

“Anything you want done baby, I’ll do it naturally.” Gender Differences in the Online Agenda

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Research Paper, Dissertation Project

1 - Background

The line from ‘I’m Every Woman’ by Chaka Khan from 1978 may be valid for female candidates running for political office. Power in political institutions is distributed asymmetrical. Considering the aspect of institutionalized gender, the question about gender differences regarding campaign behavior arises.

Does gender affect the online issue agenda of candidates?



2 - Gender Aspects

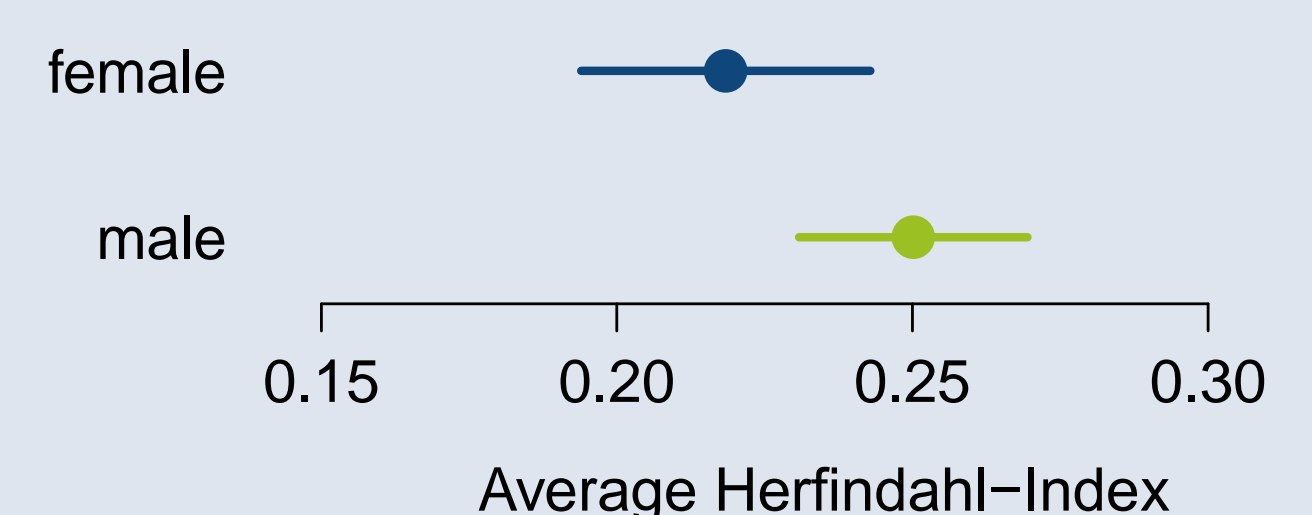
Female candidates face a challenge to demonstrate leadership and expertise while conforming to traditional gender roles. We argue that female politicians take on the challenge by covering a broader issue agenda. Online communication offers itself for this purpose, since control by the party organization is comparatively weak.

Female candidates address a broader online issue agenda compared to male candidates.

3 - Data/Method

We analyze 143,969 Twitter messages by 797 candidates for the 2017 Bundestag election. Messages are classified into 17 policy areas based on our original dictionary. We use the Herfindahl-Index that measures agenda concentration and employ an OLS regression with size of online agenda as dependent variable.

Fig. 2: Agenda Concentration by Gender



4 - Results/Discussion

Female and male candidates do not differ in the scope of their online issue agenda. The Herfindahl-Index (Fig. 2) contradicts the reasoning outlined. Examining agenda size (Fig. 3), again no gender difference is visible. Female and male candidates address on average six policy areas during the campaign. Our finding points to a benefit of social media, where seemingly less stereotypical behavior prevails. The slogan of online communication appears to be:

Anything I want done baby, I’ll address it naturally.

Fig. 3: Gender Differences in Online Agenda

