: Do you recommend political campaigns to be held only on social media platforms in the future?

A: Definitely, I recommend political campaigns to be held on social media platforms but not only! I believe offline is also very important and I think we have to uplift our content in the future to a more engaging one, more online debates, more live interviews, to communicate more with voters. Moreover, I think we should shift into two levels, 1- people's visions, interests and who they recommend as candidates.

Interview with Assaad Thebian

Q: What was your role in the campaign?

A: Basically, I was handling the communication part of the campaign. Kollouna Watani is a coalition of different political groups but there was no branding umbrella so we opened a small sector of 3-4 members (Nada, Tatiana and I) and we used to ask for help from other volunteers when needed.

Q: Where you working among a team of experts and how did you divide the roles?

A: Yes, to a certain extent they were experts. The 3 of us have previous experience in communication and marketing and advertising

Q: What was the marketing strategy adopted?

A: We were trying to reach people through online platforms because there was no budget for the traditional media (television) as they had a very high cost. It was a mix of 4 things. First we were trying to highlight our candidates and second, we aimed to reveal our political program and third we wanted to show that we are a coalition in 9 out of 15 areas in Lebanon which is considered an achievement in addition to giving the importance for gender equality and that we have many women candidate in the coalition. These 4 points are our strongholds that were among our strategy.

Q: Can you tell us about the platforms that were used for the campaign?

A: Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. We were counting on Facebook the most

Q: Were there any paid advertisements running on your platforms, tell us more about the budget set and the financial status of the campaign?

A: To be honest I don't remember exactly the number but as an estimation we reached 20,000\$ for the ads on Facebook and Instagram together.

Q: How did you launch the campaign online?

A: An offline event at forum de Beirut streamed online through live coverage on our Facebook platform in addition to Tele Liban as other media channels refused to stream. So, the alternative was the live.

Q: Was your campaign supported with offline marketing material?

A: We conducted small events all over Lebanon and we went live as well and rallying to bring people, we also did several stunts. And each district had its own print material such as distributing flyers and leaflets about candidates' CVs. Some were unified across all districts and sometimes each district was creating their own material along with t-shirts and caps from the central team for the coalition volunteers to wear on the day of the elections all under the same branding umbrella.

Q: What are the limitations that the campaign faced?

A: Definitely financial which limited our presence on the traditional media and we couldn't afford a team of experts as all the support was based on volunteer work. Also, each group among

the coalition gave importance to their candidates more than the big brand “the coalition”. Only Tatiana and I were full timers and nada part time on the campaign.

Q: What are the design limitations that the campaign faced?

A: We had a tight timeline to come up with the logo and branding it was also hard to find a color that isn't taken by any political party to use. We had no resources and internally it was taking time to get back to the decision-makers. As for our resources and time I can grade the design performance 8/10 and we also recruited a designer with a very cheap salary but he was professional and made great work.

Q: Tell us more about your target audience and how did you intend through the campaign to make them feel, think and as a result direct their voting behavior?

A: First time voters by that meaning the young generation that we gave them a replacement and the second fragment are people who don't vote so we were trying to send them positive vibes that change is coming and that for the first time the independent sectors united under the Kolouna-Watan coalition umbrella

Q: Was the campaign successful even though only one member of the coalition made it to the parliament?

A: In Lebanon, people are still affected more by television than by social media, but I can say the campaign on social media was successful so since we couldn't afford getting on we weren't able to reach more people. One of the things I remember is that we couldn't also afford printing billboards so what we did was that we took photos of existing billboards of other candidates and

we photo-shopped the photos to make them look like they were branded Kollouna Watani and this post went viral with lots of shares, people noticed that we did it on purpose due to budget restrictions, others thought that we really printed these billboards

Q: Tell us more about the designs you developed for the campaign, and how important was the design communication plan in delivering the political information?

A: As for the basic such as branding, templates, press release, photography they are important but not very crucial, creativity is all what matters. Definitely if the strategy was well studied before starting the campaign with collaborations with influencers with cross sharing platforms it might help. But sometimes out of the blue something not previously studied might go viral for some reasons.

Q: Do you believe political campaigns should be held only on social media platforms in the future?

A: Definitely no, actually I will readjust my answer, it's yes and no yes if people were aware of how to use this platform. Although social media is doing great social media is not only Facebook and Instagram, it's Whatsapp now Tiktok is trendy so it's about how we use these platforms in a very clever way to reach people and this needs resources, time and lots of preparation so this should always be considered in future campaigns and how to do branding in a populist premise, not just political. In addition, offline should also be given importance in the regions for example to be present on Whatsapp groups to talk about your campaign since no one will do that for you.

Q: Based on your experience in the 2018 campaign, what are your recommendations for a better campaign performance in the upcoming elections?

A: Task dividing is very important; to work more on creative ideas and the preparation should no longer be reactionary but well planned.

Interview with Raed Bou Hamdan

Q: What was your role in the campaign?

A: Member of the communication team

Q: Were you working among a team of experts and how did you distribute the roles?

A: The team included a group volunteers, with more and less expertise in campaigning and communication. Creative designers, videographers and video editors, social media specialists, content creators and copywriters, media buyers, and strategists.

The distribution was based on the specialization, the time availability, and the location as the campaign had decentralized tasks in the different Lebanese regions.

Q: What was the marketing strategy?

A: The strategy was based on maintaining the position of Kollouna Watani as a serious and trustworthy political alternative.

We tried to reflect the objective on the creative, the tone of voice and in the communication tactics and stunts.

Q: Can you tell us about the platforms that were used for the campaign?

A: The main focus was social media, official pages and activists' personal accounts, as that was a cost-efficient tool to create a good reach

Local Events in the rural villages and big cities were the other tool to create direct contact with the voters, in addition to some out of the box events that created media stunts

Minimal outdoor advertisements, and limited TV interviews.

Q: Were there any paid advertisements running on your platforms, tell us more about the budget set and the financial status of the campaign?

A: We were working with a very limited budget, as our resources were weak, mainly online fundraising and activists' contributions.

This led us to minimal spending on advertisements, mainly on social media, with some outdoor panels donated from supporters.

Q: How did you launch the campaign online?

A: We created a teaser before launching the campaign, with a shocking dark message addressing "No Hope" as we attracted people's attention, we revealed the positive message of the campaign by shutting down the NO from No Hope to raise a message of Hope to the voters.

Q: Was your campaign supported with offline marketing material?

A: Offline materials like leaflets, printed electoral programs and door-to-door visits helped our campaign to reflect the genuine aspect, as those communication tools were not used by our opponents from the traditional political parties.

Q: What are the limitations that the campaign faced?

A: Budget mainly, we were working with a very limited budget.

TV channels and mainstream media in general were selling airtime, which we couldn't buy

We had lack of human resources, with a small team to run a huge campaign

The oppression on the activists and the social pressure were also important limitations to our freedom of expression.

Q: What are the design limitations that the campaign faced?

A: First, Colors are dominated by Lebanese political parties, we had to find new and unique colors for our branding.

Addressing political messages had some sensitivity in using terms, graphics, etc.

Over designing could have given us a too professional/high budget look and feel, our imperfect designs were part of the storytelling.

Q: Tell us more about your target audience and how did you intend through the campaign to make them feel, think and as a result direct their voting behavior?

A: We wanted to target young voters mainly, we called them first time voters, as the last elections took place in 2009 (before 9 years).

We wanted to (create the trust feel of their power) and the relevance of their votes. Because most of the people didn't believe that their votes will make any change and they won't create the difference.

We worked gradually to address a set of messages: from hope, to power, to trust in our project, and at the latest stage of the campaign, we focused on the message of hidden support they can give us (behind the separator) if they will face pressure of announcing their political positions

Q: Was the campaign successful even though only one member of the coalition made it to the parliament?

A: The objectives of the campaign included the electoral victory for sure, but we wanted to achieve an objective beyond statistical results, in creating awareness about the movement, and redefining politics in terms of participatory approach of decision making, program-based politics, people-funded campaigns and grassroots political activism.

On this term, the campaign was successful

Q: Tell us more about the designs you developed for the campaign, and how important was the design communication plan in delivering the political information?

A: We succeeded in creating simple yet attractive designs, where we addressed political information in direct messages. In addition, the designs made a visual identity to the campaign and maintain a solid foundation of awareness raising through posters, social media posts, and print materials

Q: Do you believe political campaigns should be held only on social media platforms in the future?

A: By the time, social media will be playing a bigger role in political campaigns with the technological development and the new digital tools of defining and studying the demographics, interests, behavior, of online users... However, the offline tools will remain efficient tool

Q: Out of your experience in the 2018 campaign, what are your recommendations for a better campaign performance in the coming elections?

A: Research is a key element to improve performance of political campaigns. I highly recommend to run quantitative and qualitative studies to learn more about the audience preferences and the best practices to reach and convince voters to take actions towards the voting ballots

Interview with Nada Nassif

Q: What was your role in the campaign?

A: I was in the political bureau and a coordinator between this bureau and the media committee.

Q: Were you working among a team of experts and how did you divide the roles?

A: Yes, the team was constituted of mainly 4 key people but we brainstormed basically everything together especially the creative offline/online/media campaigns.

Q: What was the marketing strategy?

A: Shared

Q: Can you tell us about the platforms that were used for the campaign?

A: We used Facebook as the main platform for communication and had Twitter and Instagram accounts.

Q: Were there any paid advertisements running on your platforms, tell us more about the budget set and the financial status of the campaign?

A: We've had a lot of challenges financially, so the media buying was focused more on TVCs and yet we've had some budget for the online campaign. (I don't remember the exact budget though)

Q: How did you launch the campaign online?

A: Live videos were the tool to launch the campaign. We went live on the launch of the coalition (Tahalof Watani) and shared first the political campaigns/parties/movements that were part of the

coalition. When launching the lists, we also went live then shared videos for candidates of each district highlighting the headlines of their political program

Q: Was your campaign supported with offline marketing material?

A: Yes, we distributed flyers of candidates lists in districts. We also had an offline campaign in the memory of the civil war

Q: What are the limitations that the campaign faced?

A: Financial and human mainly: Compared to traditional parties we've had scarce money. Also, due to internal tensions and the need to report everything to the political bureau we've had few people working on the media part.

Q: What are the limitations on the design level?

A: We've had few volunteers working on the designs. They were committed and delivered as soon as they could. However, we needed a lot more than what we've had.

Q: Tell us more about your target audience and how did you intend through the campaign to make them feel, think and as a result direct their voting behavior?

A: The main people we targeted were first time voters. The campaign was meant for them to feel that they now have an option in electing a depute who represents their ambitions in this country especially when it comes to civil rights which was not tackled by any other lists/parties.

Q: Was the campaign successful even though only one member of the coalition made it to the parliament?

A: Taking all challenges into consideration, I would say it was good. We were competing with people who have the power, the money and the human resources to find their way easily to the parliament and yet we managed to provide what we believe was the good alternative for our target audience.

Q: Tell us more about the designs you developed for the campaign, and how important was the design communication plan in delivering the political information?

A: We didn't have complicated designs. We had often templates for social media. The struggle in design happened with the logo especially with the number of stakeholders involved in every decision.

A: Do you believe political campaigns should be held only on social media platforms in the future?

A: It really depends on the spending limit set by the electoral law. If it is low – and it should be, candidates/parties/movements/coalitions can get a great opportunity and an authentic one for that through social media.

Q: Based on your experience in the 2018 campaign, what are your recommendations for a better campaign performance in the upcoming elections?

A: First, set a clear work scheme: In 2018, we struggled with taking even the small decisions because we had to refer to an entire bureau (15+ persons). Setting clear content/ reporting/ decision-making rules accelerate the work especially in the stressing time of elections.

Second, be a planner: A communication strategy is key to your work environment. Third, a lot of people get excited to work in elections but from what I learned:

- 1- Excitement is different than finishing a task
- 2- Experts are the ones you are after.

We were lucky in 2018 to have experts excited to work yet I see that we could have had better chances and communication have we had more cash and connections.

Fourth, always review the validity of media buying: When it comes to politics, buying an engagement can make or break your connection with your audience. Never do it randomly and NEVER do it without a clear plan and purpose.