

Running head: LEARNING THE ROPES

Learning the Ropes:

The Adoption of Blogs by Political Candidates in the 2007 Finnish National Elections

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### Abstract

The strong orientation towards candidates in the Finnish election system, encouraging decentralized candidate-driven campaigns, offers a platform for experimentation in Web campaigning. In the 2007 Finnish parliamentary elections, an advancement in campaigning by candidates was the adoption of various Web 2.0 applications. Primarily, candidates integrated blogs in their online campaigns. For candidates, blogs offered a new way to reach out to voters and convey a more personal image of themselves. Moreover, the adoption of blogs by candidates potentially increased the interactive opportunities for voters to communicate with candidates. This paper aims at empirically exploring the adoption of blogs amongst candidates in the 2007 elections. First, the distribution of candidates having blogs was examined according to candidate-related variables identified in earlier research on the adoption of Web campaigning. A total of 34% of the 1,997 candidates had blogs. These “early adopters” were disproportionately young, female, running in highly urbanized constituencies, and representing major or minor parties rather than fringe parties. Second, candidates’ blogging practices were analyzed. Only 56% of the blogs allowed for public comments. Candidates running as incumbents and representing major parties were particularly reluctant to provide this interactive feature. The candidates allowing for comments were more likely young, challengers, running in urban constituencies, and representing smaller parties. The interactive blogs did however generally receive extremely few comments (Mdn. = 2). Finally, a content analysis of 100 randomly sampled blogs shows that candidates of all types generally preferred campaign and issue frames over personal frames, mostly linked to their own Web sites, and seldom took an offensive stance.

## Introduction

In a way, the name of one of the numerous blogs (or weblogs) that were run by political candidates in the 2007 Finnish parliamentary elections, “The Compulsory Blog”, summarizes the general approach to the adoption of this novel online campaigning tool. Compared to the previous parliamentary elections, held in 2003, where only a handful of candidates provided online diaries, a large share of the candidates this time integrated blogs into their campaigns: 34% of the of 1,997 candidates had their own blog (Strandberg & Carlson, 2007). For the candidates, blogs offered a new way to reach out to voters and convey a more personal image of themselves. Moreover, the adoption of blogs by candidates potentially increased the interactive opportunities for voters to communicate directly with candidates since blogs can allow comments from users. Still, the expectations regarding the positive effects of operating blogs were arguably not that high among the candidates. As the candidates were probably relatively uncertain about the efficiency of the new campaigning tool, many of them might had decided to operate a blog—a “compulsory blog”—since they feared consequences of not having this latest campaigning device.

There are several additional reasons for this rapid rise in popularity of blogs as a Web campaigning tool among Finnish parliamentary candidates. Conceivably, international campaigning trends may have spurred an interest in blogging among the candidates. In the wake of the 2004 U.S. presidential primaries and presidential election, where campaign blogging by candidates made its breakthrough (e.g., Kerbel & Bloom, 2006; Trammell, 2006; Trammell et al., 2006), blogging was during 2005 adopted by political parties and candidates in parliamentary elections in several European countries (Abold & Heltsche, 2006; Albrecht, Lübcke, & Hartig-Perschke, 2007; Jackson 2006; Klastrup & Pedersen; 2007; Stanyer, 2006). In Finland, campaign

blogging had made a quantum leap in the 2006 presidential elections where the personal blogs of the major candidates received significant news coverage and created public awareness of and interest in electoral blogging (Carlson, 2007).

The election system adds yet another reason to the adoption of blogs by Finnish parliamentary candidates. Contrary to most other Western European countries, the electoral system in Finland is strongly oriented towards individual candidates. Using proportional representation in multimember districts, the Finns cannot cast ballots according to party lists of candidates but merely for unranked individual candidates representing parties or electoral alliances. This system predominantly brings about candidate-driven campaigns. Thus, Finnish candidates invest in personal campaigns and usually have their own support groups organizing campaign activities, raising money, and generating publicity (Ruostetsaari & Mattila, 2002). In general, these groups operate relatively independently from the parties; the party organization functions as a background resource and coordinator (Sundberg, 1995). As suggested by Greer and LaPointe (2003, p. 116), candidate-centred systems, allowing for decentralized models of campaigning, offer a more flexible and diverse platform for candidates to innovate in how to reach and engage voters on the Web. Indeed, Finnish political candidates have from early on experimented with individual uses of the Web in elections (Carlson & Strandberg, *in press*).<sup>1</sup>

Against this background, the adoption of campaign blogs by candidates in the 2007 Finnish general election is not surprising. However, the extent of blog usage among the candidates—34% operating a blog—is remarkable. In comparison, few candidates blogged in the 2005 parliamentary elections in Denmark and the UK, 5.5 and 2% respectively (Klastrup & Pedersen 2007; Ward, 2005). In fact, the Finnish parliamentary candidates used blogs at a similar rate as the Senatorial candidates in the 2006 midterm elections in the U.S. with its

pronounced candidate-centred system: Among the 129 Senate candidates, 39% featured a blog on their Web sites (Gulati & Williams, 2007). The large amount of blogging candidates in the Finnish 2007 elections ( $N = 669$ ) makes it feasible to empirically examine some areas of enquiry that have general significance beyond the specific Finnish case and that hitherto has not been widely attended to in previous research focusing on blog usage by campaigns. On a general level, the areas of enquiry that will be empirically explored in this paper deal with the initial adoption and utilization of new campaigning tools—in this case, blogs—by political candidates. Three main areas of enquiry will be examined. The first area concerns patterns of adoption and focuses on the “early adopters” of the new online campaigning device: what kinds of candidates were more likely to make use of campaign blogs? The second research area is about the adoption of blog practices among the blogging candidates: what kind of blogging activities did they engage in? To what extent did different kinds of candidates engage in different kinds of practices? Particularly, attention is paid to the comment feature of blogs allowing feedback opportunities to blog readers and giving politicians an opportunity to maintain public dialogues with the readers. The final area of enquiry deals with the content of the blogs, i.e., the topics that the candidates blogged on.

#### Framework

This part of the paper is yet to be written. I will here define campaign blogs; elaborate on the three areas of enquiry and, finally, motivate the independent variables, i.e., candidate-related factors: gender, age, size of the candidates’ party, incumbency status, and urbanization level of the candidates’ constituency.

#### The 2007 Finnish National Elections

Before turning to the empirical analysis, the context of the 2007 Finnish parliamentary elections is briefly sketched (see further Arter, 2007; Nurmi & Nurmi, 2007; Statistics Finland, 2007). In the elections, held on 18 March, 200 MPs were elected to the unicameral legislature from 14 multi-member constituencies and one single-member district (the Åland Islands). The proportional election system with open party lists requests Finns to vote for a candidate and not a party. The total number of candidates in the elections was 2,004. In total, 18 parties nominated candidates; approximately two-thirds of the candidates were fielded by current parliamentary parties. Women's proportion of candidates was 39.9%. Of all candidates, 69% were aged 40 or over. In total, 169 incumbent candidates were running for re-election. Besides campaigning traditionally offline, a large share of the candidates, more than 60%, launched their own Web sites (Strandberg & Carlson, 2007). The voter turnout was 67.9%, the lowest since the 1939 elections. Eight parties gained seats in the new parliament. The support for the three major parties was quite even (capturing together approximately 65% of the vote). Among the smaller parties, the Green League and the populist True Finns were successful in these elections.

#### Data and Methods

The candidates' overall adoption rate of blogs was assessed within a broader project examining Web campaigning efforts in the 2007 elections (see Carlson & Strandberg, 2007; Strandberg & Carlson, 2007). All candidates running in the 14 multi-member constituencies ( $N = 1,997$ ) were surveyed concerning their online presence, i.e., whether they had their own campaign Web sites and blogs. A candidate was considered to have a blog if: (a) he or she had a Web site or page explicitly characterized as a blog or online diary ("My Diary", "Candidate X's Weblog", etc.); (b) the entries—the blog posts—on that Web site or page were displayed in reverse chronological order. Thus, in conformity with several other studies of blogging by

political candidates, a relatively broad definition of a blog was chosen (cf. Bichard, 2006; Klastrop & Pedersen, 2007; Trammell et al., 2006). Contrary to a study by Albrecht et al. (2007, p. 509), observing blogs in the 2005 German parliamentary elections, the definition chosen here does not require that blogs allow for reader comments or link to other blogs. As an aim of this paper is to assess how candidates adopt blogging practices, it was considered valuable not to exclude blogs lacking comment features and links. The candidates' individual blogs could either be integrated in their campaign Web sites or located on other sites (e.g., party Web sites or blog publishing sites such as *blogger.com*). In order to track candidates' Web sites and blogs, several official sources were used during the two final weeks of the election campaign: candidate listings published on the parties' Web sites; the election Web site of the Finnish public broadcasting company, Yleisradio, providing information on the candidates' Web presence; additional Google searches for name and surname of candidates. Of course, the tracked candidate Web sites were consulted, too. Table 1, presenting the results of the numerical survey, shows that most candidates that blogged also had a campaign Web site.

[INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

To analyze what kinds of candidates that were more likely to adopt campaign blogs, candidate-specific characteristics discussed above in the framework (gender, age, size of the candidates' party<sup>2</sup>, incumbency, and the urbanization level of the candidates' constituencies) were, using mainly the same sources mentioned above, established for all 1,997 candidates. Bivariate analysis as well as multivariate logistic regression analysis was employed to identify those factors that are strongly associated with having a blog.

In examining the adoption of blogging practices, the tracked blogs (N = 669) were initially coded for presence or absence of a comment function. In order to address the question

concerning which candidates that were more likely to allow comments on their blogs, bivariate analysis and logistic regression analysis were again applied by considering the above mentioned candidate-related characteristics as independent variables. In order to examine to what extent blogs allowing for comments did receive public response, a comment rate was calculated relating the number of comments to the number of blog posts (average comments per posting). In exploring the extent of reader comments, 100 blogs (approximately 15%) were randomly sampled from the total 699 observed blogs. Of these sampled blogs, 56 online diaries allowed for comments. In these blogs, the frequency of blog posts and comments was observed during the hot phase of the election campaign, i.e., four weeks prior to Election Day.

The adoption of other blogging practices than allowing for comments was explored using the same 100 randomly sampled blogs and the same four-week period. When assessing the blogging candidates' activity, the number of blog posts, and the number of words per post, was recorded. In all, 790 blog posts were observed. In observing linking practices, the number of hyperlinks per post was firstly recorded. Secondly, an internal to external hyperlink ratio was established (cf. Williams et al., 2005) making it possible to assess to what extent candidates preferred to link to Web pages within their blog or Web site. In order to establish this ratio, the recorded links were categorized as either pointing to internal Web pages or external Web pages. Differences between different kinds of candidates as to blogging activity and linking practices was examined using, at this stage, bivariate analysis and again considering the above mentioned candidate-related characteristics as independent variables.

Regarding finally the content of the candidates' blogs, the 790 blog posts of the 100 randomly sampled blogs were firstly coded as predominantly using an issue frame (focusing on political issues and issue positions), a campaign frame (focusing on the campaign and

campaigning matters), or a personal frame (focusing on personal matters related to the candidates) (cf. Bichard, 2006; Druckman, 2005). In order to compare the candidates' use of different blog post frames, the percentage of posts having a certain frame of all posts produced by a candidate during the examined period was calculated. Secondly, each post was coded for the presence or absence of offensive or negative messages criticizing opponent candidates, parties, party leaders, or cabinet ministers. Again, aiming at comparing subgroups of candidates, the analysis unit was here the percentage of all blog posts produced by a candidate that contained an offensive message.

## Findings

### Patters of Blog Adoption by Candidates

To begin with, what characterized the early adopters of blog campaigning among the Finnish parliamentary candidates? Table 2 compares the distribution of candidates operating a blog according to the candidate-related variables selected earlier.

[INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Most importantly, Table 2 shows that there is a considerable gap in blog adoption between, one the one hand, candidates representing major or minor parties and, on the other hand, fringe party candidates. It should be stressed that minor party candidates adopted blogs to a similar extent as candidates fielded by the major parties. In fact, the party with the highest rate of blogging candidates was a minor party, the Green League with 61% of its candidates having a blog (see Appendix A). There is also a considerable generational gap in blog adoption. As could be expected, younger candidates blogged to a larger extent than older candidates (50 years and older). Interestingly, a higher proportion of the female candidates blogged compared to the male candidates. Furthermore, incumbents, having more resources and being competitive runners,

adopted blogs to a higher rate than challengers. Finally, regarding blog adoption among candidates according to constituency urbanization, only modest differences are found. Before interpreting these findings, a logistic regression model, distinguishing the relative importance and independent effect of the candidate-related factors on blog adoption, is presented in Table 3.

[INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

By and large, the regression model confirms the findings of Table 2. Evidently, party size is the main decisive factor of blog adoption: the odds of using blogs are 969% higher for major party candidates and 726% higher for minor party candidates than they are for candidates running for fringe parties.<sup>3</sup> There are three possible explanations to this. First, fringe party organizations have fewer resources to assist their candidates in planning and creating individual Web campaigns. Second, the Finnish election system makes it hard for fringe party candidates to gain seats in the parliament, thus hampering their propensity to campaign seriously. Third, these candidates may have given priority to offline campaigning seeing that the target voter groups of the fringe parties are arguably not among the most web-savvy citizens.

The regression analysis furthermore confirms considerable generational gaps: the odds of operating a blog are 210% higher for the youngest candidates (ages 18–34) and 76% higher for the middle-aged candidates (35–49) than they are for older candidates (50 years and over). This is hardly surprising seeing that the younger generations show greater familiarity with and interest in the Internet. The model does not however verify an independent effect of running as an incumbent. The explanation for this is that incumbents with blogs ran solely for major or minor parties. Finally, when controlling for other factors, gender and urbanization level of the constituency still have an effect on blog adoption. Thus, female candidates are 33% more likely to blog than male candidates. As female candidates were not more likely to have a Web site than

their male counterparts in the same 2007 elections (Strandberg & Carlson, 2007), this finding suggests that women running as candidates viewed the blog as an appealing Web campaigning device. Candidates nominated in the most urbanized constituencies are 41% more likely to have a blog than candidates fielded in constituencies with a low urbanization level (< 79%).

Tentatively, candidates running in highly urbanized constituencies deem that their voters have a large enough interest in the Web and are online to a high enough degree, making it worth to set up a personal blog.

Hitherto, the adoption of blogs by subgroups of candidates has been examined among all fielded candidates, many of them (30.1%) lacking Web sites as well as blogs. Delimiting the analysis to the online candidates—those having a Web site ( $N = 1,342$ )—makes it possible to explore an additional question about blog adoption by candidates: which candidates having a Web site are more likely to additionally integrate a blog in their online campaigns? Could it, for example, be that once fringe party candidates establish a Web presence, they do not lag behind other candidates regarding blog adoption? The bivariate analysis presented in Table 4 explores these questions.

[INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE]

The findings in Table 4 do not change the picture of blog adoption by candidates presented earlier. Large gaps regarding party size and generations remain statistically significant in explaining blog adoption among the candidates having Web sites. In addition, online, female candidates are somewhat keener to maintain a blog than their male counterparts. Incumbent and challenger candidates blog to a similar rate. Finally, candidates running in highly urbanized constituencies blog to a larger extent than contenders in constituencies with lower urbanization

levels. Again, a logistic regression model, distinguishing the relative importance and independent effect of these factors, confirms the results of the bivariate analysis (Table 5).

[INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE]

When controlling for other factors, the odds of operating blogs among Web candidates are 279% higher for major party candidates and 334% higher for minor party candidates than they are for fringe party candidates. It should be noted that running for a minor party is even a stronger factor of blog adoption than running for a major party. Age is the third strongest predictor. The odds of writing a blog are 179% higher for young candidates (ages 18–34) and 65% higher for the middle-aged contenders (35–49) than they are for the oldest generation of candidates. Moreover, the odds to maintain a blog are 49% higher for the most urban candidates than they are for candidates fielded in the constituency group with the lowest urbanization level. Finally, although the odds ratio do not fully reach the statistical significance level of 0.05, female candidates are 23% likelier than their male counterparts to integrate a blog in their online campaigns ( $p = 0.07$ ).

In sum, irrespective of whether blog adoption by candidates is examined among all fielded candidates or solely among the candidates having a Web presence, a similar pattern is revealed. The early adopters of campaign blogging were disproportionately representing minor or major parties rather than fringe parties, young, female, and running in highly urbanized constituencies. Do the same factors particularly influence the blogging candidates' adoption of blogging practices? This topic is explored next.

Adoption of Blogging Practices: Allowing for Comments

A majority of the 669 blogging candidates, 56.2%, allowed for comments on the blogs. However, when examining the distribution of candidates permitting comments according to candidate-related variables, some marked differences appear (Table 6).

[INSERT TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE]

The most striking result in Table 6 is that the candidates representing major parties were reluctant to open up their blogs for comments compared to the minor and fringe party candidates. Strikingly, a similarly large share of the minor and fringe party candidates (approximately 73%) allowed for blog comments. Again, an additional examination of individual parties, not reported in detail here, shows that The Green League stands out as a case apart: 92% of their 123 blogging candidates permitted comment responses. The reluctance to allow reader feedback also applies to incumbent candidates when compared with challenger candidates. This is not surprising since the majority of the incumbent candidates (77%) represent major parties. Table 6 points to a generational gap, too. The young candidates (aged 18–34) particularly offered feedback opportunities to their readers. The same goes for candidates running in highly urbanized constituencies. Interestingly, blogging female and male candidates allowed for comments to a similar degree. Once again, a logistic regression model, examining the relative importance and independent effect of the variables, confirms these findings (Table 7). Thus, in sum, the candidates allowing for comments were disproportionately running for minor or fringe parties, challengers, young, and running in highly urbanized constituencies.

[INSERT TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE]

The interactive candidate blogs did, however, generally receive very few comments. An analysis of the 58 candidate blogs that allowed for comments in the random sample reveals that 43% of the blogs did not receive a single comment during the examined four-week period. What

is more, 85% of the blogs received less than ten comments. The median value of the number of comments is thus low: 2.0, i.e., half of the interactive blogs received less than two comments.<sup>4</sup> An additional survey of the few sampled blogs that were interactive and that had received comments ( $n = 33$ ), shows that candidates did engage in dialogue or discussion by replying to comments in 18 of these blogs (55%). Thus, generalizing from the 100 randomly sampled blogs, this finding suggests that two-way communication between the blogging candidate and the blog readers took place in only 18% of the blogs operated by candidates in the 2007 elections.

Subsequently, did certain types of candidates receive more feedback than other kinds of candidates? As merely 58 of the 100 sampled blogs allowed for comments, the comparison of subgroups of candidates with interactive blogs within the random sample of candidate blogs resulted in rather low numbers of cases. Therefore, Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric analysis of variance (ANOVA) was utilized in addressing this question. Remarkably, using four candidate-related independent variables—gender, age, size of the candidates' party, and the urbanization level of the candidates' constituency, categorized as above<sup>5</sup>—the bivariate analyses failed to show any statistically significant differences in the number of received blog comments between the compared subgroups of candidates. However, as rather few candidate blogs were included in this analysis, and the groups compared therefore were small, this finding must be treated with caution.

#### Adoption of Blogging Practices: Activity and Linking

In this section, two other blogging practices, distinguished in the framework, are examined: blogging activity and linking practices. Regarding the activity of the blogging candidates, it should initially be noted that almost all blog posts were written by the candidates themselves, or at least, their posts were written in order to give that impression. Merely 17 of the

790 examined blog posts (2%) were written by other persons than the candidates. The analysis of the sampled blogs<sup>6</sup> suggests that the candidates did not generally blog frequently. Although the number of posts written in the blogs during the examined four-week period ranged from a low of 11 to a high of 72, the median number of posts was low: 6 (interquartile range = 8). Thus, during the examined period, half of the blogs were updated with less than 6 posts. Moreover, in 70% of the blogs, the candidates had posted less than 10 entries in this phase of the campaign.

Comparing the mean number of blog posts for subgroups of candidates (male and female candidates, challenger and incumbents, major and minor/fringe party candidates, the three age cohorts, and the three groups of candidates running in constituencies with different urbanization levels), using parametric as well as nonparametric ANOVA, no statistically significant differences were found.

Regarding linking practices, subsequently, it should initially be noted that the sampled blogging candidates generally used hyperlinks pointing to various Web pages. On average, the candidates added 2.55 links per posting (S.D. = 1.98; Mdn. = 2.43). Comparing subgroups, one statistically significant difference was found: on average, minor/fringe party candidates provided more links per posting (M = 3.20, n = 50) than major party candidates (M = 1.80, n = 41),  $p < .001$  (ANOVA). Turning to the more interesting question concerning the internal to external hyperlink ratio, the analysis clearly reveals that the candidates preferred to link to Web pages within their own blog or Web site. In the sampled blogs, there were a total of 393 hyperlinks in the blog posts written during the examined four-week period. Merely 30 of these links (7.6%) went to external Web pages. Turning to the candidate level, the mean internal to external link ratio for the candidates was 89% (S.D. = 22; Mdn. = 100). Comparing subgroups, using Kruskal-Wallis nonparametric ANOVA since the data were skewed from the normal distribution, one

statistically significant although not dramatic difference, was revealed.<sup>7</sup> The internal to external link ratio was generally lower for the young candidates (aged 18–34:  $\underline{M}$  = 84,  $\underline{Mdn.}$  = 94;  $\underline{n}$  = 28) than for the oldest group of candidates (aged 50 and over:  $\underline{M}$  = 98;  $\underline{Mdn.}$  = 100,  $\underline{n}$  = 23;  $p < .05$ ).

### Topical Frames and Offensive Messages in the Candidate Blogs

Finally, what did the candidates generally blog about and to what extent did the candidates publish offensive blog posts? Regarding the blog topics, it should initially be repeated that the unit of analysis in the content analysis is not the blog post; the focus is on the blogging candidates. Therefore, for each candidate, the percentage of blog posts having a certain frame during the examined period was calculated. Examining firstly the sampled candidates with blogs ( $\underline{n}$  = 91, see endnote 6), the following results were given. Most frequently, the blogging candidates used frames predominantly focusing on campaign matters when writing the blog posts. In the blogs, the average share of campaign framed posts was 48% ( $\underline{S.D.}$  = 31). Still, the candidates used issue frames almost as often: the average share of posts having an issue frame was 40% ( $\underline{S.D.}$  = 32). Notably, framing the blog posts focusing predominately on personal matters was generally not a common strategy among the candidates: the average share of campaign framed posts in the blogs was 12% ( $\underline{S.D.}$  = 19). Whereas the share of issue and campaign frames was normally distributed (Kolmogorov-Smirnov test), the distribution of the share of personal frames was skewed ( $p < .001$ ). Therefore, it should be noted that the median and the interquartile range of the share of posts having a personal frame was 0 and 17 respectively. These figures further confirm that candidates in general did not emphasize personal matters in their blogs. Did different types of candidates focus on different topics, then? Did, for

example, female candidates use personal frames more frequently than male candidates? These questions are addressed in Table 8.

[INSERT TABLE 8 ABOUT HERE]

Interestingly, the findings presented in Table 8 suggest that the blogging candidates, regardless of age, gender, incumbency status, size of their party, and the type of constituency that they ran in, framed their blog posts in a very similar way. The statistical tests did not even detect differences that could be considered as statistical trends ( $p < .10$ ). Thus, the candidates all framed their blog messages in a quite uniform manner.

Concerning the use of negative campaign blog strategies, then, it should first be noted that the randomly sampled candidates ( $n = 91$ ) were not particularly offensive in their blogs. In the blogs, the share of posts containing offensive messages was on average 19% ( $S.D. = 24$ ). Again, as the variable is not normally distributed (Kolmogorov-Smirnov test,  $p < .001$ ), the median value, 8.0, may be more accurate. Thus, in half of the candidates' blogs, the share of offensive blog posts was on average less than 8%. Then again, there was considerable variation between the candidate blogs as to the share of negative posts: from a low of 0% to a high of 100%; interquartile range = 33. Were there, accordingly, certain types of candidates that were more offensive than other? Comparing the subgroups—using Kruskal-Wallis nonparametric ANOVA—two statistically significant differences were found. First, male candidates were generally more offensive ( $Mdn. = 22.5$ ,  $n = 40$ ) than female candidates ( $Mdn. = 4.2$ ,  $n = 51$ ),  $p < .05$ . Second, minor/fringe party candidates took an offensive stance to a higher extent ( $Mdn. = 17.4$ ,  $n = 50$ ) than major party candidates ( $Mdn. = 0.0$ ,  $n = 41$ ),  $p < .05$ .

Summary and conclusions

This section is yet to be written, too. The conclusions are, of course, partly dependent on the framework that is incomplete at the moment. Nevertheless, I will in my paper presentation summarize the findings and, additionally, present some preliminary conclusions.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the basic prerequisite for online campaigning, a high level of societal Internet penetration, was fulfilled early in Finland and the other Nordic countries (Norris, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> A categorization by Norris (2003, p. 28) is used here: “major parties” are those with more than 20% cent of all seats in the national parliament; “minor parties” are those with more than 3% but less than 20% of the seats; “fringe parties” are those that lack at least 3% of the elected members of the parliament.

<sup>3</sup> The percentage change in odds was calculated using the formula  $100 \times (\text{Exp}(B) - 1)$ .

<sup>4</sup> Minimum = 0; maximum = 41; interquartile range = 5. Relating the number of comments to the number of blog posts in the 56 blogs does not change the picture of a very low reader interest in talking back to the candidates. The median value of the average comments per posting is 0.3 (interquartile range = 0.8).

<sup>5</sup> The incumbency status of the candidates could not be used as a variable here since there were only two blogs run by incumbent candidates in this reduced subsample. Moreover, as there were few blogs operated by fringe parties in this subsample, the party size variable was dichotomized (major party candidates versus minor or fringe candidates).

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that 9 of the 100 sampled blogs were not possible to use in this analysis, thus reducing the random sample to 91 blogs. Three of these nine blogs did not contain any posts while six blogs were malfunctioning at the time of analyzing blogging practices as well as content matters.

<sup>7</sup> A total of 77 candidates were included in this analysis since some candidates did not use hyperlinks at all in their blogs.

## Tables

**Table 1.** The Distribution of Candidates with Web Sites and Blogs.

Candidates:	%	<i>N</i>
Lacking a Web Site and a Blog	30.4	608
Having a Web Site but Not a Blog	36.1	720
Having a Blog but not a Web Site	2.4	47
Having a Web Site and a Blog	31.1	622
Total	100.0	1,997

**Table 2.** Blog Campaigning According to Candidate-related Variables (Percentage of Candidates Having a Blog).

Variables	%	<i>N</i>
Gender***		
Male	28.4	1,199
Female	41.1	798
Age***		
18–34	48.0	458
35–49	40.0	637
50–	21.5	902
Party***		
Major	45.2	688
Minor	39.0	841
Fringe	6.4	468
Status**		
Incumbent	44.4	169
Challenger	32.5	1,828
Constituency Urbanization*		
Low (< 79%)	34.0	705
Medium (80–89%)	29.6	702
High (90–100%)	37.5	590

**Note:** \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*  $p < .05$  (Pearson's chi-square test).

Constituency urbanization = the proportion (%) living in urban settlements of the residents in the constituency that the candidate runs in (Source: Statistics Finland).

**Table 3.** Predicting the Candidates' Use of Blogs: Logistic Regression.

	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Gender (Female)	.282	.105	1.326	<b>.007</b>
Age				
18–34	1.131	.135	3.100	<b>.000</b>
35–50	.565	.122	1.760	<b>.000</b>
Party Size				
Major	2.370	.213	10.697	<b>.000</b>
Minor	2.111	.206	8.260	<b>.000</b>
Status (Incumbent)	.278	.176	1.320	.115
Constituency Urbanization				
Medium (80–89%)	–.049	.124	.953	.695
High (90–100%)	.347	.128	1.415	<b>.007</b>
Constant	–3.293			

**Note:** The dependent variable: 0 = Candidate does not have a blog, 1 = Candidate has a blog. Predictors: Gender: Male (0); Female (1). Age: reference category (0) = 50 years or older. Party size: reference category (0): fringe party. Status: 1 = Incumbent; 0 = Challenger. Constituency urbanization: reference category (0) = Low (< 79%). Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .225$ ; % correct = 69.7;  $N = 1,997$ .

**Table 4.** Blogging Among Candidates Operating a Web Site (Percentage of Candidates Having a Blog).

Variables	%	<i>N</i>
Gender***		
Male	41.9	747
Female	51.9	595
Age***		
18–34	60.4	333
35–49	49.0	494
50–	34.8	515
Party***		
Major	46.5	654
Minor	50.6	591
Fringe	19.6	97
Status		
Incumbent	44.6	166
Challenger	46.6	1,176
Constituency Urbanization**		
Low (< 79%)	45.5	488
Medium (80–89%)	41.5	475
High (90–100%)	53.6	379

**Note:** \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$  (Pearson's chi-square test).

**Table 5.** Predicting the Web Candidates' Use of Blogs: Logistic Regression.

	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Gender (Female)	.210	.116	1.234	.071
Age				
18–34	1.026	.152	2.790	<b>.000</b>
35–50	.501	.133	1.651	<b>.000</b>
Party Size				
Major	1.334	.282	3.795	<b>.000</b>
Minor	1.467	.279	4.338	<b>.000</b>
Status (Incumbent)	.082	.178	1.086	.644
Constituency Urbanization				
Medium (80–89%)	–.123	.135	.884	.362
High (90–100%)	.398	.145	1.488	<b>.006</b>
Constant	–2.075			

**Note:** The dependent variable: 0 = Candidate does not have a blog, 1 = Candidate has a blog. Predictors: Gender: Male (0); Female (1). Age: reference category (0) = 50 years or older. Party size: reference category (0): fringe party. Status: 1 = Incumbent; 0 = Challenger. Constituency urbanization: reference category (0) = Low (< 79%). Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .102$ ; % correct = 61.6;  $N = 1,342$ .

**Table 6:** Percentage of Blogging Candidates Allowing for Public Comments.

Variables	%	<i>N</i>
Gender		
Male	54.0	341
Female	58.5	328
Age***		
18–34	66.4	220
35–49	54.5	255
50–	46.9	194
Party***		
Major	37.3	311
Minor	72.6	328
Fringe	73.3	30
Status***		
Incumbent	29.3	75
Challenger	59.6	594
Constituency Urbanization***		
Low (< 79%)	49.6	240
Medium (80–89%)	51.9	208
High (90–100%)	67.4	221

**Note:** \*\*\*  $p < .001$  (Pearson's chi-square test).

**Table 7.** Which Candidates are More Likely to Allow Blog Comments? Logistic Regression.

	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Gender (Female)	.112	.175	1.119	.521
Age				
18–34	.727	.226	2.070	<b>.001</b>
35–50	.321	.213	1.379	.132
Party Size				
Minor	1.415	.178	4.115	<b>.000</b>
Fringe	1.397	.444	4.044	<b>.002</b>
Status (Challenger)	.817	.289	2.264	<b>.005</b>
Constituency Urbanization				
Medium (80–89%)	–.096	.208	.909	.645
High (90–100%)	.624	.211	1.867	<b>.003</b>
Constant	–1.782			

**Note:** The dependent variable: 0 = Candidate does not have a blog, 1 = Candidate has a blog. Predictors: Gender: Male (0); Female (1). Age: reference category (0) = 50 years or older. Party size: reference category (0): major party. Status: 1 = Challenger; 0 = Incumbent. Constituency urbanization: reference category (0) = Low (< 79%). Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .225$ ; % correct = 69.5;  $N = 669$ .

**Table 8.** Dominant Blog Post Frames According to Candidate-related Variables (Average Shares: Means and Standard Deviations).

	Share (%) of Posts Having:						<i>N</i>
	Issue Frame		Campaign Frame		Personal Frame		
	<i>M</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	
Gender							
Male	41	32	50	29	9	14	40
Female	39	32	47	33	14	22	51
Age							
18–34	38	30	51	30	11	23	30
35–49	42	39	45	36	12	17	31
50–	40	30	48	27	12	17	30
Party Size							
Major	40	36	51	34	9	16	41
Minor/Fringe	40	29	46	29	14	22	50
Status							
Incumbent	48	38	44	35	8	12	13
Challenger	39	31	49	31	12	20	78
Constituency Urbanization							
Low	38	30	53	30	8	13	27
Medium	34	35	52	31	14	21	28
High	46	32	41	31	13	21	36

**Note:** None of the subgroup comparisons met the  $p < .05$  criterion for statistical significance using parametric ANOVA ( $F$ -test) as well as nonparametric ANOVA (Kruskal-Wallis  $H$ -test).

## Appendix

**Table A.** Share of Candidates Having a Blog within Different Parties: A Top-Ten List.

Party	Party Size	Share of Candidates Having a Blog (%)	Total Number of Candidates
Green League	Minor	60.9	202
National Coalition Party	Major	52.4	225
Swedish People's Party	Minor	48.0	75
Centre Party	Major	43.8	233
Social Democratic Party	Major	39.6	230
Left-Wing Alliance	Minor	35.6	208
Christian Democrats	Minor	31.9	188
For the Poor	Fringe	30.0	10
Liberals	Fringe	21.1	38
True Finns	Minor	20.8	168

**Note:** Within the remaining parties—nine fringe parties—the share of candidates operating a blog ranged between 0 and 20% ( $M = 7.6\%$ )