



MALMÖ UNIVERSITY

Donald Trump's Communication During COVID-19 Pandemic On Twitter

Observed by his personal Twitter account

By Fanni Kertész and Zane Berzleja

Advisor: Michael Krona

Examiner: Tina Askanius

Passing grade: E

Word count: 15,114

Main field: Media and Communication Studies
Culture, Collaborative Media and Creative Industries

Level: Two-year Master thesis

Malmö University

Year: 2020

Abstract

The year 2020 started with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. This socio-economic crisis has led to changes in our society as several restrictions were demanded, such as self-quarantining, wearing face masks and social distancing to limit the spread of the Coronavirus. This resulted in a high need for online communication. The United States of America has reached and maintained a high death rate in comparison to other countries. Therefore, this paper researches what are the characteristics of the U.S. President's, Donald Trump, communication in relation to COVID-19. The paper reviews literature on Trump's language and communication style, his political incorrectness, and his habits on Twitter communication during the election in 2016. Moreover, it describes theoretical key terms, such as political mediatization, networked society, and further uses Castells' concept of mass self-communication as a framework for the content analysis. The resource for this analysis is Trump's official Twitter account, where 4018 tweets were retrieved from March, April, February and June in 2020. Out of those tweets, 638 are COVID-19 related tweets. Key findings show that Trump is using a simple (casual) and offensive tone of voice in his tweets. His Twitter communication demonstrates attacking his opponents and others in a politically incorrect manner while praising himself. Along with negative partisanship and idealization of pressing issues with no coherent and factual arguments. Furthermore, he is using the pandemic as a tool for reaching his political goals, thus politicizing the COVID-19 pandemic on his Twitter account.

Keywords: Twitter, Donald Trump, COVID-19, Content analysis, pandemic communication, politicization

Table of contents

List of figures and tables	3
Introduction	4
Research focus and Research question	6
Context	7
COVID-19 Pandemic	7
Donald Trump and Twitter	8
Literature review	10
Donald Trump's language and style	11
Trump's political incorrectness and negative partisanship	14
Trump's social media participation during the presidential election in 2016	15
Theoretical framework	16
Castells' Networked Society	17
Mass self-communication	19
Methodology	22
Research process	22
Quantitative and qualitative content analysis	23
Data collection and coding process	27
Ethics	33
Presentation and analysis of data	33
Trump's self-communication in relation to the pandemic	35
Donald Trump's language and tone of voice in COVID-19 related tweets	38
Politicization of the COVID-19 pandemic	42
Concluding discussion	44
Limitations	44
Discussion	45
Conclusion	48
References	52
Appendix	58
Sample selection based media coverage and events	58
Coding book for the content analysis	61

List of figures and tables

Figure 1: World leaders with the most Twitter followers as of April 2020	page 11
Figure 2: Castells' Theoretical framework	page 21
Figure 3: Research process	page 24
Figure 4: Merge the data	page 26
Graph 1: Quantitative summary of COVID-19 related tweets	page 36
Graph 2: Key purposes in COVID-19 related content	page 37
Graph 3: Donald Trump's tone of voice in COVID-19 related content	page 41
Table 1: Categories and sub-categories for the content analysis	page 31

1. Introduction

The year 2020 began with an outbreak of a new virus, named COVID-19 (WHO, 2020), which led to the World Health Organisation (WHO) declaring it a global pandemic on the 12th of March. It has brought many challenges to both society and governments, putting the world at a halt. Not only did the pandemic affect the world's economy, society, and many political factors, but it has also evoked different forms of communication.

“But the pandemic is much more than a health crisis, it's also an unprecedented socio-economic crisis. Stressing every one of the countries it touches, it has the potential to create devastating social, economic and political effects that will leave deep and longstanding scars. “(United Nations Development Program, 2020)

Both mainstream and social media outlets have been greatly utilized and relied upon in order to spread awareness and general information on the virus (Wen, 2020). For example, self-quarantine, social distancing and wearing masks have been generally advised in order to stop the virus from spreading (WHO, 2020). Consequently, it can be speculated that 2020 may be the year when the world takes a drastic leap towards digitalization (York, 2020). This is due to the fact that many people are currently forced to work from home and to limit their social interactions, which in turn implies strong reliance on online communication.

The restrictions, that are demanded from the public, have influenced many other segments as well. 2020 is also the year of the US Presidential election, where many events (for instance, rallies, debates and primaries) have been canceled, postponed or changed due to the COVID-19 (Ball, 2020). Therefore, it is yet another area, where the communication shifts to online spaces, making it more difficult to focus only on the pandemic. Furthermore, as it is a ‘socio-economic’ crisis, authorities also need to control the economy along with every other field the virus affects.

As media and communication students, the authors of this thesis have found it important to reflect upon ongoing changes within the social, cultural, ethical, and political dimensions that affect the course of communication strategies. Due to these restrictions, more information from authorities is required to constantly update the public and also to share the rules that are mandatory to follow (Reynolds, et.al., 2007). In this light, this paper's primary focus is communication in relation to COVID-19 and its key characteristics.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all countries, but not in identical measures. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a lot of media outlets have focused on the leadership, specifically leader approaches in tackling the health crisis (Robson, 2020). Thus one of the most influential countries in the world, that is facing major pandemic-related issues, is the United States of America. The U.S. has the highest death rate (WHO, 2020a) worldwide in terms of the Coronavirus, therefore, this paper will target the leader of the country, Donald Trump, and analyze the mentioned key characteristics in his communication around the pandemic.

Additionally, social media platforms now provide an immense amount of data (Holtzhausen, 2015) that can be accessed for research purposes. Donald Trump, is an active member of several social media platforms (Francia, 2018), including Twitter. He has managed to gather the biggest follower base on Twitter out of all social media channels (based on his official accounts¹, on Twitter he has 85.5 million followers, while on Facebook - 30 million, and on Instagram - 21.5 million). According to a 2019 Pew Research Center survey, 22% of all American adults admit to using Twitter in their daily lives, and this number has been stable for a couple of years (Pew Research Center, 2020). Thus the content analysis will be conducted on Trump's Twitter content because it is highly used by both the President and the citizens of the U.S. His Twitter account and content was observed from the beginning of March until the end of June (from the announced start of the COVID-19 pandemic until real-time research). Since the

¹Donald Trump's official accounts:
https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor
<https://www.facebook.com/DonaldTrump/>
<https://www.instagram.com/realdonaldtrump/?hl=en>

pandemic is still an ongoing event, and this research takes part during the course of it, the research timeline is limited to these 4 months.

1.1. Research focus and Research question

Due to the restrictions, changes in society have occurred including the field of Media and Communication. As described above, this research paper focuses on Donald Trump's (as the leader of the U.S.) communication on Twitter in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. This research is executed in order to understand how communication in times of such health crisis is being tackled by the leader of a country with the highest death rate. Based on Google Trends (2020) statistics, it shows that the search inquiries on COVID-19 in the U.S. were immense, making it one of the most searched topics. Thus proving that the citizens of the U.S. have a need for information and guidance during this global pandemic. Moreover, as the pandemic affects so many segments in everyday life, it raised a question of whether it affected the way authoritative figures communicate with the public. There are several scholars (Shafer, 2017; Abramowitz and McCoy, 2019; Ahmadian, et al., 2016; Francia, 2018; Kayam, 2018) that present the unique way how Donald Trump uses online platforms in his daily political communication with the public. In light of the pandemic, where the public demands information in the online space, new findings can be presented. These findings can contribute to the field of pandemic/health and political communication. To gain better insight on the topic, first, the literature review needs to be presented to acquire knowledge in this field, as well as find out what represents Donald Trump's Twitter communication. Further, a theoretical framework needs to be formed in order to gather data through content analysis. Thus further analysis can be made to identify Trump's COVID-19 related communication. Thus the research question for this paper is:

What are the characteristics of Donald Trump's communication on Twitter in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Findings, from answering this question, will serve as a base to observe whether there are any similarities or differences that can be identified in his communication, thus a supporting question for this paper is:

What are the similarities or differences in his day-to-day political and COVID-19 related communication?

This research contributes to the field of Media and Communication, because it observes key communication characteristics of an ongoing - therefore, barely or not researched - global health crisis. As well as, it identifies Donald Trump's day-to-day political communication, which will serve as a base for the analysis and focuses on ongoing trends in the media. This will be done by gathering data and doing content analysis on the U.S. President's Twitter account.

2. Context

In order to grasp the overall research topic, a brief background on the COVID-19 pandemic, Twitter and Donald Trump's Twitter usage will be introduced in the following chapter.

2.1. COVID-19 Pandemic

Every few decades the world battles a new pandemic (WHO, 2020c), therefore, a new pandemic was bound to occur once again in the foreseeable future. The transmission of COVID-19 began at the end of 2019, in Hubei Province, China, and rapidly taking over the whole world in the first months of 2020. The COVID-19 is a new form of a coronavirus. The virus spreads through droplets of saliva, and it is identified as respiratory disease (WHO, 2020b). Many people have mild symptoms or no symptoms at all (WHO, 2020b), however, the elderly or people with chronic health problems have been struggling, and the death toll increased in these specific groups under the effect of the coronavirus (WHO, 2020a). The United States of America has by far the most registered COVID-19 cases (Johns Hopkins CSSE, 2020), as well as the highest death toll in comparison to other countries. According to official data, currently (as of August 19th 2020) the U.S. has over a million registered COVID-19 cases with over 170 thousand registered deaths (Johns Hopkins CSSE, 2020).

An influenza pandemic is described when a new type of virus emerges, and humans have little or no immunity to it (Kelly, et.al., 2011). It affects any class or category of people, and it comes in waves (Reynolds et.al., 2007). Due to the social nature of humans, the virus spreads in waves and consequently affects people worldwide. The virus influences aspects ranging from infrastructure to the economy and security (2007).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, changes in interpersonal and online communication habits have been made in the first half of 2020 (Wen, 2020). Communication and connectivity are of high importance in order to inform and spread awareness to their citizens. Reynolds, et.al. (2007) lists some of the key elements for effective communication in relation to a crisis, such as informing people, delivering updated messages, providing guidance, sharing technical, accurate and factual information that is based on science, facts and data. Moreover, the authority also plays an influential role in terms of communication towards the public in critical situations. For instance, Iran was massively affected by the COVID-19 virus at the beginning of 2020 (Deutsche Welle, 2020), but the lack of trust in government institutions led people to ignore instructions, and, therefore, influenced the spread of the virus negatively (Deutsche Welle, 2020).

2.2. Donald Trump and Twitter

Twitter is a microblogging platform, where Twitter users post short messages, also known as tweets, on a timeline with maximum of 280 characters (Developer, 2020). Tweets can also use tags, such as “mentions” and “hashtags”. As mentioned in the previous chapter, many researchers have chosen to base their research on Twitter data. This is argued by Burghardt (2015), who presented the benefits of retrieving and analysing data from Twitter, and they are: message size, sample size, metadata, availability and accessibility. Burghardt (2015) describes the benefits in more detail, which also serves as the ground purpose of choosing Twitter for data gathering in this research paper.

Message size: compared to other social media platforms, Twitter has relatively short messages with 280 characters, therefore, making analysis more concrete and short.

Sample size: Twitter has around 326 million active users per month (Statista, 2019), which doesn't mean that it's the most used social media platform. However, it is estimated that 500 million tweets are sent out each day (Smith, 2020). This makes Twitter a great source for data regarding recent events or specific social topics.

Metadata: Twitter contains multiple types of metadata, for example, username, date, geolocation, language, tags and many more.

Availability: Twitter is a public platform, where registered and not registered users can access vast amounts of tweets, therefore, researchers can retrieve a big amount of data.

Accessibility: Using API (Application Programming Interfaces), Twitter data can be retrieved fairly easily and further used for analysis.

Base for research: When researchers study Twitter, it is with the aim of discovering a wide range of information behaviour, sentiment analysis and specific linguistics (Meier & Elswailer 2014;Pak & Paroubek 2010).

Donald Trump leads his Twitter account with 85.5 million followers (Twitter, 2020) - that is a large audience to be communicating with.

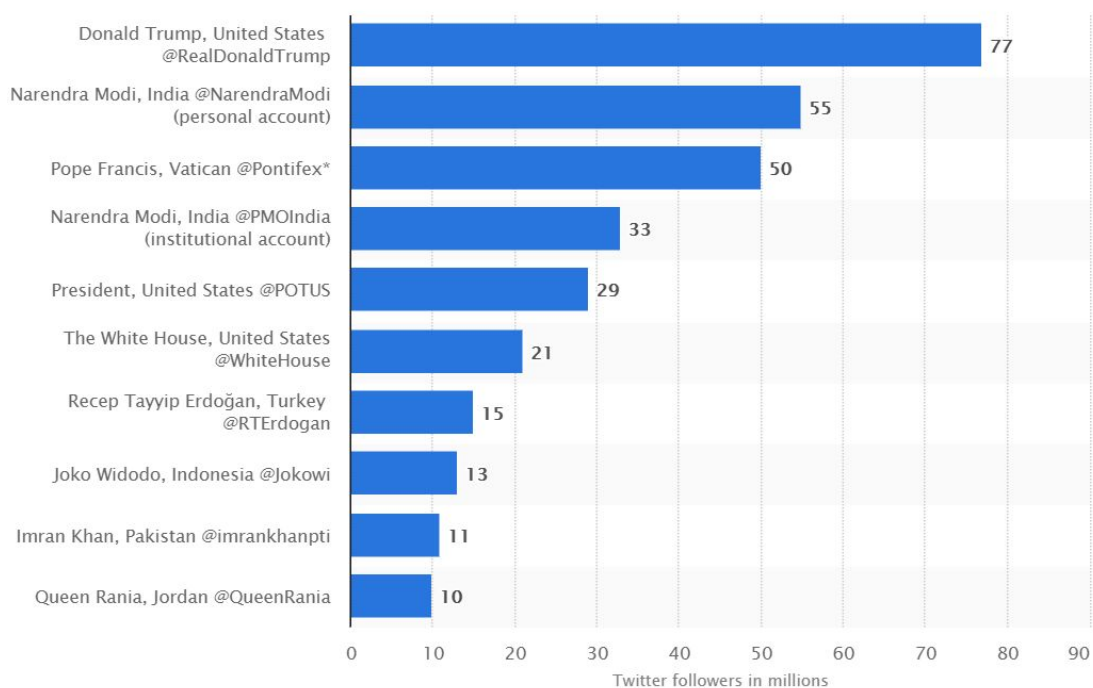


Figure 1: World leaders with the most Twitter followers as of April 2020, Statista (2020)

He also, according to Statista (2020), has the most followers from all the world's leaders in 2020, indicating that people choose to follow his content specifically. Therefore, it can be argued that as one of the world's leaders, Trump has a high probability of influence over his follower base.

As a president, Donald Trump uses Twitter more frequently than his predecessors. For example, despite Barack Obama having a bigger social following than Donald Trump, he does not apply the same communication methods or style on his account that would allow him to reach the same engagement as Trump (Miles and Haider-Markel, 2020). Although Trump tends to express himself differently by using much simpler language, he uses Twitter for the same purposes as all the previous precedents have used it (Miles and Haider-Markel, 2020). That is, shaping attention to national news agenda or changing subjects to suit his needs. As well as, gain the public's support in new policy proposals (Miles and Haider-Markel, 2020). The media is more likely to give more publicity to political actors who are active on Twitter (LaMarre and Suzuki-Lambrecht, 2013).

Furthermore, this year, in November, the next president of the United States will be elected for the upcoming term. Hence ongoing political campaigns (2020 US Presidential election) are taking an important part of 2020 (Ball, 2020). Despite the current situation, campaigns are still continuing to run and the main ground for campaigning is the digital environment (Ball, 2020). Trump's usage of social media platforms was one of the key factors that led him to become the President in 2016 (Francia, 2018). Thus in the year 2020, he is maintaining a coherent communication with the public in relation to both the election campaign and the pandemic.

3. Literature review

For comprehensive content analysis and further insights on Donald Trump's Twitter usage, it is important to first assess already existing literature on previously written

research papers, moreover, it identifies and links it to the research gap to the research focus. As the topic is part of media and social studies, it is relevant to reflect on communication in the modern political world and communication tools and platforms. In this case, this section will demonstrate studies on the mentioned topics in relation to Donald Trump.

3.1. Donald Trump's language and style

Donald Trump has become a well-known political figure all across the globe. It is safe to say that he has gained a vast recognition due to his style of communication (Francia, 2018), and eccentric public persona. However, when Donald Trump was nominated by the Republican Party as a candidate for the 2016 US presidential election, he especially caught headlines in the media and started trending on social media platforms (Sclafani, 2017). Due to his communication style and preferred communication on social media, social studies have increased in regard to political communication and strategies. It is said that Donald Trump excelled over his more experienced opponents with different styles of communication and language during the presidential elections in 2016 (Ahmadian, et al., 2016 and Francia, 2018).

“His [Donald Trump's] self-promotional style has built a high profile in both show business (the television show, The Apprentice) and the financial world. However, the question remains whether grandiosity helps or hinders political success.”

(Ahmadian, et al., 2016, p.49)

Linguists have analyzed Donald Trump's language during his speeches as a candidate by applying the Flesch-Kincaid formula. Flesch–Kincaid formula was designed to determine the level of difficulties in understanding information in contemporary and academic English (Kayam, 2018). The formulas were first approved in 1978 by the US Department of Defense for assessing the readability of technical manuals for the US Army (DuBay, 2004).

Flesch Reading Ease

$$206.835 - 1.015 \left(\frac{\text{total words}}{\text{total sentences}} \right) - 84.6 \left(\frac{\text{total syllables}}{\text{total words}} \right)$$

Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level

$$0.39 \left(\frac{\text{total words}}{\text{total sentences}} \right) + 11.8 \left(\frac{\text{total syllables}}{\text{total words}} \right) - 15.59$$

Image 1: Flesch-Kincaid Formulas, Readable, 2017

By applying the Flesch-Kincaid Grade level formula (See Image 1) on transcribed Trump’s speeches from 2016, Kayam (2018) determined that “the average grade level of all Donald Trump’s analyzed transcripts is 3.96—a readability level of a fourth-grader (9- to 10-year-olds)” (p.81). Kayam (2018) also compared the results from the opponents, which on average was 8.03 - readability of an eighth-grader (aged 13 to 14). Hilary Clinton resulted in the highest average result of grade-level 9.18, whereas Bernie Sanders’ average result was 8.57. According to Kayam (2018), on average the Republican candidates tend to score lower grade-levels. In the research, Kayam (2018) also looked into other aspects, such as “complex words, the average number of words per sentence, the average number of syllables per word, and the average number of characters per word” (p.83). All the results showed that Donald Trump uses less complex words, and has significantly shorter sentences than other candidates. In summary, the research proved that Donald Trump uses much simpler language, shorter sentences and fewer words compared to other candidates in the 2016 US presidential elections (Kayam, 2018). Flesch’s reading ease index (See Image 2) estimates that the percentage of American adults, who can understand on a fifth-grade level, is 93%, whereas 83% can understand on an eighth-to ninth-grade level (Readable, 2017). Since Trump uses a more simple language, it makes it more accessible to the general public, and it can be understood by approximately 10% more American adults. Reaching a bigger span of the audience than the other candidates (Kayam, 2018).

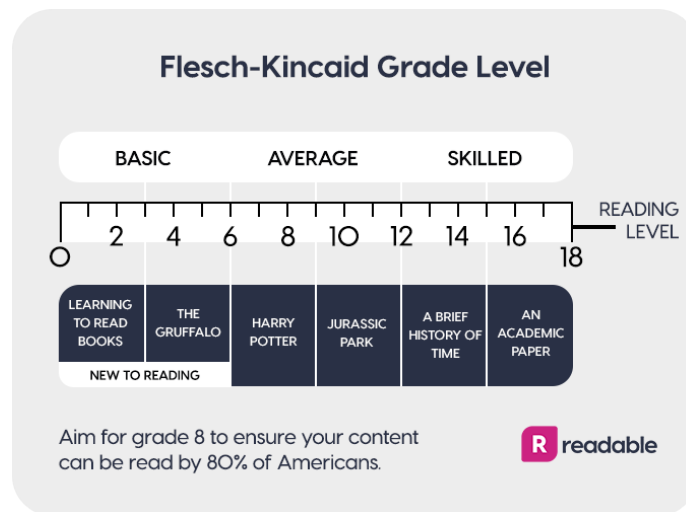


Image 2: Flesch's reading ease index of Grade Levels, Readable, 2017

Jeff Shesol, historian and former speechwriter for Bill Clinton, says:

“In the early republic, presidents could assume that they were speaking to audiences made up mostly of men like themselves: educated, civic-minded landowners. These, of course, were the only Americans with the right to vote. But over time, the franchise expanded and presidential appeals had to reach a broader audience.” (in Thompson, 2014: para. 8)

This suggests that using simple, low-grade-level language during political campaigns might be useful in order to reach wider audiences (Kayam, 2018). Clear and short messages in an informal tone sound less politically oriented and translate information much faster to a bigger audience. However, it does not necessarily mean that people with low-grade-level readability will choose such a candidate as a president, it simply indicates a higher reach in a wider audience (Kayam, 2018).

By applying the same communication strategy, Donald Trump has been famously using Twitter as a tool to communicate with his audience. Social media, such as Twitter and Facebook are commonly used as informal tools to communicate with voters and media. Facebook is identified as socially-oriented, and Twitter is more topic-oriented, therefore, Twitter has become one of the used platforms for political communication (Ahmadian, et al., 2016).

3.2. Trump's political incorrectness and negative partisanship

Donald Trump's communication strategy involves different approaches, such as his political incorrectness. According to Shafer (2017), it is hard to define when someone is being politically incorrect, but there are some key aspects to be observed when using this term in relation to Trump's politics when using this term: it supports white people and place their issues above other races' and also offends them, it is set in a neoliberal and egotistical frame and pushes the borders of extremism while moving towards liberal fascism (p.2). In Shafer's (2017) paper, it is described that Trump often argues about what it means to be politically correct. In his understanding, as long as the truth is being said, the language applied does not matter. Consequently, his messages are often sent with the 'no-shame' (p.3) rhetoric as Trump bears no fear of the repercussion of his actions. However, many researches (Shenk, 2016; McRobbie, 2009; Bonilla-Silva, 2014) argue, that what defines this term is also taking some ideas, which are now widely accepted, for instance, gender and racial equality, and abusing them in a dogmatic and authoritarian way. These characteristics can be found in Trump's communication when discussing topics like the Mexican migration and how the 'white' Americans do not want them, therefore, a wall should be built to 'Make America Great Again' (Shafer, 2017).

In a work written by Shenk (2016), it is stated that another key characteristic of Trump's communication, apart from above mentioned, is that he supports traditional, economic and nationalist values, where American citizens' interests stand before foreign policies. It ties together with Shafer's (2017) work, as it discusses how Trump's approach serves the dominant white hegemony of the U.S. (p.4). What is further discussed is that the way he sees political correctness serves as an example to the public and strengthens the gap between Republicans and Democrats, and the white American Trump supporters start applying the same political incorrectness on deeper social issues (Shafer, 2017).

However, being politically incorrect is not the only approach Trump is using to create a negative atmosphere in the country and strengthen the ‘hate’ towards Democrats and their ideologies. One of the most common, Donald Trump’s communication key characteristics during the 2016 US presidential elections was negative campaigning, which was especially directed towards Hillary Clinton, also called Crooked Hilary by Trump himself (Winberg, 2017). It is common to use such type of communication and can be simply described “as any discussion of the opponent, his or her policies, or the opposing party in general” (Winberg, 2017, p.3). The Editorial Board of New York Times (2016) went on to describe Trump’s qualities as “bluster, savage mockery of those who challenge him, degrading comments about women, mendacity, crude generalizations about nations and religions” (Editorial Board, 2016). This phenomenon is described as ‘Negative Partisanship’ by Abramowitz and McCoy (2019): to ‘*dislike the opposing party and its leaders more than they like their own party and its leaders*’ (p.146). They state that it was not only Trump but also Hillary Clinton who applied negative partisanship, however, in the 2016 elections it has reached new measures and was one of the most commonly applied approaches (Abramowitz and McCoy, 2019).

3.3. Donald Trump’s social media participation during the presidential election in 2016

In his paper, Francia (2018) writes that in 2016 Donald Trump managed to defy the claims and predictions that he will not be the president of the United States. Francia (2018) reflects on media outlets giving political predictions, where they gave a 98% probability of winning the election to Hilary Clinton and low chances to Donald Trump. This was argued by the major differences in budget and teams for each of the candidates. Even though Hilary Clinton excelled over Donald Trump in many aspects, the end result of the election overruled everyone’s expectations. Francia (2018) names one of Donald Trump’s advantages in winning the election, as the novel use of social media. Since conventional explanations give little clarity, Francia (2018) suggests looking at Donald Trump and his actions for winning the election as unconventional. Mainly due to his Twitter use and communication. “[*The*] *unpaid or free media exposure allowed Trump to remain in the public eye*” (Francia, 2018, p.444). Donald

Trump's unconventional way of using Twitter resulted in him having a higher number of followers, free media attention and more Google searches than his direct opponent (Francia, 2018), thus succeeding and dominating the social media measures. However, Francia (2018) argues that Trump's success in social media did not give him strong positive attention and tone in comparison to Clinton.

Additionally, during the 2016 US Presidential Election, Donald Trump also used his social media accounts to address news media outlets, specifically to criticize the journalists and the mass media (Francia, 2018), which evidently resulted in Trump's supporters trusting less in media outlets, such as New York Times, The Washington Post and Wall Street Journal (Francia, 2018).

Francia (2018) concludes his paper by saying that one of the unconventional explanations of Donald Trump defying the odds and winning the election to become the president of the United States, was his excessive use of social media to produce free media coverage.

The literature review described above is used to identify what knowledge is already available in relation to Donald Trump and his day-to-day communication characteristics, as well as his Twitter communication habits. The following steps will help to form the theoretical framework, the methodology and the gathered data, in order to observe and analyze whether a crisis like COVID-19 has resulted in changes in relation to Trump's communication on Twitter and how the communication was addressed. The presented reviews will serve as a base in the following sections and as a comparison with specific pandemic related findings.

4. Theoretical framework

Theoretical frameworks help to gain a deeper understanding of key concepts around the research problem and serve as a base for structuring the analysis. In order to understand the theoretical background, first, the meta-level of the theory used in this research will

be described. Followed by a micro-level theory that helps to narrow down the research and develop a theoretical framework for the content analysis.

4.1. Castells' Networked Society

Changes in the political sphere are heavily influenced by changes in the technological dimension. When changes in media appear, it affects its surroundings as well, including the people who engage in the media (Hepp, 2015). The study that researches the interrelation between our society and changes in media is called mediatization:

‘(...)mediatization research engages with the complex relationship between changes in media and communication, on the one hand, and changes in various fields of culture and society on the other’ (Hepp, 2015, p.314). Political mediatization observes these shifts in the political fields, how political actors are adapting to our digitalized world and how the perception of the citizens are extremely mediatized (Casero-Ripollés et al., 2016).

The definition of a political actor in this paper is described as an individual, who has in some way obtained political power and authority in a certain society, thus he/she engages in political events to alter policy making, media coverage, and any other political outcome (Wolfsfeld, 2015). In democratic countries, such as the United States, political actors can be defined as leaders, candidates, policy makers and elected government representatives (Wolfsfeld, 2015). On one hand, political actors can easily bypass mainstream media and share content on their own digital platforms, and citizens have much more freedom of expressing their political affiliation. Moreover, different event representations in the media can also shape the citizens' view on politics (Casero-Ripollés et al., 2016).

Media is the primary link between political actors and citizens, thus media became a very significant political actor itself in this sphere (Strömbäck, 2008). As Castells (2007) discusses, what does not appear in the media, is not public, thus it is crucial for politicians to have an active role in media and adapt to its changes and trends. After all, it is the media that decides what are the most important events and news of the day, which ultimately influences the public's opinion (Casero-Ripollés, López-Rabadán, 2014). With the rise of social media channels, all users have the possibility to express

themselves in various creative ways, for instance, by using emojis, memes, sharing videos, images or feelings and emotions (Waterloo et al., 2018). As many politicians are building up personal social media accounts, it allows them to reach out to the public (who are the potential voters) more independently (Karlsen, 2011).

Moreover, Castells (2007) describes the interchange between power relations and network society in the political environment. As mentioned above, due to the technological advances and digitalization, political communication is changing (Casero-Ripollés et al., 2016). However, the media has always been used as the primary space for spreading information. Therefore, what this means is that while the media has always served as the space for information flow, types of media and trends have been expanding and changing - old media forms, such as radio and TV, are less likely to be sufficient in 21st century (Castells, 2007) to gain the interest of the public, as people have switch their information channels to the digital online spaces. According to Castells (2007), the public is the primary connection between authority and society, therefore, what does not appear in the media is not the public. Nowadays, technology drives communication to be more horizontal (Castells, 2004, 2007). Nonetheless, it is relevant to note that mass media has never been a power holder, instead media has broadened the space where power is decided. The overall aim is to shape society's outlook on political situations, meaning that the media industry is a rather competitive field of business, where credibility is of high importance for maintaining the audience's attention (Castells, 2007).

In light of these two concepts, it can be noted that networking is crucial for all the actors because it is where the information is being shared. Trump, as a political actor, needs to use a type of network outlet to engage with other actors - the public -, in order to keep the public informed (Castells, 2007). The choice to gather data from an online platform was decided due to the political mediatization theory (Casero-Ripollés et al., 2016), which it describes that changes in the technological world have resulted in changes in our society and vice versa. Thus, as previously explained, the power of social media platforms are ever growing (Holtzhausen, 2015), and it is necessary for politicians to adapt to these changes and maintain communication with the public. Not only via

traditional media, but also on social media platforms (Castells, 2004, 2007). In the U.S. people are very active participants on Twitter, as one-in-five U.S. adults use Twitter in their daily lives (Pew Research Center, 2020), and it is the platform, where Donald Trump has gathered an immense number of followers, thus it is potentially the best platform for ‘networking’ with other political and non-political actors.

4.2. Mass self-communication

Mass self-communication is a term set by Castells (2007, 2009) and is a part of his larger Networked Society theory. He explains that nowadays politics is media politics, where information exists within the media. However, it does not mean that the media is the powerholder, as political actors use it to influence the active public, who also has a say in selecting what information they seek (2007, p. 240). Mass self-communication is described as a horizontal many-to-many communication form (Castells, 2007), which potentially reaches a global audience. Since politicians are the representative figures of politics, they are in charge of shaping and sending political messages on different media spaces. Castells (2007) states that issues in politics are based on the values and trustworthiness of the political actors, and the values are identified by what is important mostly for the majority of the public, thus in this understanding, they decide what information is valuable enough to be shared and what is not. With the rise of the Internet, communication exists both locally and globally, in real and in chosen time (Castells, 2007). The information flows from many to many by peer-to-peer networks (Castells, 2009), therefore, it is defined as ‘mass-communication’. Due to this aspect, it has led to some changes in media politics, for instance, there are new ways for non-political actors to have a say in the political agenda (2004, p.254). It is also worth mentioning that mass self-communication has resulted in the rise of the autonomy of individuals (Castells, 2007, 2009), thus actors on the network can shape their communication flow to reach their goals and defend their actions. In this case, Twitter is a network of political and non-political actors, who use mass self-communication to produce and shape information for their own interest.

In addition to this concept, Castells (2007, 2009) definition of ‘self’ in this theory can be explained in two ways: 1) the content that is being shared is ‘self-generated’ by the online users, and it is self-directed in terms of the emission. 2) from the plethora of information, an actor ‘self-selects’ what information they need. This is the difference from any other mass communication theory. In Castells’ understanding of modern communication, due to the usage of online spaces, there is a very high focus on the individual and self-expression. Moreover, since it is a communication theory, it is also observing the purpose of online participation (Castells, 2009).

In order to get a better understanding of this theory and apply it in practice, a visualized model was created (Figure 2), which serves as the base for the methodology section and analysis process.

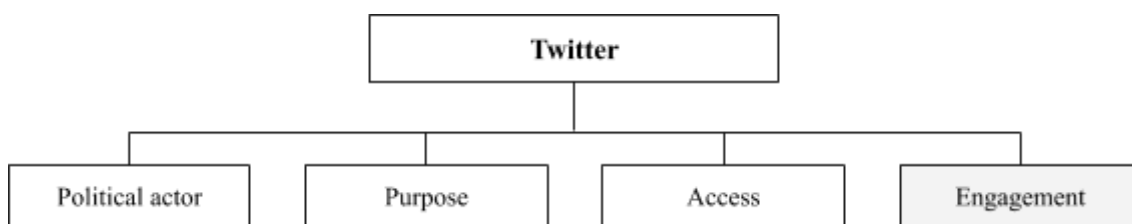


Figure 2: Theoretical framework based on Castells’ mass self-communication theory

Theory applied in this research paper

Castells’ mass self-communication, previously described in meta- and macro-level dimensions, contributes to the paper in several ways. Based on Figure 2, the application of theory can be further described in detail:

- **Online media platform (the network):** Twitter is the network of political and non-political actors and the primary base of mass self-communication. This platform already has a set of rules in relation to the messages that can be produced on this platform, primarily - it has to be short (Burgdhart, 2015). By gathering data or using any kind of outlet (in this research a Twitter archive will be further used), it is important to understand, for instance, the functions of APIs in order to deepen the knowledge about the gathered data (APIs will be further explained in the Methodology section). From the network, self-generated

information will be gathered from a political actor, in this case - Donal Trump and his tweets.

- **Political actor:** Since the network consists of political and non-political actors, the focus in this research paper is on the individual political actor and his generated material. In this research that is identified as Donald Trump - a political actor who uses mass self-communication to produce and shape information on his Twitter account. Thus the aspect of Castells' mass self-communication will allow the research to focus on key characteristics in his Twitter communication in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic that will be identified and analyzed.
- **Purpose:** without any further assessments, the primary focus is communication. More specifically, the information that is forwarded to the follower base on Twitter about the COVID-19 pandemic from Donald Trump's account. The purpose can be identified after the data has been gathered and analyzed, however, in the selection of data, the primary purpose should be taken under consideration.
- **Access:** as it is described, information can be accessed both in real-time and chosen time. This helps to select a specific timeframe for the research. The tweets from Trump's account will be gathered, selected and analyzed from March, as it was the beginning of the global COVID-19 pandemic, until the current time (the end of June). Since the pandemic is still present during the research, a timeline from the pandemic to the current situation can be identified.
- **Engagement/reach:** this paper does not research or focus on any kind of audience engagement, therefore, this will be addressed in the limitations section.

5. Methodology

5.1. Research process

Collins' (2010) research process, Figure 3, is used as the base for creating a plan and research process for this paper. The figure shows a circular type of research process and planning, yet due to the iteration of the research, it is possible to move back and forth between the said steps (Collins, 2010). For example, a literature review brings the possibility to apply information to previous steps of the process as well. This research was directly applied in this paper, as it was necessary to move back and forth to narrow down and specify the research focus, thus adjusting further findings to answer the research questions.

Figure 2
THE RESEARCH PROCESS

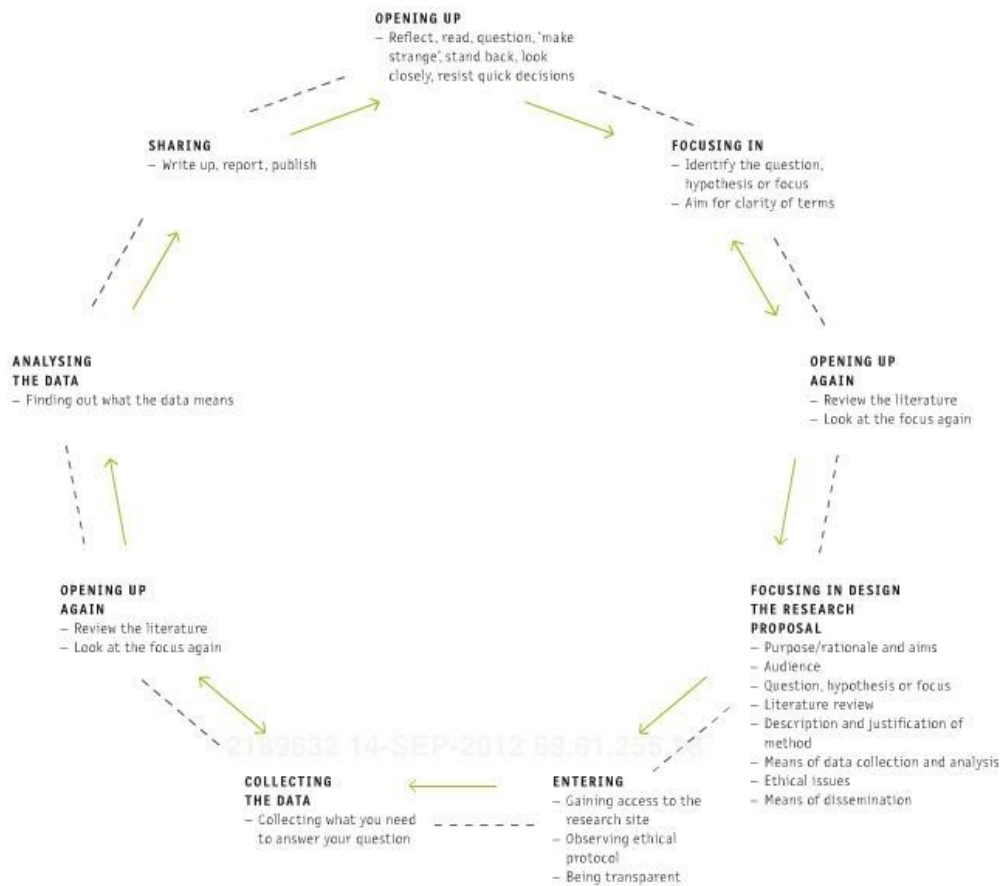


Figure 3: Research process Collins, H., 2010, p.12

In the initial steps, the research area, focus and research questions were determined and described in Chapter 1. Further steps include a literature review, that is available in Chapter 2 and a theoretical framework in Chapter 3 - these chapters focus on exploring the research area in order to gain insights that will support the data gathering process.

One of the finalizing steps includes the presentation and analysis of the gathered data. In order to do so, the research must draw parallels with literature review and theories (Collins, 2010). The data is presented in an organized and academic way that is strengthened by the theoretical framework, thus arguing the valid findings and fulfilling the purpose of the paper. The presentation and analysis of data are described in Chapter 6.

Further paragraphs will focus on content analysis, data gathering and ethics. These topics will be addressed and will describe the reasons behind the chosen method and ways of gathering data from Donald Trump's Twitter account.

5.2. Quantitative and qualitative content analysis

According to Neuendorf (2017), content analysis is one of the most rapidly expanding techniques in gathering data in research, especially in mass self-communication research. As Burghardt (2015) describes, Twitter has become one of the commonly used platforms for research in order to collect data. Thus this research paper will be focusing on analyzing Twitter content for significant findings. In order to analyze Donald Trump's tweets, content analysis will be applied to retrieve qualitative and quantitative data.

“Quantitative and qualitative research may be viewed as different ways of examining the same research problem.” (Gray and Densten, 1998, p. 420).

To break it down through some examples, quantitative data will give a perspective on numbers - how often has Donald Trump tweeted during the first half of 2020? How many tweets in total are available for data extraction? Whereas, qualitative data will

give insights on the content itself - what is Donald Trump tweeting about? What is his communication style? What are the key characteristics of his communication? What words does he choose to express himself?

Schreier (2014) describes the 8 steps of content analysis, which are “(1) Deciding on a research question, (2) Selecting material, (3) Building a coding frame, (4) Segmentation, (5) Trial coding, (6) Evaluating and modifying the coding frame, (7) Main analysis, (8) Presenting and interpreting the findings” (p.174-175). A sampling selection strategy will be applied in order to collect data and material that is only relevant to this research area and research topic. The data serves a purpose to answer research questions established in Chapter 1. Following Schreier’s (2014) guidelines, a search algorithm will be developed in order to retrieve and organize data, which will be put into categories and sub-categories. The collected data can be evaluated both in a quantitative and qualitative approach. Factual base and actual data will be used for argumentation, as well as support the overall research.

Evidently, based on the chosen research area and method, this research paper will have a single perspective to evaluate the topic and its importance. Therefore, leaving space for other possibilities and angles to discuss this topic. Considering the data availability and limitations, this paper will focus on gathering data from an open source, such as Twitter, and offer a non-biased viewpoint on the topic.

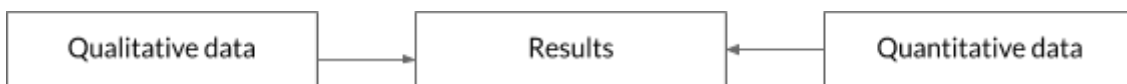


Figure 4: Merge the data (Collins, 2010, p.50)

Quantitative data

Quantitative research is a method to analyze numbers (Greener, 2011). Numerical data, such as the number of tweets, likes, comments and retweets can be analyzed to get an overall understanding of how much content can be retrieved and measure the capacity of this research. In this paper, only a quantitative summary will be applied to create a perspective of the research capacity and results, thus summarizing total tweets in

categories and sub-categories. Quantitative data will support and strengthen the argumentation by providing a scale of data that can further provide comparative results.

Qualitative data

Whereas, qualitative research does not include numerical evaluations. Qualitative data includes text, images, video or any other form that is not numbered (Greener, 2011). Quantitative data will provide an insight into what Donald Trump is tweeting as a leader (political actor) of the United States. Therefore, the analysis of the text will be primarily used to retrieve qualitative data. However, since it's a large scale research, it is important to plan sample selection beforehand, thus the text analysis will be based on the previously gathered findings from other research papers and designed theoretical framework. This way already key characteristics will be identified, as well as new patterns and characteristics in his communication.

Twitter's search algorithm

This research focuses on conducting Twitter data, therefore, it is crucial to acquire deeper knowledge in this area to understand the source itself. Data is being shown in a readable way by using an external computer program that draws the data from the chosen web platform. In order to maintain communication between the web platform and the program, Twitter is using API. According to Twitter's terms, it is forbidden to redistribute any content outside of Twitter's platform.

"In practice, this means it is not possible to precompile Tweet corpora and to share them in a way they are readily accessible for academic research." (Burghardt, 2015, p.78)

However, when a Tweet corpora is shown as a list of numerical identifiers, through Twitter API, it can be rebuilt again as the Tweet content (McCreadie et al., 2012). Burghardt (2015) describes that Twitter APIs (Application Programming Interface) is a set interface, which helps the developers to communicate with the Twitter platform and distinguish two types of APIs: Search API and Streaming API. Streaming API provides live data as long as it is told to stop. It is focusing on the newly published tweets and

can be refined by parameters e.g. keywords, geolocation or user ID. When working with a streaming API, it sends back the tweets that fit the set criteria as long as it does not exceed 1% of the total Tweets published on Twitter (Kumar, et. al. 2013). It is mostly used to gather data from a live stream or a live campaign. Search API is part of Twitter's REST API (Twitter Developer, 2020), which works similarly to Twitter's search itself: tweets can be traced back to when they match specific criteria e.g. keywords, hashtags or usernames. This is useful when researchers need to do more analytics on Twitter data (Burghardt, 2015).

The API system, however, has some disadvantages, and it is not the most practical approach. First, when a tweet has already been stored, it can not be changed. When a change occurs (e.g. the tweet is being deleted or edited), the tweet remains in its original form, when it was first connected via the unique ID (Burghardt, 2015). Second, researchers need programming skills to build tweets within an API, which can raise risks and issues during the research process. Luckily, there are some tools on the market. Without them, researchers would have to gather data by using scholars and create their own collection. These software tools provide a graphical interface for the API, and it helps the researchers' job when it comes to analyzing Twitter data (Burghardt, 2015). There are several different types of tools, depending on its analytic focus e.g. social networks of Twitter users, which basically tracks down the engagement.

For this research, the Trump Twitter archive² was chosen. It focuses on Donald Trump's Twitter account (@realdonaldtrump) and gathers tweets from his profile. When looking for a specific tweet with a specific keyword or hashtag on this platform, it is possible to set search parameters and retrieve data. Moreover, all of the tweets can be ordered to appear according to its popularity, the number of retweets, or in chronological order. This archive is operated by a Search/REST API. According to the developer of the archive, since 1/27/2017 all tweets are being gathered and monitored in real time. Prior to that, it was more difficult to collect the tweets, and there was a probability of missing out on tweets that were posted but deleted almost right away. This archive is using an

² <http://www.trumptwitterarchive.com/archive>

API tool called Tweepy. All the live and raw data is being stored with GMT (Greenwich Mean Time) timestamp, which is being translated to Eastern Standard Time (EST). EST is five hours behind the GMT, and, since not all his tweets appear with location data, tweets that come from Pacific Standard Time can not be further translated, if it is three hours behind. As mentioned above, the API approach has its disadvantages, even by using specifically programmed tools, but it is still the most accurate solution. It can provide an immense set of data, and due to its functions, the historical data for analytics can be gathered much more easily.

5.3. Data collection and coding process

As mentioned above, Trump's Twitter Archive was used as the basis for collecting Trump's tweets for the content analysis. Trump's Twitter archive is a collection of Donald Trump's tweets starting in 2017. It is connected to his profile @realDonaldTrump on Twitter. The content analysis was based on Schreier's (2014) 8 steps, which are described before and will be further addressed in more detail to describe the data gathering process and coding process.

(1) Research question

Decisions of research questions are described in chapter 1 (Introduction).

(2) Selecting material

The mentioned Twitter archive served as a base for gathering the data. Castells' mass self-communication model allows the researchers to retrieve data from the real- or chosen timeframe. To meet the research question, a specific time frame was set: tweets observed from the 1st of March till the 30th of June. Prior filter functions of this archive help to collect data from this selected time frame. In order to create a core for structuring, all the tweets were placed exported in CSV format and imported in an Excel sheet. The total number of tweets between March and June is 4018. Since Donald Trump posts a lot of content, it was important to select the right groups of content for further investigation. For example, by searching keywords and matching tweets to the related groups. This is further described in the next paragraph.

(3) Sample selection and selecting material

Since 4018 tweets were retrieved in total, it was necessary to narrow down the search and identify the tweets that will support the actual research. Therefore, every tweet that is related to the COVID-19 pandemic, needed to be identified. In order to do the first round of selection, pandemic related keywords were searched in the Twitter archive and gathered separately. These keywords were: pandemic, coronavirus, virus, COVID-19, vaccine. In some cases, tweets contained more than one keyword, thus to avoid overlapping, a specific function of the search was used. In the online archive, it is possible to search for combinations of words. E.g. COVID-19 and pandemic by writing it in the search bar in the following combination: COVID-19&&pandemic. Moreover, some tweets had only the 'virus' keyword along, however, it was also shown in the 'coronavirus' based searches. All the tweets that contained virus were 301 and the number of tweets which contained coronavirus was 258. Therefore, there are 43 tweets that only contain the word virus, and was placed under this category. However, it is important to note that in other cases, for the tweets that contained more than one keyword, they were only placed in one of the categories. Due to this phase, it is only the number of tweets that are relevant and not the contained words. They only helped to narrow down the search and didn't serve as a pattern for categorizing in this time of the research. After these steps, the selected number of tweets in relation to the pandemic is 492.

In order not to miss any tweets due to the lack of keywords mentioned in tweets, all the other 3526 tweets were initially read manually. When a tweet contained COVID-19 related information, it was added to the collection of the tweets. After this initial observation, 146 more tweets were added to the collection, making the total number 638 of COVID-19 related tweets in four months. These tweets were, for instance, appreciating workers who contributed to the well-functioning of the country like health workers, employees of delivery companies, etc.

(4) Segmentation

The following step requires the group formation and categorization of the raw data. Before creating categories, it is important to reflect on Blaike’s (2009) research strategy approaches. For this research paper, an *Inductive* (p.9) research strategy was applied. This strategy requires gathering data, then analyzing it in order to create general and new patterns, while accumulating data and analyzing it with a generic or ‘inductive’ logic (Blaike, 2009). Moreover, this type of research strategy answers questions that start with ‘What’. It also links together with Castells’ mass self-communication theory, where based on placing the individual, the self-creator (in this case Donald Trump), in the focus, key characteristics, thus general patterns can be observed in relation to a specific research area.

The aim of the research process is to provide answers to the research questions. The main question, as described, focuses on observing possible new patterns, which requires the researchers to set no limitations. For instance, if a framework was created e.g. based on already existing knowledge as a pattern, it would not allow seeing the data holistically, and would already guide the data formation in a specific direction. Therefore, all 638 tweets were carefully selected and categorized manually. Two main categories were created based on the previous studies and Catells’ model (Figure 2). These two main categories were formed based on what is the *purpose* of the message and what *language* or tone of voice he is using. Each tweet has both categories applied, in order to observe his communication approach from a higher perspective. To further narrow down within both main categories, several sub-categories were created based on initial observation of all 638 tweets (see the full coding book in Appendix 9.2.):

Main categories	Sub-categories
Language/Tone	Professional
	Simple (or casual)
	Enthusiastic
	Offensive (Racist and Negative is under this category as well)
	Respectful
Purpose	To encourage citizens to fight the virus
	To provide general information and update the citizens

	To show numerical data
	To appreciate the work of employees of the country
	To attack his opponents or show them in bad light
	To provide guidance on what has to be done to avoid further spreading
	To show some changes due to COVID-19
	To praise himself and his achievements

Table 1: Categories and sub-categories for the content analysis

In addition, the initial sub- research question also needs to be answered, which creates some patterns based on already existing ones: the information gathered from answering the main research question and comparing already existing knowledge. Already acknowledged key patterns, such as political incorrectness and simple (casual) language were researched in all 4018 tweets. It was not done to question the previous research papers, but to observe the situation in terms of the COVID-19, and how it might have affected Trump’s day-to-day communication approaches. In the initial observations, it was conducted that several other categories could have been formed, such as: presidential election, economy, presidential tasks, etc. However, due to the narrow research focus these groups were not further analyzed, instead some of these tweets were collected to support already existing studies and serve a purpose in the comparative analysis. These examples are focusing on political incorrectness, negative campaigning, and his simple and offensive tone. See an example of such tweets below:

“Mini Mike Bloomberg just “quit” the race for President. I could have told him long ago that he didn’t have what it takes and he would have saved himself a billion dollars the real cost. Now he will pour money into Sleepy Joe’s campaign hoping to save face. It won’t work!” @realDonaldTrump on March 4th

(5) The trial coding

Trial coding is a part of the pilot phase, where the material is selected for coding before evaluating and modifying it. The process of trial coding was further organizing the extracted tweets in an Excel sheet: first, the tweets were organized by months, which

were identified starting March. Second, main categories (Language/Tone and Purpose) were assigned to tweets by manually reading the content and evaluating which category it falls into. Third, the tweets were further put into smaller categories to identify the differences (See Table 1) and patterns. Trial coding can be especially valuable when two coders are working on the same sample of material. For example, in this case, one coder evaluated the tweets and applied the identified categories, while the other coder repeated the same job with a few days' differences. Schreier (2014) writes that the categories are applied "during two rounds of coding, following the same procedure" (p.179). Since this paper consists of main and subcategories, it was important to construct the work accurately. That is, by applying the main categories first, followed by adding sub-categories and moving on through the rest of the main categories. This is done by adding values in the Excel sheet in columns and rows. Categories are assigned in the columns, and coding values are filled in the cells. Coding is applying codes (categories and sub-categories) to raw data (the tweets), which was done manually on an Excel sheet that contained the extracted list of tweets. This served as the base for identifying already existing patterns, as well as finding new patterns regards the COVID-19 content.

(6) Evaluating and modifying the coding frame

Based on Schreier's (2014) steps of content analysis, further evaluations and modifications were applied in the coding frame after trial coding was completed. As described above, the content was organized in 2 main categories, and several sub-categories, which were applied on a set of extracted tweets by two coders. The trial coding initially started by applying categories to all the tweets, which allowed to assess what groups are the focus for answering the research questions. Minor adjustments were made, in order to identify the right content – that is COVID-19 related tweets. Since not all of the tweets contained keywords, such as 'COVID-19', 'Coronavirus', 'Virus' and so on, more in-depth searches were done. Therefore, expanding the number of tweets related to the main topic. Furthermore, the material was organized in sub-categories, that help analyze the written content and identify the key characteristics of Donald Trump's communication. While some of these characteristics were also identified through literature review (such as simple language, negative tone, political incorrectness

etc.) and further observations on all the tweets, the search needed to be narrowed down to specifically address the COVID-19 content. Evaluations and modifications were done by two coders, so the content was organized through two rounds by two different people. This was especially helpful in seeing the tweets from two different perspectives. Therefore, changes were applied through discussion between the two coders. To increase validity (Schreier, 2014), such categories are also evaluated by seeing if the previously assigned categories directly match the material, if not - new sub-categories are developed. For this instance, a new sub-category under Purpose was developed to represent 'self-praise'. While the tweets seemed to inform and show an enthusiastic tone, it was difficult to fit them in the correct groups, thus a new sub-category was necessary. Once the changes were made, that included adjusting sub-categories, the frame was ready to be used for the main analysis to answer research questions.

(7) The main analysis phase

This contributed to qualitative data, which was analyzed through quantitative comparatives. As seen in Graph 1, quantitative comparison gives an overall perspective on Donald Trump's content types. In order to draw the right conclusions from the main analysis, it was important to link the focus back to the research focus and research questions. As well as, pose questions based on primary knowledge and purpose of his communication: how often does he tweet about COVID-19? To get a better understanding of the importance of this issue in his opinion: What types of tweets does he generate in relation to the pandemic and what purpose do they serve? By answering these questions, basic patterns can be set that will serve as a base for answering the research questions. Quantitative data was collected from gathering the number of tweets in total, and in each category and sub-category. This way a comparison was applied to find Donald Trump's focus on each of the groups. In order to retrieve qualitative data, text analysis was applied by reading through the tweets. Finally, correlations between quantitative and qualitative data were highlighted and thus will be used for further argumentation.

(8) Presentation of data

As the last step of the content analysis, the presentation of data and main findings are described in the following chapter.

5.4. Ethics

As researchers, it is important to protect data and privacy. Layder (2013) writes that any social research requires ethical principles, that are used as guidelines for the researchers to protect subjects' interests and well-being. This paper will analyze public data from open sources, and no sensitive data will be published (Townsend and Wallace, 2016). Since there will be no direct participants addressed during the research, there is no risk for breach of privacy and data. Donald Trump has a public account on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump>), which is the primary source of information. The data will be mined from the account, further analyzed and presented in findings.

Shamoo and Resnik (2015) present a list of ethical suggestions that are used as guidance when doing the research. The ethics that are taken into consideration are honesty, objectivity, confidentiality, and respect of the intellectual property. Alongside these ethics, a non-biased mindset will be applied to evaluate and discuss the findings. It is relevant to mention that Donald Trump has an immense reputation that often divides the public's opinion, therefore, during this qualitative and quantitative research, a clear and critical ethos will be applied.

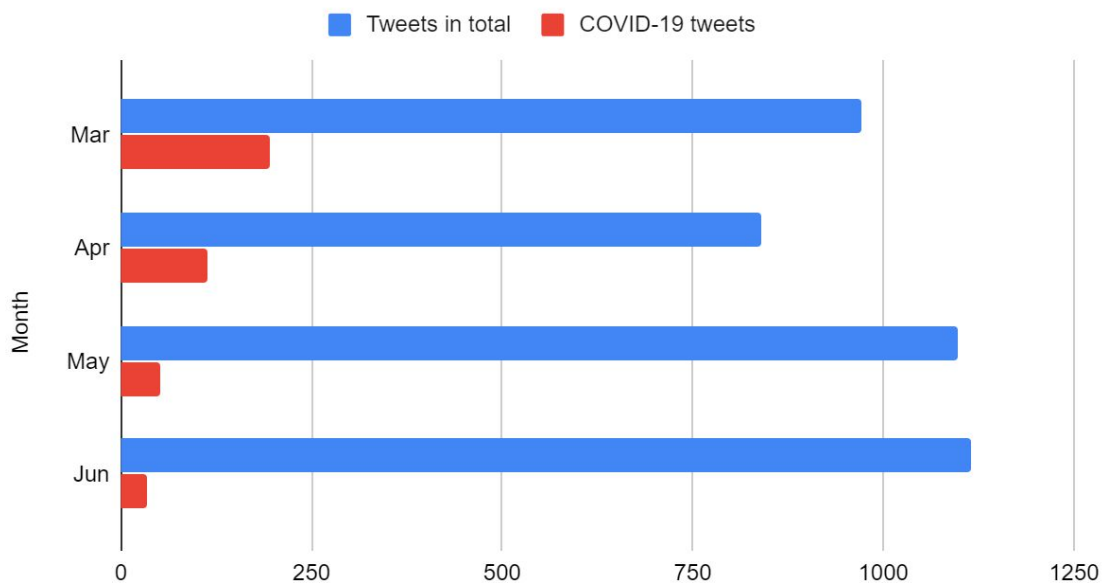
Everything addressed and presented in this research paper will be well-thought-out. The subject and his content will be addressed with full respect, and only public data will be used in this research. The content from Twitter will be selected according to the described criteria in order to present safe and legitimate findings in this paper.

6. Presentation and analysis of data

From the beginning of March until the end of June 2020, it was necessary to highlight the importance of the pandemic, as it was declared as an international crisis (UNDP,

2020) that affects many segments of people’s daily lives, and evidently is still an ongoing health crisis. In order to see whether Trump has managed to do that, the number of COVID-19 related tweets were compared (taken from the categorized sample selection) with the number of all tweets in every month observed.

Quantitative comparison of COVID-19 related content

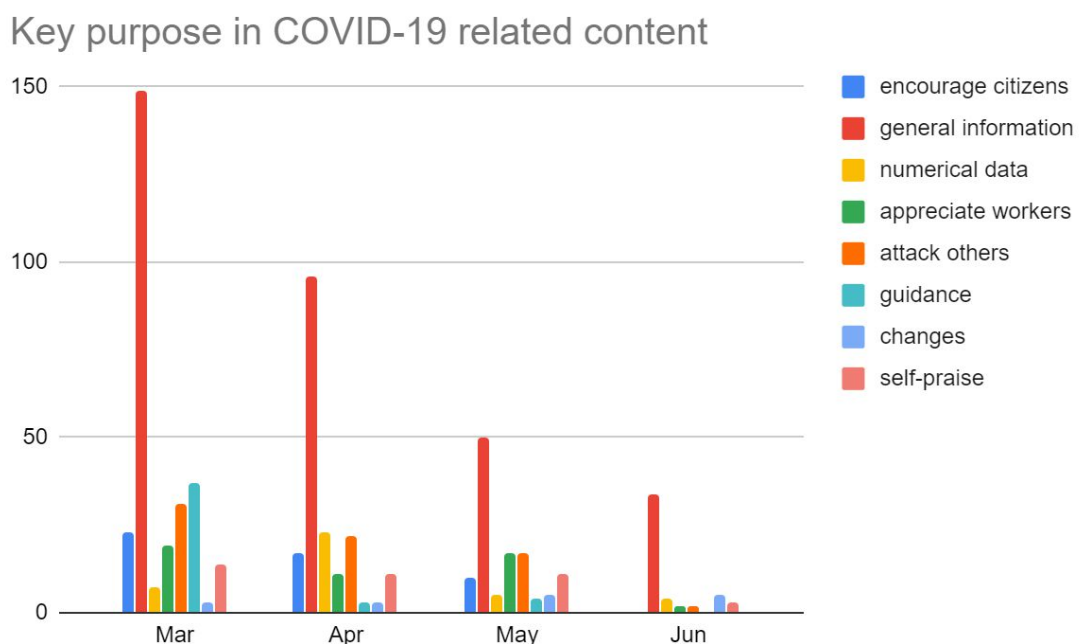


Graph 1: Quantitative summary of COVID-19 related tweets

From this graph (Graph 1) it can be conducted that in the most active months in terms of tweeting (May and June), the amount of coronavirus-related posts have significantly decreased. The only two months, where he was actively sharing COVID-19 related content, was in March and April. What this shows is that, while the level of discussion or information sharing was decreasing, the number of tweets, in general, was increasing, thus other topics began taking over the priority. Even though March and April required the most information flow, in May and June the coronavirus was still a very global health issue and had not stopped spreading. The United States is still the number one country in terms of death rates (Johns Hopkins CSSE, 2020) (as of August 19th), and, as mentioned, many conventions and primaries and other key events were canceled or postponed (Ball, 2020), thus the public continuously needs to be informed, and one of the most important topics should not be distracted.

In media politics, it is the leader (political actor) who is in charge of representing the political world and sharing all the needful information (Castells, 2009). This requires a leader who will share valuable, transparent, concrete, and fast information and will understand the issue in the eye of the public and places focus on it accordingly (Reynolds, et.al., 2007). Additionally, citizens, health care workers, policymakers and media have a significant role and require action to produce accurate information, which is based on data and science to remain credible and provide trustworthy sources (Castells, 2009; Reynolds, et.al., 2007). During the initial phase of the pandemic, people tend to develop natural interest and demand for information (Reynolds, et.al., 2007). Since the pandemic, which began in March, people have entered lockdown in the U.S. and mainly rely on the government, health officials and leaders to provide information and support, as they are the power holders in the world of media politics (Castells, 2009). Based on Google Trends (2020), COVID-19 is one of the top searched topics, thus proving that people are searching for information for guidance and updates.

6.1. Trump’s self-communication in relation to the pandemic



Graph 2: Key purposes in COVID-19 related content

Graph 2 demonstrates all the sub-categories and their comparison with each other. This chapter will present and analyze the key findings in relation to Trump's communication based on the category *'purpose'*.

The Coronavirus started from China at the end of 2019 (WHO, 2020), and rapidly spread around the world, now placing the United States in the first place based on the death rates (Johns Hopkins CSSE, 2020). In some of his tweets, Donald Trump addressed the coronavirus as the "Chinese Virus", making it offensive towards the people of China, and working his way towards political incorrectness (Shafer, 2017), as he is addressing a non-white ethnic race. He is not only using an offensive tone but also blaming China for causing an international crisis, by naming it after the country and not using the world-wide accepted name. For instance:

'The United States will be powerfully supporting those industries, like Airlines and others, that are particularly affected by the Chinese Virus. We will be stronger than ever before!' @realDonaldTrump on March 16th

Consequently, this term faced a lot of backlash in the media due to its racial portrayal (Mangan, 2020).

In addition, while observing the content and the messages of his tweets, it was clear that many fake news related and attacking tweets were around the topic of the virus. Plenty of news channels and political opponents have shared information, ideas or observations in relation to the pandemic. Trump has accused them on several instances or attacked them via tweets, simply because they put Trump in a negative light. Out of **638** COVID-19 related tweets, there are **72** in which he either blames someone else, connects it with fake news, offends a news sharing portal or attacks one of his opponents. For instance:

"Great credit being given for our Coronavirus response, except in the Fake News. They are a disgrace to America!" @realDonaldTrump on May 11th

He uses many of his tweets to argue, attack and blame while failing to provide enough information or space for engagement on the topic of the virus. This kind of attitude does not help to raise awareness and provide all the needful support and information in a huge nation like the United States, which, according to Baker and Oneal (2001), could actually benefit the leader. He also uses such negative words as “loser”, “worst”, “wrong” to describe his opponents in tweets. Politicians practice negative campaigning to a certain level - it can decrease the opponent’s approval ratings (Donatelli, 2020) -, thus making this a political tool in Trump’s communication even in times of health crisis. Moreover, he is using negative partisanship even during a difficult time, where citizens are struggling with health issues both mentally and physically. According to Sandell, et. al.’s (2013) research, striving towards a union or providing more information would help to improve their well-being.

As a leader, Donald Trump is showing support to hospitals, health care workers and people in need by sharing updates about testing, medicine and medical equipment, such as ventilators. This can be observed in March, April and May.

“HYDROXYCHLOROQUINE and AZITHROMYCIN taken together have a real chance to be one of the biggest game changers in the history of medicine. The FDA has moved mountains - Thank You! Hopefully they will BOTH (H works better with A International Journal of Antimicrobial Agents).....” @realdonaldtrump on March 21st

It is an important aspect that he can show empathy and respect (Graph 2, appreciating workers) towards the workers in the U.S. In many of the appreciation posts, he genuinely shows that he is grateful for their hard work, however, he uses the word ‘our’ instead of e.g. *America’s* or the *country’s* often in these posts:

“I want to thank all of our Great Government officials on the CoronaVirus Task Force who are working around the clock in response to the CoronaVirus...”

It can be interpreted as the country's great workers, but also as 'our' as his, since he is the leader of the country, thus making it his own success. In addition, he tends to evade important information, such as current numbers of the death toll, infected people, or cured cases. He keeps a positive outlook with the usage of a simple language, and, for example, by emphasizing that testing and precautionary actions have significantly improved the situation in the U.S. When in reality, results and statistics (Johns Hopkins CSSE, 2020) express concern of the overall situation in the U.S., as it remains the leading country with most coronavirus cases, thus misinforming the public about the current situation, and distracting the facts with other approaches, like the above-mentioned empathy towards the healthcare employees. Thus making the signs of respect and appreciation as a political tool, and pointing to a direction where there is a positive sentiment, instead of telling the public the truth. In total, there are only 4 tweets, where Trump shares the actual death rate in the U.S. The rest of the instances have general information or update on testing and mortality, showing no clear data as presented in the example below:

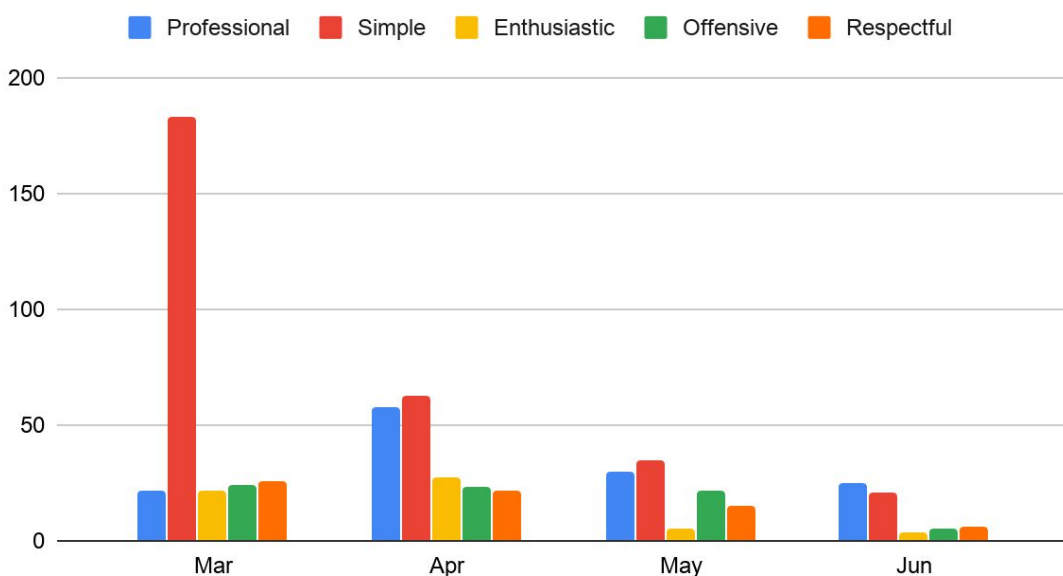
"The number of ChinaVirus cases goes up because of GREAT TESTING while the number of deaths (mortality rate) goes way down. The Fake News doesn't like telling you that!" @realDonaldTrump on June 25th

After analyzing Donald Trump's tweets, it is safe to conclude that the followers will not meet all the necessary information through his tweets. People will be fairly informed with generic messages that are not argued with science and data. The information flow about COVID-19 is not coherent, therefore, the public will not be informed or guided by the content. Moreover, several approaches can be observed, where he is incorporating his already recognized political tools, like negative partisanship, distracting the audience, misinforming and producing content with racists connotation.

6.2. Donald Trump’s language and tone of voice in COVID-19 related tweets

Since the purpose of this paper is to analyze Donald Trump’s self-communication on an online mass communication platform, such as Twitter, and ultimately identify his key communication characteristics, it is important to present the findings of his communication style, language and tone of voice. This was identified in the “Language/Tone” category on COVID-19 tweets. From the previous literature review, it was already identified that Donald Trump uses unconventional (Francia, 2018), negative and simple language (Kayam, 2018) on his social media, incorporated with political incorrectness (Shafer, 2017). Thus such characteristics were observed in the collected data as well (See Graph 3 below).

Tone of voice in COVID-19 related content



Graph 3: Donald Trump’s tone of voice in COVID-19 related content

For providing general information on the virus, Donald Trump uses a mix of a professional and simple way of presenting the content, along with the offensive tone in relation to the tweets where he attacks his opponents. However, addressing the topic in a simple and casual way is by far the most commonly used approach on this Twitter

communication. What is interesting to note, is that Donald Trump Re-Tweets (RT) a lot of content from others, such as senators, Ivanka Trump, The White House and many others. In contrast to Donald Trump's language and style, these accounts use a more professional, formal and neutral tone. For example, a contrast between two tweets can be identified here:

“RT @SenatorTimScott As our nation faces an unprecedented crisis in responding to the #COVID19 #coronavirus pandemic, it is critical that we put plans in place to both keep Americans healthy and restart our economy.” @realDonaldTrump on April 18th

And

“The world is at war with a hidden enemy. WE WILL WIN!” @realDonaldTrump on March 17th

Note that this self-generated tweet was made after the global COVID-19 pandemic was announced by WHO (WHO, 2020a), thus indicating that the ‘hidden enemy’ is the Coronavirus and ‘war’ is the pandemic. He keeps an enthusiastic tone to motivate and lead the country by adding the exclamation ‘we will win’. Without the context and background information, such tweets can be applied to many scenarios, therefore, explaining the simplicity of expressing oneself. By comparing these two tweets, even though the message is quite similar, language differences can be noticed in the choice of words and the tone. For example, Senator Tim Scott uses words like ‘respond’ while Donald Trump uses ‘win’ for the Coronavirus. The reason behind leaving re-tweets in the analysis was to observe not only what Trump is writing himself, but also to see what content he finds relevant to share on his Twitter feed. Therefore, also the similarities between the language and communication styles can be identified further. Moreover, in some cases, he also leaves his personal thoughts on the retweeted content. What is interesting to mention, is that out of 135 collected tweets with a ‘professional’ tone of voice, 109 tweets are retweeted content from other accounts. This means that Donald Trump tends to re-tweet content that sounds more sophisticated than his own communication.

Furthermore, as described in 6.1., there is a tendency of him showing empathy and appreciation towards the hard-working people, who support the nation in times of this crisis. In the category language and tone, many tweets had ‘respectful’ interpretations. Some among these posts is again leaning towards a political direction, for instance:

“A Poll in today’s New York Post says that 77% of “U.S. adults have confidence in their government’s ability to handle the Coronavirus (Number One) compared to other health threats.” 64% for Zika 58% for Ebola. Others way down on list. Our professionals are doing a great job! “

Even though he shows respect and appreciation towards the professionals, and in a way dedicates this tweet to their hard work, many other hidden political messages can be found. First of all, the poll results are showing that the Republicans have the support of the nation and, therefore, the government is doing a great job. Second, he brings examples of other viruses and their poll results. What is interesting in relation to Zika and Ebola, is that during the outbreak of those, the leading party and the President represented the Democratic party, thus comparing his job with the opponent (Zika’s outbreak was in 2016-7,³ and Ebola in 2014⁴, both during the presidency of Obama (2009-2017)).

Trump also interpreted his campaign slogan Keep America Great Again in the tweet by writing “Keep America Safe”.

“Congress has agreed to provide \$8 Billion to fight Coronavirus! This means @CDCgov @HHSgov and @DHSgov will have the resources they need to Keep America Safe and keep the risk to workers and families very low. This is great news for our Health our Economy and our Nation!” @realDonaldTrump on March 3rd

It is yet a new observation in relation to him using the pandemic as a tool for campaigning. This slogan has been incorporated in many of his tweets in an

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/>

⁴ <https://www.who.int/health-topics/ebola/>

encouraging tone. He then adds ‘keep the risk [...] very low’ and ‘this is great news’. The message is clear and easy to interpret. Since Donald Trump has a large follower base, his message will be more likely to reach a bigger audience, who can easily decode the message. According to Kayam (2018), by having a more simple language and style of communication, Donald Trump reaches a bigger audience than his political opponents. Thus non-political actors on Twitter, are more likely to interpret and understand Donald Trump’s messages more easily than other political actors' messages on Twitter.

6.3. Politicization of the COVID-19 pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic (in the first half of 2020) in the U.S., the focus was shared with the election period, therefore, making it more difficult to build up effective communication towards the pandemic. Due to the fact that many events, conventions, debates, etc were postponed (Ball, 2020) from March, the focus was highly on the pandemic. These conclusions are based on Google Trends (2020) search inquiries from its users. It has not only affected the campaigns and the political happenings, but also the future voters and their well-being. Thus handling the crisis as fast and effectively as possible, had the possibility to help take the focus back on the election.

Donald Trump is a candidate in the ongoing 2020 US Presidential Election. The role of the leader during such an international socio-economic crisis can ultimately have a huge influence on the election’s outcome. Since COVID-19 is still a pressing issue, it is not possible to evaluate the direct outcome of Trump as a leader during a health crisis. However, by observing his content on Twitter, it is possible to gain insights into his primary focus areas, characteristics and communication. Not only does Donald Trump need to meet pressing political and economic issues, but he also needs to control the health crisis.

He is known for his unique usage of words and his specific communication style. The way he expresses himself on the self-generated tweets is in a simple and casual

language, and much less politically oriented (Kayam, 2018). Thus he is able to reach a wider group of people. However, mixing his style with his political incorrectness can result in a highly offensive language. For instance, as part of his negative partisanship, he created offensive nicknames to his opponents and negatively addressed other political members or media outlets. In total, **72** tweets were counted in the category, where he either attacked someone or applied a racist ideology. Moreover, there are 61 tweets, which have an offensive tone. He also addressed the COVID-19 virus as the Chinese virus, thus blaming China for the biggest health crisis in the 21st century. This shows that one of his characteristics, in relation to the COVID-19, is to incorporate his approaches from his day-to-day political communication, such as racism and negative partisanship (Shafer, 2017; Abramowitz and McCoy, 2019).

There are 39 COVID-19 related tweets, where he is praising himself or expressing satisfaction of his work or retweets from others putting him in a good light, for instance, based on his decision-making skills. This could be argued by actual facts by e.g. showing more numerical data, which he lacks. It also shows how he lacks to provide credible information to the public, instead he incorporates the pandemic in his daily affairs communication. The same patterns - the fake news-related tweets, attacking opponents or news channels, who do not support him and the lack of actual information, which is mostly replaced by 'Trump-idealizing and loving' posts - can be observed in both his COVID-19 communication and in his day-to-day political communication. This means that his strategic communication is to apply these methods regardless of the issue, which made him fail to educate and update the public.

Nonetheless, he expressed great support on the dates (March 13, 17 and 27), when a national emergency was declared by WHO (2020a) (See Appendix 9.1. for sampled dates) and it required immediate attention. Donald Trump showed action and support during March and April, however, he shifted the focus off the pandemic, and in the observed four months, the COVID-19 was ultimately used as a tool for the presidential campaign. This indicates that his main focus is to succeed as a presidential candidate and keep the conversation alive. Moreover, apart from the above-mentioned findings, he also politicizes the pandemic by building his campaign slogan into his COVID-19

related tweets. It is yet another of his key characteristics in communication to distract the people of the United States. Thus, switching the importance of the virus itself, and turning the focus towards his political goals. According to researchers (Chapman & Reiter 2004, Boin et al.,2012, Baker and Oneal, 2001, Reynolds, et.al., 2007), focusing more on the virus and on having a more effective communication strategy, could have resulted in Donald Trump gaining popularity due to his actions as a President and the time of a global pandemic. As this research does not focus on studying the audience, and the pandemic is still an ongoing issue, it is hard to tell whether or not his communication was successful or not, however, these studies argue that a better approach could have helped to reach his goals in the 2020 US Presidential Election.

To sum up, Donald Trump is a strong political actor, who uses mass self-communication on Twitter to present political content, negative partisanship, self-praising content and attacks his opponents - to name a few -, even in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. As an actor on a mass self-communication platform, he can distribute information flow to his needs (Castells, 2007). He is politicizing content on his Twitter platform regardless of the communication, and evidently, he is using the pandemic as a tool for his election campaign. He self-generated content with a simple tone and usage of words, with very little professional or political language presented. Thus making his content easy to read and interpret, which can be a great attribute in reaching large audiences, however, this key characteristic was not applied successfully in a time of the global pandemic.

7. Concluding discussion

7.1. Limitations

The framework of this research was based on the mass self-communication theory from Castells (2007, 2009), supported by the content analysis on Donald Trump's tweets during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the analysis was based on the *Inductive* research strategy (Blaike, 2009), the goal was to identify patterns and characteristics in order to answer the research questions. Thus based on the previously addressed literature review, prior knowledge and assumptions were already identified on Donald Trump's

communication style, tone of voice and language. This process was done manually instead of using software, which could have affected the research focus. What could further support the findings, and what this paper did not address, was the linguistic studies, the audience - Donald Trump's Twitter followers - and lack of existing research papers on this specific topic, which will be described as limitations to this paper.

The content analysis was based on a theoretical framework and knowledge gained from the literature review, thus the tweets were organized into groups and sub-groups that reflected prior knowledge. In order to expand on the text analysis, linguistic approaches can be added to further assess Donald Trump's communication on COVID-19. For example, how his choice of words describes the virus compared to official information from health officials. Thus seeing the pattern of how he interprets actual fact-based information to his Twitter followers. As well as, fact-check Donald Trump's content on Twitter.

This next step leads to Trump's followers, who are the ones receiving and consuming the information. It is not possible to make assumptions whether or not the followers demand informative content regards COVID-19, therefore, it is biased to say that a leader should be assessing such a topic and providing general information or guidance via his/her personal Twitter account. Since Donald Trump is an actor in a network, he himself can shape and produce information based on his own needs. Therefore, further audience studies could be applied to learn how well the information is perceived and interpret by his followers. This could be measured through engagement, comments, likes and retweets.

Since this particular research angle is new and lacks previous research for comparison, it is only possible to create observations on key characteristics and patterns on Trump's communication about COVID-19. Further researches can be developed to address the audience's demand for guidance and information from a president or a leader on Twitter. As well as, what tone of voice and communication style is well perceived on Twitter regards a health crisis

7.2. Discussion

Based on the statistics (Johns Hopkins CSSE, 2020) and media coverage, so far it has been a very difficult year for all the countries, due to the pandemic spreading worldwide. However, for many countries, it was not the only issue they had to face in these months. In previous assignments, an interest was sparked towards observing Trump's communication approaches, because of his divisive personality, tone of voice and communication style while being the President of one of the most influential countries in the world. In the first three years of his presidency, he did not face any critical issues or crises, therefore, this year is a determinative period in showing off his presidential skills in light of a huge international health crisis.

The results show that Trump's COVID-19 related communication has incorporated his day-to-day political communication characteristics, such as negative partisanship, political incorrectness, self-flattery, etc, where the content is being produced by using a simple language and tone. These findings were identified from other research papers, as well as identified in this research process and analysis. Moreover, Donald Trump uses the pandemic as a tool for his Presidential election campaign, for instance, by including attacking facts on previous President, Barack Obama, from the opponent party, and his crisis solving skills. Thus the key finding from analyzing Trump's tweets, is that Trump is politicizing content on his Twitter regardless of the type or the purpose of it.

The gathered data serve as a generic pattern (Blaike, 2009) for further studies. As mentioned in the limitation, this paper does not focus on the engagement of the audience. A possible contribution of the data, analyzed in this paper, could be to the field of political communication, especially in light of this year's election. What can be further observed, is how the public sees him after the outbreak of the virus and the way he handled it. In order to demonstrate how the public reacted, current poll results were observed. It is explained in terms of Networked Society (Castells, 2004, 2007) that media outlets can be discredited either due to being accused of disinformation or due to their business nature and greediness. Therefore, making it difficult for the public to

know which outlet to trust. To avoid misleading information, several articles from different media channels were observed (CNN, 2020; FiveThirtyEight, 2020; BBC News, 2020; Fox News, 2020). However, findings from these channels show that President Donald Trump is not the favored candidate and political actor anymore, as his main opponent Joe Biden is ahead in the competition. Without any deeper research or understanding of the public's behaviour, no clear connection can be stated in relation to this year's key event and the poll results, but it can be observed that, even though Trump had the chance to win the public over, he failed. Thus, this angle opens up new ways for further research. By an in-depth analysis of this year's public engagement, further insights can be drawn, which can help to broaden the knowledge in the field of both crisis and political communication.

In addition, as discussed in the sections above, several key events were influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only in the political world but, for instance, the Olympics were also postponed until the year 2021. Therefore, it raises several questions regarding the election in the United States this year: Will it be affected? If so, how? Could it be postponed? Will people vote via mail? Based on recent research by the Pew Research Center (2020), two-third of the American citizens believe that the Presidential election in 2020 will be disrupted by the coronavirus. It is unclear how exactly, however, most people believe that instead of the general voting system, the election will be based on mail-in voting. As presented in the sample selection, several states have opted for this alternative before. The mail-in voting raises some concerns, for instance: will the democratic values be maintained? It is mentioned that Trump has had a disagreement with Twitter since the social media platform fact-checked his tweet. In this tweet Trump was concerned about the Mail-In Ballots (aka voting via post instead of voting in person):

‘@Twitter is now interfering in the 2020 Presidential Election. They are saying my statement on Mail-In Ballots, which will lead to massive corruption and fraud, is incorrect, based on fact-checking by Fake News CNN and the Amazon Washington Post....’ @realDonaldTrump

The research (Pew Research Center, a, 2020) shows that Democrats are more in favor of voting via mail than Republicans. The COVID-19 pandemic is still a persistent health crisis and has not yet passed, most countries are still operating under strong restrictions and the second-wave is also predicted to appear (BBC News, a, 2020). Therefore, Donald Trump might have to change the policies regarding the election. This can, however, be a tool used to argue about the election being corrupted, as presented, if the results do not support him.

Furthermore, crisis situations are extremely unpredictable (Boin et al., 2012), which means that every future scenario is possible, including postponing the election. The results presented in this paper can also contribute to the field of crisis and health communication. The angle should shift and observe, for instance, crisis communication approaches in other countries, where the crisis was handled with a much lower death rate. The data gathered on other countries' communication characteristics can be compared and key elements can be drawn in relation to communication in times of a pandemic.

7.3. Conclusion

One of the utmost takeaways from 2020 is the increased mediatization and digitalization (Wen, 2020). While there are a lot of events happening, the COVID-19 pandemic is a huge international crisis with the high influence of many sectors and almost all the countries in the world (WHO,2020; UNDP, 2020). A lot of physical activities have been suspended due to lockdowns and social distancing (WHO, 2020), thus increasing online communication on digital platforms. Digital communication and online platforms is nothing new (Singha, et al., 2017), it has been a part of our daily lives, and yet it has played a significant role in the year 2020. Even though only half of the year has passed, it is safe to say that the use of digital communication and digital communication tools have increased and further shaped work, education and social lives. In order to succeed and excel, one must adapt to the changes.

The focus of this paper is to identify the characteristics of Donald Trump's, the President of the United States of America, communication in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is an important event that requires an effective communication strategy from the government in order to inform the citizens (Reynolds et.al., 2007), thus the choice for observing Donald Trump's communication as a leader and a political actor will contribute the key findings as a pattern to the field of Media and Communication studies, especially crisis, health, pandemic and political communication. Since the focus of 2020 communication is on digitalization, content analysis (Neuendorf, 2017) was applied on Trump's Twitter account to retrieve data and analyze his communication related to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was a clear solution to choose Twitter as the primary communication tool because Trump has always preferred to express himself on this platform (Francia, 2018). As a part of political mediatization (Casero-Ripollés et al., 2016) and networked society (Castels, 2004, 2007, 2009), Donald Trump is an active political actor, who enjoys bypassing the media (Castells, 2007).

Certain conclusions on Donald Trump's communication approaches were drawn from evaluating quantitative and qualitative data (Burghardt, 2015) in a form of tweets. (1) Quantitative data shows the amount of tweets, frequency of posting, as well as retweets and favorites from followers. In total, there were approximately 4018 tweets withdrawn from Trump's Twitter Archive from March until the end of June in the year 2020. This gave a vast insight into Trump's tweeting habits. In general, he spent approximately 638 tweets on COVID-19 related content, and 3380 tweets on other content. COVID-19 related content was less common on Trump's timeline. (2) Qualitative content required reading and analyzing actual content to see what exactly he is writing about, and how he is presenting the information. In order to do so, a coding frame was developed based on previously gained knowledge from other research papers and the theoretical framework, mass self-communication by Castells (2009).

The purpose of the research paper is to answer the research questions presented in the Introduction section:

What are the characteristics of Donald Trump's communication on Twitter in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic?

The initial findings included: negative partisanship and the usage of offensive tone towards media outlets and opponents. His content was mostly generated in a simple way by using casual language, and most tweets that contained professional and formal language were retweeted by fellow politicians. Trump addressed the virus with political incorrectness and self-flattery, thus it was also presented in his content. Moreover, he used the pandemic as a tool for his political campaign, for example, distracting needful information with attacking his opponents by addressing already presented facts on media outlets.

The second research question focused on:

What are the similarities or differences in his day-to-day political communication and the COVID-19 related communication?

Based on previous research from other literature sources, Trump has approached the COVID-19 related communication with similar key characteristics (political incorrectness, simple language, negative campaigning, etc.) as any other topic. Thus Donald Trump has politicized the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead of having a higher focus on educating and guiding the public, he has used it as a tool to further attack his opponents and misinform the public, thus shaping the public's perception about the results of the pandemic and his opponents. However, even though Donald Trump is prone to use negative and casual ways of communication, it was observed that he is also showing empathy and respect towards the citizens and people working to fight the virus. Nonetheless, in many cases that were also just another tool for politicizing content.

In general, Trump expresses himself by using simple and casual language (Kayam, 2018). By not using difficult words or terms, he connects with the American citizens more vastly, because it does not require a lot of time to decode the messages. This was observed through all of Trump's tweets. Simple language is a great strategic approach to reach out to the general public (Reynolds, et.al., 2007), this way one can assure that the message is delivered and understood immediately. Donald Trump has previously proved to gain a bigger reach with his simple sentences and terms (Kayam, 2018).

When it comes to COVID-19 and pandemic related content, Donald Trump is often idealizing the situation. There are few or no concrete, science-based facts that would educate and engage the public. Even though Donald Trump radiates a sense of power, he lacks consistency through factual evidence, therefore, not giving an honest description of current situations. He keeps things light and controlled by not introducing any worrisome content. Donald Trump often used the term ‘Chinese Virus’, which is not a technical or correct term for the virus. As a leader, he introduces racial and inaccurate slur. By calling COVID-19 a Chinese Virus, he indicated that China is the sole cause of the world pandemic.

As a leader and social media user, he has a huge impact over the content he produces, however, it is up to him what he posts or shares with his followers. Evidently, that is also the direct insight of his priorities, because he is simply a political actor creating mass self-communication on Twitter (network). Since his main focus is to win the 2020 Presidential Election, he lacks leadership during a health crisis. Nonetheless, this hypothesis will only be resolved after the COVID-19 pandemic and the Presidential Election in November. Thus further research to base his COVID-19 communication and the public’s perceptions during the pandemic is necessary to draw more conclusions on this topic.

8. References

- Abramowitz A., McCoy J. 2019. United States: Racial Resentment, Negative Partisanship, and Polarization in Trump's America, *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 681 (1)
- Ahmadian, S., Azarshahi, S. and Paulhus, D. L. (2016) 'Explaining Donald Trump via communication style: Grandiosity, informality, and dynamism', *Personality and Individual Differences*, 107, pp. 49–53. doi: 10.1016/j.paid.2016.11.018.
- Baker W.D., Oneal J. R. (2001) Patriotism or Opinion Leadership?: The Nature and Origins of the "Rally 'Round the Flag" Effect, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 45 (5)
- Ball, M. (2020). How COVID-19 Changed Everything About The 2020 Election. [online] Time. Available at: <<https://time.com/5876599/election-2020-coronavirus/>> [Accessed 29 August 2020].
- BBC News, 2020. US election 2020 polls: Who is ahead - Trump or Biden?, accessed 18/08/20, available online at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/election-us-2020-53657174>
- BBC News, a, 2020. Winter wave of coronavirus 'could be worse than first', accessed 29/08/20, available online at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-53392148>
- Blaikie, N. (2009) *Designing Social Research*, 2nd Edition. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Boin A., Hart P., Van Esch F., (2012) Political Leadership in Times of Crisis: Comparing Leader Responses to Financial Turbulence, available online at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262863554_Political_Leadership_in_Times_of_Crisis_Comparing_Leader_Responses_to_Financial_Turbulence
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2014). *Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States* (4th ed.). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Burgdhar, M. (2015). Introduction to tools and methods for the analysis of Twitter data. *10plus1 Journal: Living Linguistic*, 1, pp. 74 - 91.
- Casero-Ripollés A., López-Rabadán P., (2014) Media Engagement Boundaries and Political Influence in Europe, *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 58(7)
- Casero-Ripollés A., López-Rabadán P., (2014) Media Engagement Boundaries and Political Influence in Europe, *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 58(7)
- Castells, M. (2007) 'Communication, Power and Counter-power in the Network Society', *International Journal of Communication* (19328036), 1, p. 238. Available at: <https://search-ebscohost-com.proxy.mau.se/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edb&AN=109117959&site=eds-live> (Accessed: 1 August 2020).

Castells, M. ed (2004) *The network society : a cross-cultural perspective*. Edward Elgar Publishing. Available at:
<https://search-ebshost-com.proxy.mau.se/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat05074a&AN=malmö.b1280973&site=eds-live> (Accessed: 31 July 2020).

Castells, M. (2009). *Communication power*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Chapman T. L., Reiter D. (2004) *The United Nations Security Council and the Rally 'Round the Flag Effect*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 48 (6)

Collins, H. (2010) *Creative Research. The Theory and Practice of Research for the Creative Industries*. Lausanne, Switzerland: AVA Books.

CNN, 2020. CNN Poll of Polls: Biden holds a nine-point lead over Trump ahead of the party conventions, accessed 18/08/20 available online at:
<https://edition.cnn.com/2020/08/17/politics/biden-trump-poll-of-polls-august-election/index.html>

Deutsche Welle, 2020. Coronavirus: Iranians Lose Trust In Government As Virus Spreads | DW | 05.03.2020. [online] DW.COM. Available at:
<<https://www.dw.com/en/coronavirus-iranians-lose-trust-in-government-as-virus-spreads/a-52651804>> [Accessed 18 August 2020].

Developer. (2020). Counting characters. [online] Available at:
<https://developer.twitter.com/en/docs/basics/counting-characters#:~:text=In%20most%20cases%2C%20the%20text> [Accessed 8 Aug. 2020].

Donatelli, F., 2020. Negative Campaigning Can Only Do So Much. Trump Should Know | Opinion. [online] Newsweek. Available at:
<<https://www.newsweek.com/negative-campaigning-mixed-result-trump-biden-1519448>> [Accessed 16 August 2020].

DuBay WH (2004) *The Principles of Readability*. Costa Mesa, CA: Impact Information. Available at: [http:// www.impact-information.com/impactinfo/readability02.pdf](http://www.impact-information.com/impactinfo/readability02.pdf) (accessed 30 July 2020)

Editorial Board, 'Why Donald Trump Should Not Be President,' *New York Times*, September 25, 2016, accessed August 17, 2020,
www.nytimes.com/2016/09/26/opinion/why-donald-trumpshould-not-be-president.html.

FiveThirtyEight, 2020. Latest Polls. accessed 18/08/20, available online at:
<https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/polls/>

Francia, P. L. (2018) 'Free Media and Twitter in the 2016 Presidential Election: The Unconventional Campaign of Donald Trump', *Social Science Computer Review*, 36(4), pp. 440–455. doi: 10.1177/0894439317730302.

Fox News, 2020. Fox News Poll: Voters pick Biden, yet more think their neighbors back Trump, accessed 18/08/20, available online at: <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/fox-news-poll-voters-pick-biden-yet-more-think-their-neighbors-back-trump>

Google Trends (2020). Coronavirus Search Trends. [online] Google Trends. Available at: <https://trends.google.com/trends/story/US_cu_4Rjdh3ABAABMHM_en> [Accessed 30 August 2020].

Gray, J.H., Densten, I.L. (1998). Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis Using Latent and Manifest Variables. *Quality & Quantity* 32, 419–431
<https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1004357719066>

Greener, I. (2011). 'Introduction to Social Research Design - or What Are You Talking About?' in *Designing Social Research: A guide for the Bewildered*. SAGE Publications Ltd, London, pp. 1-21

Hepp, Andreas, Hjarvard, Stig and Lundby Knut (2015) *Mediatization: theorizing the interplay between media, culture and society*

Holtzhausen, D., 2015, *Datafication: threat or opportunity for communication in the public sphere?*, *Communication in the public sphere*, College of Fine Arts and Communication, Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas, USA

Johns Hopkins CSSE (2020), *Coronavirus Covid-19 Global Cases* by John Hopkins CSSE, Johns Hopkins University. Viewed May 3rd 2020
<<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6>>

Karlsen, R. (2011) *A Platform for Individualized Campaigning? Social Media and Parliamentary Candidates in the Party-Centered Norwegian Campaign.* *Policy & Internet* 3 (4): 1–25.

Kayam, O. (2018) 'The Readability and Simplicity of Donald Trump's Language', *Political Studies Review*, 16(1), pp. 73–88. doi: 10.1177/1478929917706844.

Kelly, H.A., Priest, P.C., Mercer, G.N. et al. (2011). We should not be complacent about our population-based public health response to the first influenza pandemic of the 21st century. *BMC Public Health* 11, 78 . <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-11-78>

Kumar, S. et al. (2013). *Twitter Data Analytics*. New York: Springer

LaMarre, H. L. and Suzuki-Lambrech, Y. (2013) 'Tweeting democracy? Examining Twitter as an online public relations strategy for congressional campaigns', *Public Relations Review*, 39(4), pp. 360–368. doi: 10.1016/j.pubrev.2013.07.009.

Layder, D. (2013). *Doing Excellent Small-Scale Research*. LA, London, New Dehli: Sage.

Mangan, D. (2020). Trump defends calling coronavirus “Chinese virus” — “it’s not racist at all.” [online] CNBC. Available at: <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/18/coronavirus-criticism-trump-defends-saying-chinese-virus.html> [Accessed 17 Aug. 2020].

McCreadie, R., Soboroff, I., Lin, J., Macdonald, C., Ounis, I. and McCullough, D., 2012, August. On building a reusable Twitter corpus. In Proceedings of the 35th international ACM SIGIR conference on Research and development in information retrieval (pp. 1113-1114).

McRobbie, A. (2009). *The aftermath of feminism: Gender, culture and social change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Meier, F. & Elswiler, D. (2014). Personal Information Management and Social Networks Re-finding on Twitter. In Proceedings of the 5th Information Interaction in Context Symposium (pp. 339-341).

Miles, M. R. and Haider-Markel, D. P. (2) (2020) ‘Polls and Elections Trump, Twitter, and Public Dissuasion: A Natural Experiment in Presidential Rhetoric’, *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 50(2), pp. 436–450. doi: 10.1111/psq.12615.

Neuendorf, K. A. (2017) *The content analysis guidebook*. 2nd edition. SAGE Publications, Inc. Available at: <https://search-ebshost-com.proxy.mau.se/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat05074a&AN=malmö.b2442038&site=eds-live> (Accessed: 5 August 2020).

Pew Research Center, 2020. 10 Facts About Americans And Twitter. [online] Pew Research Center. Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/08/02/10-facts-about-americans-and-twitter/> [Accessed 27 August 2020].

Pew Research Center, a, 2020., Two-Thirds of Americans Expect Presidential Election Will Be Disrupted by COVID-19, accessed 18/08/20, available online at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/04/28/two-thirds-of-americans-expect-presidential-election-will-be-disrupted-by-covid-19/>

Readable. (2019). The Flesch Reading Ease and Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level. [online] Available at: <https://readable.com/blog/the-flesch-reading-ease-and-flesch-kincaid-grade-level/> [Accessed 8 Aug. 2020].

Reynolds, B., Deitch, S., & Schieber, R.A. (2007). *Crisis and emergency risk communication pandemic influenza*.

Robson, D., 2020. Covid-19: What Makes A Good Leader During A Crisis?. [online] Bbc.com. Available at:

<<https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20200326-covid-19-what-makes-a-good-leader-during-a-crisis>> [Accessed 30 August 2020].

Schreier, M (2014), 'Qualitative content analysis', in *The sage handbook of qualitative data analysis*, SAGE Publications Ltd, London, pp. 170-183, doi: 10.4135/9781446282243.

Shafer, J.G. 2017. Donald Trump's "Political Incorrectness": Neoliberalism as Frontstage Racism on Social Media, *Social Media + Society*, 1-10

Shamoo A and Resnik D. (2015). *Responsible Conduct of Research*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press).

Shenk, T. (2016, August 16). The dark history of Donald Trump's rightwing revolt. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2016/aug/16/secret-history-trumpismdonald-trump>

Smith, K. (2020). 58 Incredible and Interesting Twitter Stats and Statistics. [online] Brandwatch. Available at: <https://www.brandwatch.com/blog/twitter-stats-and-statistics/> [Accessed 8 Aug. 2020].

Statista. (2019). Global social media ranking 2019 | Statistic. [online] Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/> [Accessed 8 Aug. 2020].

Statista (2020). Twitter account with the most followers worldwide as of 2020 May, accessed at 08/15/2020, available online: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/273172/twitter-accounts-with-the-most-followers-worldwide/>

Statista. (2020). World leaders with the most Twitter followers as of April 2020| Statistic. [online] Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/281375/heads-of-state-with-the-most-twitter-followers/> [Accessed 8 Aug. 2020].

Strömbäck, J. Frank E. (2014) *Mediatization of Politics: Towards a Theoretical Framework*, In *Mediatization of Politics: Understanding the Transformation of Western Democracies*, ed. Frank Esser and Jesper Strömbäck, 3–28. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Townsend, L., & Wallace, C. (2016). *Social media research: A guide to ethics*. Aberdeen: University of Aberdeen.

Twitter (2020) Donal J.Trump. Available at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor (Accessed: 18 August 2020).

Twitter Developer.; Twitter documentation, Publish and analyze Tweets, optimize ads, and create unique customer experiences, accessed: 08/17/20 available online at: <https://developer.twitter.com/en>

United Nations Development Programme, 2020. COVID-19 pandemic; Humanity needs leadership and solidarity to defeat the coronavirus, accessed at 27/08/20 available online at: <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/coronavirus.html#:~:text=But%20the%20pandemic%20is%20much,leave%20deep%20and%20longstanding%20scars.>

Vaughan, E. and Tinker, T. (2009) ‘Effective Health Risk Communication About Pandemic Influenza for Vulnerable Populations’, *American Journal of Public Health*, 99(S2), pp. S324–S332. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2009.162537

Waterloo, S. F., Baumgartner, S.E., Peter, J., Valkenburg, P.M., 2018, Norms of online expressions of emotion: Comparing Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp, *New Media & Society* Vol. 20(5)

Wen, T., (2020). How Coronavirus Has Transformed The Way We Communicate. [online] Bbc.com. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20200408-coronavirus-how-lockdown-helps-those-who-fear-the-phone> [Accessed 30 August 2020].

WHO (2020). WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard, accessed at 27/08/20, available online at: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/interactive-timeline>

WHO, (2020a). WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard, accessed at 27/08/20, available online at: <https://covid19.who.int/>

WHO (2020b) “Coronavirus” World Health Organization. Viewed May 2nd 2020, https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1

WHO. (2020c). Past pandemics. [online] Available at: <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/communicable-diseases/influenza/pandemic-influenza/past-pandemics> [Accessed 17 Jul. 2020].

Winberg, O. (2017). Insult Politics: Donald Trump, Right-Wing Populism, and Incendiary Language. *European journal of American studies*, [online] 12(2), p.13. Available at: <https://journals.openedition.org/ejas/12132>.

Wolfsfeld, G., (2015) INFOCORE Definitions: “Political Actors”. Herzliya, Interdisciplinary Center. Online available at <http://www.infocore.eu/results/definitions/>

York, D., 2020. How COVID-19 Is Changing The Way We Communicate. [online] TheHill. Available at: <<https://thehill.com/changing-america/opinion/502144-how-covid-19-is-changing-the-way-we-communicate>> [Accessed 30 August 2020].

9. Appendix

9.1. Sample selection based media coverage and events

To be sure that no big event is missed out on, important dates of events (such as, news media, WHO's announcements and updates, press conferences, etc.) are selected as the base for studying Trump's response and content on his Twitter account. Based on the dates from the first half of 2020, tweets will be retrieved, collected and analyzed. Based on AJMC (2020) article, a list of suggested dates for the COVID-19 pandemic category can be viewed below:

COVID-19 Pandemic pinpoint events in the US

1. March 11 — WHO Declares COVID-19 a Pandemic
2. March 13 — Trump Declares COVID-19 a National Emergency
3. March 13 — Travel Ban on Non-US Citizens Traveling From Europe Goes Into Effect
4. March 17 — Administration Asks Congress to Send Americans Direct Financial Relief
5. March 26 — Senate Passes CARES Act
6. March 27 — President Trump Signs CARES Act Into Law
7. April 8 — Troubles With the COVID-19
8. May 21 — United States and AstraZeneca Form Vaccine Deal
9. June 10 — US COVID-19 Cases Reach 2 Million

Based on the 2020 US presidential election event summary on Ballotpedia (2020) and Wikipedia (2020), following dates for sample selection are suggested below:

2020 US Presidential election pinpoint events in the US

1. March 13 — Covid -19 is a National Emergency and thus Louisiana is the first state to postpone its primaries
2. March 17 —Trump officially becomes the Republican presumptive nominee; Maryland becomes the fifth state which postpones its primary due to COVID-19
3. March 18 —North Dakota cancels its Republican convention due to COVID-19
4. April 8 — Sanders acknowledges that it is almost impossible to win thus making Biden the Democratic Party’s presumptive nominee
5. April 14 —Trump halts the U.S. funding to the WHO and saying that it is "severely mismanaging and covering up the spread of the coronavirus”
6. April 30 — Biden announces his vice presidential selection committee
7. May 22-25 — Libertarian Party Convention is held online; Jo Jorgensen is officially chosen as the party’s nominee
8. May 25 — George Floyd dies, a forty-six-year old black man due to white police officer kneeling on his neck
9. May 31 — Violent riots are being organized, supporting the Black Live Matters movement
10. June 1 – Trump threatens to invoke military forces due to the riots
11. June 10 — Trump’s campaign demands CNN to apologize for data that was shown, considered as fake news according to Trump
12. June 20 — Trump held his first public rally since the restrictions

The above highlighted dates show the key events during the first half of the year. However, it is important to note that in general most primaries and conventions were postponed, canceled, or reorganized for people to vote via mail. This also shows that during this time there was an even higher demand for online communication. This increase is not only to inform people about the pandemic, but also to maintain the political race and manage a successful campaign in this crisis situation.

COVID-19		2020 presidential election	
Date	Number of related tweets	Date	Number of related tweets

March 11 WHO Declares COVID-19 a Pandemic	9	March 13 Covid -19 is a National Emergency and thus Louisiana is the first state to postpone its primaries	22
March 13 Trump Declares COVID-19 a National Emergency	22	March 17 Trump officially becomes the Republican presumptive nominee; Maryland becomes the fifth state which postpones its primary due to COVID-19	29
March 13 Travel Ban on Non-US Citizens Traveling From Europe Goes Into Effect	2	March 18 North Dakota cancels its Republican convention due to COVID-19	0
March 17 Administration Asks Congress to Send Americans Direct Financial Relief	29	April 8 Sanders acknowledges that it is almost impossible to win thus making Biden the Democratic Party's presumptive nominee	4
March 26 Senate Passes CARES Act	4	April 14 Trump halts the U.S. funding to the WHO and saying that it is "severely mismanaging and covering up the spread of the coronavirus"	4
March 27 President Trump Signs CARES Act Into Law	14	April 30 Biden announces his vice presidential selection committee	0
April 8 Troubles With the COVID-19	10	May 22-25 Libertarian Party Convention is held online; Jo Jorgensen is officially chosen as the party's nominee	2
May 21 United States and AstraZeneca Form Vaccine Deal	1	May 25 George Floyd dies, a forty-six-year old black man due to white police officer kneeling on his neck	0
June 10 US COVID-19 Cases Reach 2 Million	3	May 31 Violent riots are being organized, supporting the Black Live Matters movement	8
		June 1 Trump threatens to invoke military forces due to the riots	2
		June 10 Trump's campaign demands CNN to apologize for data that was shown, considered as fake news according to Trump	1

		June 20 Trump held his first public rally since the restrictions	2
--	--	--	---

9.2. Coding book for the content analysis

Main categories	Sub-categories	Description
Language/Tone	Professional (P)	Text is written in a professional manner with a purpose to send a clear message, using terminology.
	Simple (or casual) (S)	Tweets contain simply comprehensive words, and are written in a casual way.
	Enthusiastic (E)	Text includes words, sentences or exclamation marks to express enthusiasm or motivation.
	Offensive (Racist and Negative is under this category as well) (O)	Text contains negative words to describe a person or situation.
	Respectful (R)	Tweet is showing respect towards other, fx health workers.
Purpose	To encourage citizens to fight the virus (EN)	Tweets contain a message to encourage and motivate the citizens during times of crisis.
	To provide general information and update the citizens (I)	Tweets contain general information, which is based on actual facts or sources.
	To show numerical data (NR)	Tweets contain numbers about COVID-19 situation. Fx, death rate, infected people.
	To appreciate the work of employees of the country (AE)	Tweets address any workers helping and responding to COVID-19, in order to help the citizens, and showing support and appreciation.
	To attack his opponents or show them in bad light (AC)	Tweets are negatively addressing news media outlets or people by expressing 'fake news' or others opinions

	To provide guidance on what has to be done to avoid further spreading (G)	Tweets contain messages with helpful information and guidelines regards COVID-19
	To show some changes due to COVID-19 (C)	Tweets contain information about events that have been affected due to COVID-19. Fx, canceled events.
	To praise himself and his achievements (SP)	Tweets are aimed to emphasize Trump's work, as in successes. Fx, citing other's opinions or expressing the success directly
Other*	Negative campaigning	Attacking or negatively describing Trump's opponents (Democrats, presidential candidates)
	Presidential election	Tweets are specifically addressing the upcoming presidential campaign. Contains slogan, promises, campaign messages
	Presidential tasks	Tweets contain information on everyday tasks and daily updates
	Economy	Tweets contain information about changes in economy, current situations, bills, policies etc.
	Other	Any other tweet that does not fall in the categories above. Fx, addressing events, wishing happy birthdays, wtc.

***Other:** this category was designed to place the rest of the tweets in. While it was not directly used in the analysis, this category helped to see what other topics Donald Trump addresses in his tweets.

Example of coding frame for ‘Language/Tone’

Sub-category	Description	Content
Professional (P)	The tweet contains professional and formal tone that is supplemented by terminology. The user has chosen to RT	“RT @GReschenthaler: FEMA is sending 83400 testing swabs and 55660 media tubes to the Commonwealth of PA. Thank you @realdonaldtrump”
Simple (or casual) (S)	The user uses common and simple words to express himself and describe the situation, therefore, making it easy to decode the message	“I will be having a White House CoronaVirus Task Force meeting in a short while. May or may not do a News Conference after the meeting depending on new information. Talks & meetings today are proving promising but a rough two weeks are coming up!”
Enthusiastic (E)	The user writes in uppercase and supports the text with exclamation marks	“. We will get through this together and bats will be swinging before you know it. In the meantime take care of mom and dad and know that this will not be forever! @littleleagueceo”
Offensive (Racist and Negative is under this category as well) (O)	The user uses negative form of words to describe a person and a situation	“Some wacko in China just released a statement blaming everybody other than China for the Virus which has now killed hundreds of thousands of people. Please explain to this dope that it was the “incompetence of China” and nothing else that did this mass Worldwide killing!”
Respectful (R)	The user uses a written communication to express respect and support, there are positive words and appreciations used to describe other people and their work	“The men and women of the National Guard have been doing a great job fighting the CoronaVirus. This week I will extend their Title 32 orders through mid-August so they can continue to help States succeed in their response and recovery efforts.”

Example of coding frame for ‘Purpose’

Sub-category	Description	Content
To encourage citizens to fight the virus (EN)	The tweet contains a message to unite and motivate the citizens of the U.S. during the pandemic. It provides light of hope.	“I ask all Americans to band together and support your neighbors by not hoarding unnecessary amounts of food and essentials. TOGETHER we will stay STRONG and overcome this challenge!”
To provide general	The tweet is based on	“China has just announced a doubling in the

information and update the citizens (I)	actual government issued facts and information that is used to update the public about the current situation.	number of their deaths from the Invisible Enemy. It is far higher than that and far higher than the U.S. not even close!”
To show numerical data (NR)	The tweet contains actual numerical values that represent statistics of tested people, thus showing the current situation of the pandemic in numbers and putting it into perspective.	“We have now Tested more than 5 Million People. That is more than any other country in the World and even more than all major countries combined!”
To appreciate the work of employees of the country (AE)	Respect, support and appreciation is shown by addressing the hard work on people who are directly engaged with fighting the virus and helping the citizens.	“America owes our very hard working food supply workers so much as they produce and deliver high quality food for us during this horrible COVID-19. Join me in thanking our Farmers Ranchers Processors Distributors and Stores! @JohnBoozman”
To attack his opponents or show them in bad light (AC)	Tweet contains strong and negative language and messages towards other political members, in order to point out the wrongful facts and at the same time downplay the political opponent.	“I NEVER said people that are feeling sick should go to work. This is just more Fake News and disinformation put out by the Democrats in particular MSDNC. Comcast covers the CoronaVirus situation horribly only looking to do harm to the incredible & successful effort being made!”
To provide guidance on what has to be done to avoid further spreading (G)	The tweet provides actual guidelines that have been imposed from other governmental institutions. Guidelines are used with the purpose to protect the public. In this case, a RT from another political member.	“RT @SenateGOP: What is social distancing and why does it matter?More from @SenCapito 🇺🇸 https://t.co/qyAXulQypc ”
To show some changes due to COVID-19 (C)	The tweet explains the changes made due to COVID-19, hence the imposed measurements to close borders and restricting travel.	“We will be by mutual consent temporarily closing our Northern Border with Canada to non-essential traffic. Trade will not be affected. Details to follow!”
To praise himself and his achievements (SP)	The context of the tweet contains a	“Our Testing is the BEST in the World by FAR! Numbers are coming down in most parts of our

	message where the user showcases hard working nature, thus emphasizing the good job that has been done in order to fight the coronavirus.	Country which wants to open and get going again. It is happening safely!"
--	---	---

A screenshot from the Excel Sheet where the tweets were gathered and grouped:

The screenshot shows an Excel spreadsheet with the following data:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	Language/Tone	Purpose	text	created_at	retweet_cou	favorite_cou	
1							
28	E	I	REOPEN OUR COUNTRY!	05-18-2020 12:3	106551	536333	
29	S	I	I am proud to announce that the United States will donate ventilators to our friends in India. We stand with India and @narendramodi during this pandemic. We're also cooperating on vaccine development. Together we will beat the invisible enemy!	05-15-2020 18:5	79566	377634	
30	E	I	Cases numbers and deaths are going down all over the Country!	05-24-2020 14:3	44729	306835	
33	O	AC	All over the World the CoronaVirus a very bad "gift" from China marches on. Not good!	05-28-2020 14:3	62675	306777	
34	O	SP	Mexico is sadly experiencing very big CoronaVirus problems and now California get this doesn't want people coming over the Southern Border. A Classic! They are sooo lucky that I am their President. Border is very tight and the Wall is rapidly being built!	05-04-2020 13:4	57481	272450	
36	O	AC	Some wacko in China just released a statement blaming everybody other than China for the Virus which has now killed hundreds of thousands of people. Please explain to this dope that it was the "incompetence of China" and nothing else that did this mass Worldwide killing!	05-20-2020 12:3	65915	264998	
84	E	I	The number of Coronavirus cases is strongly trending downward throughout the United States with few exceptions. Very good news indeed!	05-17-2020 22:5	37164	205473	
113	R	I	I will be lowering the flags on all Federal Buildings and National Monuments to half-staff over the next three days in memory of the Americans we have lost to the CoronaVirus....	05-21-2020 22:4	37068	198412	
158	O	AC	Why is it that China for decades and with a population much bigger than ours is paying a tiny fraction of \$'s to The World Health Organization The United Nations and worst of all The World Trade Organization where they are considered a so-called "developing country" and...	05-16-2020 22:5	41351	175317	
160	O	AC	Great credit being given for our Coronavirus response except in the Fake News. They are a disgrace to America!	05-11-2020 13:4	30057	158078	
161	S	I	Good numbers coming out of States that are opening. America is getting its life back! Vaccine work is looking VERY promising before end of year. Likewise other solutions!	05-14-2020 13:0	29159	153152	