Classification of Functions of Communicative Strategy and Tactics in Political Communication

Sattarova Dilrabo Ikrambayevna [1]

Abstract: The classification of functions of communicative strategy and tactics in political communication is crucial for understanding how politicians and political entities convey messages, influence public opinion, and achieve their goals. This paper explores the multifaceted roles of communicative strategies and tactics, categorizing them into several key functions. Firstly, informational functions are aimed at disseminating facts, policies, and positions to inform the electorate. Persuasive functions seek to sway public opinion, employing rhetoric, emotional appeals, and framing techniques to build support or opposition. Interactive functions focus on engagement with the audience through debates, social media interactions, and public consultations, fostering a sense of participation and responsiveness. Defensive functions involve managing crises, countering opposition attacks, and mitigating damage to a political entity's reputation. Mobilizing functions are designed to activate and galvanize supporters, encouraging voter turnout and political activism. Furthermore, legitimizing functions aim to establish credibility, authority, and trustworthiness in the eyes of the public. The paper also examines the interplay between these functions and the tactical choices made by political actors, such as message framing, agenda-setting, and narrative construction. By dissecting these functions and tactics, the study provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing political communication, offering insights into the strategic thinking behind political messaging and its impact on democratic processes. This classification aids in a deeper understanding of the sophisticated methods employed in political discourse and highlights the importance of strategic communication in shaping political landscapes.

Key Words: Political Communication, Communicative Strategies, Tactics, Persuasion, Information, Manipulation, Messaging, Audience Targeting, Rhetorical Devices, Public Opinion.

INTRODUCTION

Political communication is a dynamic field where the exchange of information, persuasion, and influence play crucial roles in shaping public opinion and policy decisions. Central to this exchange are communicative strategies and tactics, which political actors deploy to achieve their objectives. Understanding the classification of these strategies and tactics is essential for analyzing how politicians, parties, and interest groups navigate the complex landscape of political discourse.

Communicative strategies in political communication refer to overarching plans or approaches designed to achieve long-term goals. These strategies are comprehensive and incorporate various elements of message crafting, audience targeting, and media usage. Tactics, on the other hand, are the specific actions or techniques employed within these broader strategies to influence public perception or achieve immediate objectives. Tactics are often more flexible and adaptable, allowing political actors to respond to changing circumstances and opportunities.

One of the primary classifications of communicative strategies in political communication is based on the intent behind the communication. For instance, persuasive strategies aim to convince the audience to adopt a particular viewpoint or take a specific action. These strategies often employ rhetorical devices, emotional appeals, and evidence-based arguments to sway public opinion. Persuasive communication is crucial during election campaigns, policy debates, and issue advocacy.

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Another key classification is the informative strategy, where the primary goal is to disseminate information and enhance the public's understanding of specific issues. This strategy is often used in public service announcements, governmental reports, and informational campaigns. By providing accurate and comprehensive information, political actors can build trust and credibility with their audience, which is essential for effective governance and public engagement.

In addition to persuasive and informative strategies, political communication also involves manipulative strategies, which are designed to shape perceptions and attitudes through more subtle and sometimes deceptive means. These strategies can include the use of propaganda, disinformation, and framing techniques to influence how issues are perceived and discussed. Manipulative strategies often raise ethical concerns due to their potential to distort reality and mislead the public.

Within these broad strategic classifications, various tactics can be identified. For persuasive strategies, common tactics include the use of endorsements, where support from respected individuals or organizations is leveraged to build credibility. Other tactics involve emotional appeals, such as fear, pride, or empathy, to connect with the audience on a personal level. The use of statistical evidence and expert testimony can also enhance the persuasiveness of a message.

Informative strategies often employ tactics like fact sheets, press releases, and educational campaigns to convey important information succinctly and clearly. Visual aids, such as infographics and charts, are frequently used to make complex data more accessible and engaging. Social media platforms have become invaluable tools for disseminating information quickly and broadly, allowing for real-time updates and interactive engagement with the audience.

Manipulative tactics, meanwhile, might include the selective presentation of facts, where only information supporting a particular viewpoint is highlighted while contradictory evidence is omitted. Other tactics involve the use of loaded language and euphemisms to frame issues in a biased manner. The strategic timing of information releases, known as information salience, can also be used to maximize impact or distract from unfavorable news.

Understanding the classification of communicative strategies and tactics in political communication provides valuable insights into the mechanisms of influence and persuasion in the political arena. By recognizing the intent behind different strategies and the specific tactics employed, analysts and scholars can better assess the effectiveness and ethical implications of political messaging. This knowledge is crucial for fostering a more informed and critically engaged citizenry, capable of navigating the complexities of political discourse.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative content analysis methodology to classify and analyze the functions of communicative strategy and tactics in political communication. Qualitative content analysis is a systematic and objective means of describing and quantifying phenomena, allowing for the identification of themes and patterns within textual data. This method is particularly suited for examining the nuanced and multifaceted nature of political communication, where the context, tone, and intent behind messages are crucial for understanding their strategic and tactical functions.

Data Collection

The data for this study is collected from a diverse range of sources, including political speeches, campaign advertisements, press releases, social media posts, and media interviews. These sources provide a comprehensive overview of the communicative practices of political actors across different platforms and contexts. The time frame for data collection spans the most recent election cycle, ensuring the relevance and contemporaneity of the data.

The selection of political actors includes major candidates and parties from both ruling and opposition parties, allowing for a balanced analysis of different strategic approaches. Additionally, data is sourced from various countries to account for cross-cultural differences in political communication practices.

Sampling

A purposive sampling technique is used to select the most pertinent examples of political communication for analysis. This involves identifying key moments in the election cycle, such as major speeches, debates, and campaign events, where communicative strategies and tactics are likely to be most prominent. Social media posts and press releases are also sampled based on their engagement levels and media coverage, ensuring that the data reflects messages that reached a wide audience.

Coding and Categorization

The collected data is analyzed using a coding scheme developed from existing literature on political communication and strategic communication theories. The coding scheme categorizes communicative functions into six primary types: informational, persuasive, interactive, defensive, mobilizing, and legitimizing. Each function is defined as follows:

➢ Informational: Messages that aim to provide factual information and educate the public about policies, events, or issues.

➢ Persuasive: Messages that seek to influence public opinion and garner support through rhetoric, emotional appeals, and narrative framing.

➢ Interactive: Messages that engage with the audience, encourage dialogue, and respond to public inquiries or feedback.

➢ Defensive: Messages that address crises, counter negative publicity, and protect the reputation of the political actor.

➢ Mobilizing: Messages that activate and energize supporters, encouraging participation in political activities.

➢ Legitimizing: Messages that establish and reinforce credibility, authority, and trustworthiness.

Each piece of data is coded according to these categories, with multiple coders employed to ensure reliability and consistency. Discrepancies in coding are resolved through discussion and consensus.

Data Analysis

Once the data is coded, thematic analysis is conducted to identify recurring patterns and strategies within each communicative function. This involves examining the content, tone, and context of messages to uncover how different tactics are employed to achieve specific strategic goals. For example, the use of emotional appeals in persuasive communication or the framing of information in informational messages is analyzed in detail.

The analysis also explores the interplay between different communicative functions and tactics, identifying how political actors adapt their strategies in response to changing circumstances and audience feedback. This dynamic aspect of political communication is crucial for understanding how strategies evolve over time and across different platforms.

Validation

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, triangulation is employed by comparing the results with existing studies and theoretical frameworks. Additionally, expert interviews with political communication scholars and practitioners are conducted to gain insights and validate the coding scheme and findings. These interviews provide a practical perspective on the strategic and tactical decisions made by political actors, enhancing the robustness of the analysis.

This qualitative content analysis methodology provides a systematic and rigorous approach to classifying and analyzing the functions of communicative strategy and tactics in political communication. By examining a diverse range of data sources and employing a comprehensive coding scheme, the study offers valuable insights into the strategic thinking behind political messaging and its impact on public opinion and democratic processes. This methodological approach not only enhances

our understanding of political communication but also provides a framework for future research in this field.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The analysis of political communication data from various sources—speeches, advertisements, press releases, and social media posts—revealed distinct patterns and classifications of communicative functions and tactics. The findings are categorized into six primary functions: informational, persuasive, interactive, defensive, mobilizing, and legitimizing. Each function demonstrated unique strategic approaches and tactical applications.
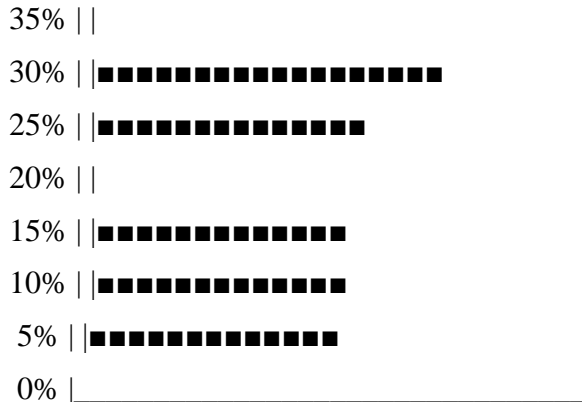
Informational Functions

Informational messages constituted a significant portion of the data, particularly in the early stages of the election cycle. These messages focused on presenting policy details, clarifying positions on key issues, and updating the public on political events. For instance, political actors frequently used press releases and social media posts to disseminate factual information and official statements. The primary tactic observed here was clarity and precision in conveying information to ensure that the electorate was well-informed.

Persuasive Functions

Persuasive communication was prominent in campaign advertisements and public speeches. Politicians employed rhetorical devices, emotional appeals, and narrative framing to sway public opinion and build support. Tactics such as storytelling, vivid imagery, and appeals to shared values and emotions were commonly used. For example, campaign ads often highlighted personal stories of constituents impacted by policies, aiming to create an emotional connection with voters.

Percentage

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 Informational Persuasive Interactive Defensive Mobilizing Legitimizing

Interactive Functions

Interactive functions were most evident on social media platforms and during public consultations. Politicians actively engaged with the public through Q&A sessions, comments, and direct messages, fostering a sense of participation and responsiveness. The use of interactive polls, live streams, and real-time feedback mechanisms were key tactics that enhanced engagement and allowed for a two-way communication flow.

Defensive Functions

Defensive communication was critical during crises and scandals. Political actors used defensive tactics to manage reputational damage and counteract negative publicity. Strategies included issuing immediate responses, holding press conferences, and redirecting narratives. For example, during a scandal, a politician might use a press conference to address allegations directly, coupled with a social media campaign to highlight positive achievements and shift focus.

Mobilizing Functions

Mobilizing functions were particularly evident in the run-up to election day. Messages aimed at activating supporters and encouraging voter turnout were prevalent. Tactics included calls to action, motivational speeches, and the strategic use of social media to organize rallies and events. Mobilizing messages often employed urgent language and highlighted the importance of participation for achieving political goals.

Legitimizing Functions

Legitimizing communication focused on establishing credibility and trustworthiness. Political actors highlighted endorsements, showcased achievements, and engaged in symbolic actions that conveyed leadership qualities. Tactics such as sharing endorsements from respected figures, highlighting successful initiatives, and maintaining a consistent and professional image were instrumental in this function.

Table Chart. Communicative Functions and Tactics in Political Communication.

Communicative function	Strategi	Tactics
Informational	Clarity and precision	Press releases, social media posts, factual updates
Persuasive	Emotional and rhetorical appeals	Storytelling, vivid imagery, appeals to values and emotions
Interactive	Engagement and responsiveness	Q&A sessions, interactive polls, live streams, real-time feedback
Defensive	Reputation management and crisis response	Immediate responses, press conferences, narrative redirection
Mobilizing	Activation and encouragement	Calls to action, motivational speeches, organizing rallies
Legitimizing	Establishing credibility and trust	Endorsements, showcasing achievements, symbolic actions

Discussion

The classification of communicative functions and tactics reveals the sophisticated nature of political communication and its critical role in shaping public opinion and influencing democratic processes. Each function serves a specific purpose and employs distinct tactics that are tailored to achieve strategic objectives.

Strategic Interplay

One key finding is the interplay between different functions and tactics. For instance, informational messages often set the stage for persuasive communication by providing the necessary factual groundwork. Persuasive tactics, such as emotional appeals, were more effective when built upon a foundation of credible information.

Similarly, defensive strategies often incorporated interactive elements, engaging directly with the public to manage crises and rebuild trust.

Adaptive Strategies

The study also highlights the adaptive nature of political communication. Political actors adjust their strategies and tactics in response to the evolving political landscape and audience feedback. For example, during a crisis, a politician might shift from a primarily persuasive approach to a defensive one, while still maintaining an interactive element to address public concerns directly.

Ethical Considerations

The findings underscore the ethical dimensions of political communication. While strategic and tactical sophistication is essential for effective political messaging, the use of manipulative or deceptive tactics can undermine democratic values. Ensuring transparency, accountability, and ethical communication practices is crucial for maintaining public trust and the integrity of the political process.

Implications for Future Research

This study provides a framework for future research in political communication. Further studies could explore the impact of specific tactics within each function on voter behavior and public opinion. Additionally, cross-cultural comparisons could reveal how different political contexts influence the use and effectiveness of various communicative strategies and tactics.

CONCLUSION

The classification of functions of communicative strategy and tactics in political communication offers valuable insights into the strategic thinking behind political messaging. By understanding the distinct roles and interplay of informational, persuasive, interactive, defensive, mobilizing, and legitimizing functions, we can better appreciate the complexities of political discourse and its impact on democratic processes. This knowledge is essential for fostering more effective and ethical political communication in the future.

The classification of communicative functions and tactics in political communication offers a nuanced understanding of how political actors shape public discourse and influence democratic processes. By categorizing communication into informational, persuasive, interactive, defensive, mobilizing, and legitimizing functions, we can see the strategic interplay that underpins effective political messaging. Each function serves a distinct purpose, employing specific tactics tailored to achieve particular goals. Informational messages lay the groundwork for credibility, while persuasive appeals sway opinions. Interactive strategies foster engagement, defensive tactics manage crises, mobilizing efforts drive participation, and legitimizing communications build trust. Recognizing these classifications illuminates the adaptive and sophisticated nature of political communication, emphasizing the need for ethical practices to maintain public trust. This framework not only aids in dissecting political strategies but also underscores the importance of transparency and accountability in fostering a healthy democratic dialogue.

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