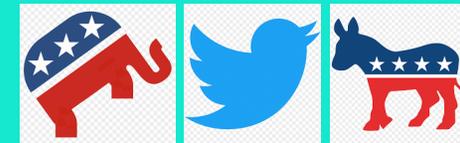


The Implications of Issue Ownership and Political Partisanship on Twitter

A Case Study of 2018 United States Midterm Election in Relations to Flipped Seats



By: Caley Hewitt

1. Social Media in the current political climate has become of the utmost importance to many candidates, and since the election of President Donald J. Trump, Twitter use has been taken to a new extreme.

2. Issue Ownership is defined as: “a campaign effect when a candidate successfully frames the vote choice as a decision to be made in terms of problems facing the country that he is better able to “handle” than his opponent. “Handling” is the ability to resolve a problem of concern to voters.”¹

3. Political Partisanship is defined as: “the notion that partisanship is a type of social identity ... [with a] conceptualization in which voters evaluate parties over time to form a “running tally” and choose the party most likely to benefit them. From this perspective, partisanship is not an identity but rather a product of voters maximizing their expected utilities.”²

4. Partisan Trespassing is the ability to “convince voters they own the issues and traits associated with their party as well as the opposing party. Evidence suggests that candidates often develop campaign messages that reflect trespassing strategies [and] trespassing messages, when successful, should increase a candidate’s electoral support to include out-partisan voters as well as in-partisan voters.”³

5. Research Question:

How are issue ownership and political partisanship implicated in campaign advertising on Twitter in relation to flipped seats in the 2018 United States Midterm Election.

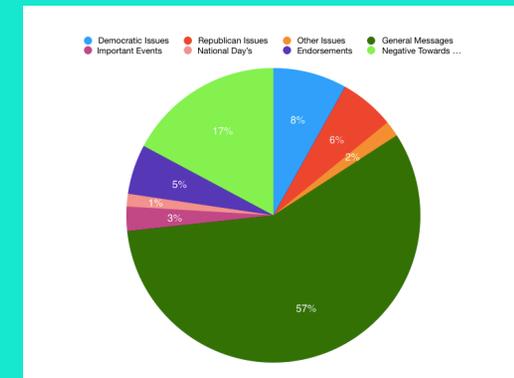
6. Data Set:

- This Data set was built upon the 46 flipped seats in the 2018 Midterm election and included 92 candidates.
- The sample was drawn from all the tweets of these candidates from October 6th 2018 to November 6th 2019 and included 9,692 tweets.
- This data set had 54 males to 38 females
- The candidates ranged in age from 29 years old to 77 years old

7. Conclusion

- In this data set, the Democratic Candidates tweeted 6,873 times as compared to the Republicans only tweeting 2,934 times showing that Republicans only tweeted once to every 2.34 Democratic party tweets.
- 5 Republican candidates either did not have Twitter or deleted their Twitter following the election.
- This election has unprecedented results with so many women being elected to government and 25 of those women being included in this sample.
- Over 50% of the tweets in the combined data sample (Box A) were general messages (dark green).
- Partisan and Issue messages only represented approximately 20% of the tweets which is approximately 2,000 of the 9,807 tweets but these tweets were vital for many candidates to spread their campaign advertisements and campaign goals with their voters. Many candidates also used these issues in their negative tweets and call out their opponents for not supporting certain issues, ex.) Second Amendment Rights vs Gun Safety.
- Issues Ownership only counted for 20% of the tweets and even then most of those tweets went to the two most important issues of the election: Healthcare versus Economy.
- Democratic candidates tweet more about issues that they stand for or that their opponent does not but stick more to Partisan party lines
- Republicans were more likely to trespass partisan lines to talk about work they have done in congress.
- Since the 2018 election, Twitter has combined with ballotpedia.org and created a banner for political candidates, so nobody is deceived by a fake account and people know who their political candidates are.

A. Combined Data



8. References

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3. Bauer, N. M. (2018). The Effects of Partisan Trespassing Strategies Across Candidate Sex. *Political Behavior*, 41(4), 897–915. doi: 10.1007/s11109-018-9475-3