The Role of the Internet in Taiwanese Party Politics (draft)

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Abstract

The increasing popularity of the internet has had a significant impact on electoral campaigns in Taiwan over the past two decades. It is found that both political parties or individual candidates have created campaign websites in elections. By way of qualitative and qualitative research strategies, this essay examines the functions of political party and candidates' campaign websites on the one hand and explores citizen's internet political participation on the other. The results show that the main function of party and candidates' campaign websites is to provide information in elections. Other interactive functions are less significant. Meanwhile, a clear digital gap also appears during campaigns between the urban and rural areas. Urban voters tend to visit party and candidate's website more often than rural voters. Similarly, like many studies on internet usage, those younger and more educated voters are more likely to visit party and candidate's websites. Lastly, it isfound that candidate's websites have consistently attracted more voters in elections than party's websites. The differences may come from different contents provided by political party and individual candidates which the latter is more detailed and personalistic than the former.

Keywords: internet, websites, campaign, Taiwan

Introduction

As the internet began rapidly developing in the 1990s, it has dramatically changed the way political parties and candidates compete in politics. Political campaign websites are no longer a novelty in many countries around the world. It is hard to deny that the internet serves as an important campaign tool in communications, mobilization, and fund-raising. The rise of the internet not only brought about changes in the organization and structure of political parties, but the use of the internet also has a far-reaching influence on the functioning of democracies. Taiwan is thus no exception.

Political parties in Taiwan have been building up their websites since the mid-1990s. Thanks to the high rates of penetration, the use of the internet as a campaign tool by political parties and candidates in elections has become very common in Taiwan. In this paper, we focus on to the role of the political party and candidates' campaign websites in elections. The research asks several questions: how do political parties and candidates in Taiwan use the internet to compete? How distinctive is the internet as a communication tool? Do party websites play a role in expanding the party support base? Who visits party websites? In attempting to answer these questions, we analyze survey data of county magistrate and city mayoral elections, together with in-depth interviews with party and candidate's e-campaigners. By examining these questions we will have a greater understanding of the role of the internet in the Taiwanese electoral politics.

Internet as campaign tool in party politics

With the appearance of high levels of internet diffusion in the early-2000s, many studies have examined the use of internet by political parties and candidates in campaign, particularly in the U.S., the U.K. and some European countries. Over the past decade, the study of internet's impact on electoral politics have been expanded to southern Europe, former communist countries, and Asian countries (Gibson et al., 2003; Ward et al., 2008). Many studies indicated that the new technology can be an important channel in political communication. It also believed that the internet will spur civil participations and facilitate plurality in society. It has been widely predicted that the internet will have a significant influence on election campaigning. However, by the end of the 1990s, there are scholars who claim that the internet has only had a marginal influence on electoral politics. They found that most political parties treat party websites more as channels in providing information than to facilitate interaction with supporters. As Margolis and Resnick (2000: 54) pointed out, the Internet reflected "politics as usual".

Indeed, studies of the internet's impact on electoral politics can be divided into two distinct schools of thought: "equalization", which claims that the internet serves as a tool for political communications which increases the competitiveness of small or marginal political parties; and "normalization" which states that in the virtual world larger political parties still dominate as they are in a traditional mass environment. Meanwhile, in order to examine the web's influence on party organization, party campaign, and democracy, researchers conducted cross-national projects to have a more comprehensive understanding of party behavior (Gibson et al., 2003; Ward et al., 2008; Norris, 2003; Ward and Gibson, 2003; Semetko and Karsonboka 2003; Jackson, 2007).

How do party websites function? Based on the analysis of the U.S and the U.K. party websites, party websites mainly play a the roles of information provision and resource generation. The information includes party history, organization structure, ideology and policies, and profiles of politicians. Meanwhile, the party websites also serves as a platform for recruiting members and appealing for political donations (Gibson et al., 2003:57, 59). As mentioned above, party websites are more focused on information provision and resource generation. Compared with more traditional mediums, the Internet gives small parties more chances to demonstrate their existence. Although it was found that major parties enjoy advantages during campaigns through both traditional and new mass media, small parties are more likely to encourage participation online to attract more supporters (Norris, 2003: 30).

Briefly speaking, studies on the functions of party websites point out five crucial aspects : information provision, resource generation, participation, networking, and campaign (Gibson et al., 2003; Ward and Gibson, 2003; Norris, 2003; Semetko and Krasnoboka, 2003; Gibson et al., 2003a; Tkach-Kawasaki, 2003; Jackson, 2007; Ward et al., 2008). Most studies acknowledge that the internet has become an important channel for political parties and candidates to communicate with supporters. Parties with different political strengths, however, also influence the comprehensiveness of party websites functions. Major parties (those with seats in parliament) perform much better than small parties on the internet (Gibson et al., 2003: 67；Jackson，2007). In a study of post-communist countries, Semetko and Krasnoboka (2003: 84-85) also found major parties are more likely to use the internet than minor parties. Although most studies concludes that major parties perform much better on websites, it also be found that small parties are more inclined to use the Internet as a communication tool to interact with supporters, to attract potential supporters or members. Small parties build

up discussion forums to maintain long-term relationship with supporters (Jackson, 2007: 268).

Methodologically, most of these studies use qualitative methods, especially content analysis and in-depth interview, to examine the role of the internet in elections and how the internet has changed the organization of political parties and electoral competition. In theory, the functions of political parties include standing for the election, to maximum votes, seeking government offices, advocating party ideology and policies, and strengthen the linkage with supporters (Katz and Mair, 1994; Ware, 1996; Panebianco, 1988). In the past, the political parties depend on traditional mass media to communicate with supporters. However, it is doubtful that the development of the internet is able to replace the role of traditional mass media. Thus, the analysis of content of party websites offers evidence of how political parties function in the web. For example, Norris (2003) breaks down the content of party website into two functional dimensions: communication and information. Her study showed that European parties perform well in providing information just like parties in the U.S. However, in her article, the results also demonstrated that European parties pay attention to interactive functions to bridge parties and supporters (Norris, 2003: 30).

The 1994 Taipei Mayoral campaign was the first political campaign in Taiwan to use blogs as a communication tool. The 1995 Legislative election was the first time that candidates used the World Wide Web (WWW) to campaign (Chuang and Cheng, 1996). Major political parties such as Kuomintang (KMT), Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), and New Party (NP) also established party websites in the same year. In the beginning, blogs or websites were a way to spread parties and candidates' messages. As the internet advanced its popularity increased among more people, the content provided on party websites increased.

Chuang and Cheng (1996) indicated that the contents of candidates' campaign websites or blogs are just like the traditional print in the mid-1990s, pure texts display. As the technology advanced, the websites' designs have become richer and more lively, extensively using multimedia design such as mixing sound, images, and video in particular. Yet, the websites are still place less emphasis on political campaigning (Peng, 2001) . In his study of the 2004 Presidential election, Chang (2004) pointed out that candidates hired professional teams to maintain their websites. Web campaigning has become a regular campaigning method during elections. In his interviews with website workers, the purpose to build up the websites is to attract younger votes. Chuang (2000) is the first to examine the influence of the Internet from an electoral

competition perspective. He found candidates who were nominated by major parties or candidates and whom were successfully elected were more likely to use web campaigning. Small parties or independent candidates did not enjoy advantages from this low cost campaign tool.

Hung (2006) shifted the focus to study the candidates' websites user. She designed an online survey which put on the Candidates' websites to explore the characteristics of the candidates' websites users. Though the finding was not able to generalize the whole population in Taipei, her findings are similar to what was found in the western countries. Male, younger people, those with higher level of education, and political interests are more likely to visit candidates' websites. However, it is also found that less voters use the internet as their main sources in election news in Taipei. Very few voters visited candidates' websites or blogs during campaign (Wang, 2010).

Most studies of the Internet's impact on politics in Taiwan were focused on political communication, especially how candidates used the internet to market themselves. Yet, there has been little research addressing how the internet affects party competition in politics. It is inevitable that the Internet will be a new campaign tool, thus how it changes party and candidate's electoral competition needs more analysis.

Data and Research Method

This study first applies content analysis to examine the functions of the party websites. Data were collected during 2009 county magistrate and city mayoral election in 2009. In this study, we focus on the KMT, the DPP, the New party, the People First party (PFP), Taiwan Solidarity party (TSU) , and the Hakka Party (HP), among them the KMT, the DPP and the HP nominated candidates to stand for the 2009 election. We adopted Gibson et al. (2003) and Norris' (2003) coding schemes to characterize the functionality and design of the parties' websites. The scheme consisted of information provision, networking, political participation, campaign, resource generation, and websites maintenance. Each aspect was evaluated and measured by different criteria, listed in Table 1. The observation was carried out one month before the polling day and observed the websites every day. Each of the functions was coded simply as present (1) or absent (0) when the websites were content analyzed. By analyzing the content allows us to summarize the functionality that party websites perform and to compare how major and minor parties use the Internet.

Second, this study uses in-depth interview to collect information on how parties and candidates viewed the Internet as new campaign tool. Eighteen party or candidates websites' workers were interviewed in this study. Based on an interview guideline, this study gathered information on how parties used the Internet, the purpose of building up the website, party elites' perceptions on web campaign, and the expansion of votesthrough using the Internet.[1]

Finally, in order to examine how political parties function from a users' perspective, we analyze survey data collected by Taiwan's Election and Democratization Study (TEDS) in the 2009 county magistrate and city mayoral elections and 2010 metropolitan city mayoral elections survey data. These two survey measure who these internet users are and their behavior in visiting party or candidate's websites. By analyzing survey data, it offers us with demand-side information to examine any difference between the supply-side (party/candidate websites) and demand-side (the voters).

Table 1 The Coding Scheme of the Contents of Party Websites

Information provision	Party history, party organization, party platform and policies, manifestos, newsletter, archive release, politicians profiles, party leader profile, candidates profile, electoral performance, event calendar, press release, frequently asked questions, library, different language (16 items in total)
Networking	Links to local party office, incumbent representatives, incumbent city mayor, aligned organizations or parties, related news sites, government sites, and activity sites (10 items in total)
Political participation	Register with email list, online comment submit, provide web master, party leader, incumbent politicians' contact information (such as telephone number, fax number, or email account), online email to party leader, online email to web master, chat room, forum, leave message (10 items in total)
Campaign	Provide campaign multimedia (such as videos, pictures, campaign songs), campaign news release, campaign calendars, constituency news, download campaign logo
Resource generation	Online join party, online political donation, purchase

	related commodities online, recruit volunteers (7 items in total)
Websites maintenance	Total visitor counts, updated date, new article per day, number of visitors per day, respond to message, and change banner (6 items in total)

Notes: Adopted from Gisbson et al. (2003) and Norris (2003).

Internet Use from Supply-side

The KMT, the DPP, and the NP were established before the mid-1990s and they had built up party websites in the mid-1990s. The PFP and the TSU were established in 2000 and 2001. The HP was established before the 2008 Legislative election. All of them have had established party websites after their parties had formed. How well did the parties use the web? Table 2 displays the results of the content analysis of the party websites. First, all parties had websites with a range of features. The result clearly shows that the party websites in Taiwan performed well in providing information, especially the major parties, the KMT and the DPP. Compared with the KMT and the DPP, minor parties such as the PFP and the TSU performed better in generating resources. Small parties have more limited monetary resources, therefore, we found they were more likely to be experienced in generating resources. In general, compared with the studies in the Western countries, party websites in Taiwan emphasize more on providing information, including party history, profiles of party elites, press releases, and campaigning news. It is clear that while parties choose to embrace the Internet, they are appear to do so in a way of top-down designs. Parties put less effort in the way of a bottom-up strategy to encourage voters' participation.

Table 2 The Contents Analysis of the Party Websites in Taiwan

	Information provision	Networking	Political participation	Campaign	Resource generation	Websites maintenance	Total
KMT	16	9	8	4	2	5	44
DPP	18	11	7	5	2	3	46
NP	10	0	5	1	0	0	16
PFP	9	2	6	2	3	0	22
TSU	13	1	6	5	4	0	29
HP	8	1	4	3	1	0	17
GP	8	1	1	2	1	0	13

Source: Authors.
Notes: GP: Green Party in Taiwan, which was established in 1996.

Why build up Websites/ blogs ?

Based on data from in-depth interviews with party e-campaigners, most party elites were skeptical of the influence of the Internet on electoral politics before mid-2000s. Although the KMT and the DPP created party websites in 1995, it was not until late-2000s that both parties established an internet department within the structure of the party organization. Why the parties build up the websites in the first place? With high internet penetration in society, parties recognized the importance of using it as more and more young people got online. Therefore, the internet was viewed as an importance channel to reach younger voters. Party e-campaigners also believe using the Internet can create younger image of the Party or candidate.

" *More and more young people get online, the websites can be a channel to communicate with young voters*", "*It is difficult to mobilize or access to young voters through traditional networks, the Internet can make it*" " *To create younger image of the candidates.*"

It is clear that the emergence of the Internet also brought about changes within party organizations. Each party has dedicated teams of professionals to create and manage its websites and internet since then. During the 2009 Magistrate and City Mayoral election, the DPP even sent professionals to local party offices and candidates' headquarters to assist in building up and management of websites or blogs. The internet department of the DPP also held several workshops to promote the use of new communication tools within the party. The KMT also encouraged all local party offices to build up websites or blogs as well. Party headquarter e-campaigners of the KMT and the DPP hold positive perceptions of the internet use and hope to promote the use of the Internet. However, most local party offices of the two parties place less effort in building up websites.

How do party/candidate e-campaigners use the Internet?

Party website masters and candidates' blogs manager all agree that the importance of the Internet in electoral politics is increasing. Internet usage enables parties or candidates to broadcast themselves directly without any distortion by traditional mass media. The crucial properties of the new Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) are user control and decentralization of media ownership. Everyone can become producers of news and search information without limitation of distance and time. The Internet helps candidates and parties reach large numbers of people in short periods of time, and it also helps to strengthen linkage with voters.

"the Website/blog is an extension of the candidate", "transmit message without distortion and faster than traditional mass media medium", "normally use as news release platform, including campaigns news, campaign schedules and candidates' or parties latest news". "we read messages which left by supporters on blogs or websites, and we try to respond them on the internet to strengthen linkage or interaction with supporters". "we use the Internet to clarify the false message".

The effectiveness of the online campaign

It is hard to deny that the Internet has become a fundamental element in political campaigns. However, to what extent can the internet mobilize or swing voters? In interviews with party or candidates' e-campaigners, all of them agree that the Internet plays a positive role in mobilizing voters or expanding voters. Yet, it is difficult to measure its real political benefits. Besides, the influence of the Internet is also correlated with electoral levels, the degree of electoral competition, and the degree of urbanization. The higher level of the election positions, the greater political benefits that the Internet bring about.

"it does help, but difficult to measure. But we did find that more people visited our blogs when it is approaching polling day", "it is a channel for us to have interaction with supporters", "compared with the vote share that we estimated, the Internet did contribute some amount of votes that we got in election", "we link our website or blog to other related organizations' websites, I think this is also help for our election"

"The effectiveness of the Internet depends on the development of the constituency. We are in a more agriculture area, voters are elder than the average population, not too many people get online, therefore, the Internet may not play an important role in political communication. But I think it does important in metropolitan".

Who visit party websites or candidates websites/ blogs?

Party websites can be viewed as virtual organizations of the parties in cyberspace. It is believed that people who go online is young, well-educated, and have more interested in politics (Norris, 2008; Hung, 2006). We further asked party and candidates's e-campaigners to talk about the socio-demographic characteristics of the websites visitors. Unfortunately, none of them did a scientific research on their visitors. They mentioned that it is difficult to picture socio-demographic

characteristics of the websites visitors. But party and candidate's e-campaigners indicate that the characteristics of the internet is across time and space constraints, therefore, it may attracts people from everywhere not just the eligible voters from the constituency.

> *"they are university students, around 20 to 30 years old, they might be the eligible voters but do not live here. The Internet is a channel for them to know what happen in their constituency", "most of them are less than 40 years old who are working or studying in other cities", "they seems to be have interested in public issues".*

Party and candidate e-campaigners further mention that the model of web campaigning emphasizes more on publicizing campaign activities via videos. Websites or blogs masters indicate that videos can transmit party platforms or manifestos much better than texts. Therefore, parties gradually put more effort on managing videos on websites or on *Youtube*. They also try to connect supporters via adding as friends, network support groups, or fan groups in cyberspace to hold meetings together in the real world. Starting from virtual party organization, the Internet-based fan groups, parties plan to use the Internet to connect each other in the real life and transform users as supporters.

A key characteristic of the Internet is its low cost. Thus, the emergence of the Internet does facilitate diverse party competitions in Cyberspace. No matter whether these are major parties or minor parties, most of the parties and candidates use the Internet as a channel to connect with voters and to run the campaign in Taiwan. The result from content analysis and in-depth interviews clearly show that the Internet brings in more political competition in Taiwan. The Internet does play a role in attracting votes and it is also an important political communication channel. Most parties in Taiwan create websites to demonstrate their presence. However, the empirical evidence is more supportive of the normalization argument. Major parties have the capacity to outstrip minor parties both during election campaigns and non-campaign period.

Internet Use from Demand-side

As discussed in previous section, parties in Taiwan have gone online since mid-1990s and they are aware that party Internet activity is getting more and more important. How about perceptions from the demand-side of this phenomenon? How many voters will visit party or candidate websites? What do they do on it? And, are

there different attributes among these website visitors? In this section, we will analyze survey data to explore those questions. There are two survey data available in measuring party or candidate websites visitors, which were conducted in 2009 and 2011. Therefore, the discussions below will display results from these two surveys.

According to the report from the Institute for Information Industry in Taiwan, 75.63 per cent of the population are internet users in 2011.[2] The results from Table 3 show that the internet penetration is very different between metropolitan and rural area. There are around 62 per cent of the respondents in Taipei, Taichung and Kaohsiung city are internet users, however, the penetration rate in Yunlin County and Taoyuan County is around 50 per cent. There are 46.9 per cent of voters from metropolis use the Internet every day, but only 37.0 per cent of their rural counterparts did. Why do people get online? According to the result in Table 4, it is clear that the respondents get online to check or send E-mails, to browse news, and to search for information. This also corroborated by a report from Taiwan Network Information Center in 2011,.[3] Although the survey data that was analyzed here are not nation-wide, the finding is no different from the nation-wide population.

Table 3 The Frequency of Internet Usage in 2009 and 2010 Elections

	2009		2010	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Every day	992	37.0	1630	46.9
1-3 times per week	120	4.5	204	5.9
Occasional use	243	9.1	308	8.9
Do not use	1316	49.0	1327	38.2
It depends	12	0.4	7	0.2
Total	2683	100.0	3476	100.0

Table 4 The Purpose to Get online

	2009			2010		
	N	%	% of Obs	N	%	% of Obs
E-mail	533	21.3%	39.0%	1200	23.0%	55.8%
Browse news	505	20.2%	36.9%	1074	20.6%	50.0%
Collect information	476	19.0%	34.8%	865	16.6%	40.3%
Blogging	149	6.0%	10.9%	290	5.6%	13.5%

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[2] http://www.find.org.tw/find/home.aspx?page=many&id=322 (accessed on 22 May 2012).
[3] http://www.twnic.net.tw/download/200307/1107c.pdf (accessed on 23 May 2012).

Shopping	164	6.6%	12.0%	310	5.9%	14.4%
Online game	205	8.2%	15.0%	348	6.7%	16.2%
Online Communication	156	6.2%	11.4%	347	6.6%	16.1%
Information exchange platform	145	5.8%	10.6%	427	8.2%	19.9%
Watch multimedia	110	4.4%	8.0%	265	5.1%	12.3%
Working	41	1.6%	3.0%	47	.9%	2.2%
Financial transaction	4	.2%	.3%	6	.1%	.3%
Stocks				36	.7%	1.7%
Internet dating				1	.0%	.0%
Medical service				1	.0%	.0%
Learning				1	.0%	.0%
Refuse to answer	1	.0%	.1%	1	.0%	.0%
It depends	10	.4%	.7%	2	.0%	.1%
Total of Response	2499	100.0%	182.8%	5221	100.0%	243.0%

Notes: Respondents can choose two items in 2009 and three in 2010.

The survey measured respondents' party websites and candidate websites experiences. The results are displayed in Table 5-1 and Table 5-2. In 2009, there are only 2.3 per cent of voters in Yunlin County and Taoyuan County visited party websites. There are 5.6 per cent of voters in Taipei, Taichung and Kaohsiung city. The 2009 and 2010 elections are Magistrate and City Mayoral elections using single-member-plurality system. It is showed that campaigning in democracies around the world is becoming more Americanized where candidate-centered campaigning strategy is emphasized (Brox and Shaw, 2006). Candidates may receive more attentions from voters than the political parties. Thus, it is not surprising that the percentage of visiting candidates' websites/blogs is higher than party websites.

Table 5-1 Party Websites Experience in 2009 and 2010 Elections

	2009		2010	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Not internet users	1316	49.0	1327	38.2
Internet users but do not visit	1304	48.6	1953	56.2
Internet users	63	2.3	196	5.6

and do visit			
Total	2683	100.0	3476	100.0

Table 5-2 Candidate Websites/Blogs Experience in 2009 and 2010 Elections

	2009		2010	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Not internet users	1316	49.0	1327	38.2
Internet users but do not visit	1267	47.2	1901	54.7
Internet users and do visit	100	3.7	248	7.1
Total	2683	100.0	3476	100.0

We further examine internet users activities on party websites. According the results from Table 6, the most frequently activity by internet users is to browse the party's latest news. The following activity is perusing through the profiles of party politicians, and participation in online polls ranks as third. The result clearly shows that the survey respondents who well versed in internet browsing tend to searchfor information from party websites. They are especially concerned with the latest news of the elections. Based on the content analysis of party websites and the in-depth interview that we discussed in previous section, information provision is a major function of party. This meets the need from the demand-side. Besides, the survey respondents show interactive interests on party websites too. For example, the survey respondents said they have participated in on-line polls, e-mailing party leaders and website masters, and have made political donation through the websites in 2010.

Also indicated in Table 7, it clearly shows that most respondents visited candidate websites/blogs to search for news of the candidate or election. This shows that respondents might consider candidates' websites/blogs as important sources of information on the candidates. Besides, websites/ blogs also play roles in terms of interaction and participation. Just like party websites, the candidates' websites/blogs offer the Internet users opportunity to express opinions, launch support activity and donation.

Table 6 Activities on Party Websites in 2009 and 2010 Elections

	2009			2010		
	N	%	% of	N	%	% of

			Obs			Obs
Browse party history and platform	8	8.0%	12.9%	22	6.4%	11.3%
Browse profiles of party politicians	29	29.0%	46.8%	115	33.6%	59.3%
Browse party's latest news	38	38.0%	61.3%	126	36.8%	64.9%
Watch or download multimedia	8	8.0%	12.9%	24	7.0%	12.4%
Participate on-line polls	9	9.0%	14.5%	40	11.7%	20.6%
E-mail party leader	1	1.0%	1.6%	3	0.9%	1.5%
E-mail website master	0	0.0%	0.0%	1	0.3%	0.5%
Make donation	0	0.0%	0.0%	2	0.6%	1.0%
Subscribe newsletter	2	2.0%	3.2%	5	1.5%	2.6%
Browse manifesto	3	3.0%	4.8%	0	0.0%	0.0%
It depends	2	2.0%	3.2%	4	1.2%	2.1%
Total	100	100.0%	161.3%	342	100.0%	176.3%

Table 7 Activities on Candidate Websites/Blogs in 2010 Elections

	2010		
	N	%	% of Obs
Browse candidate and election news	195	60.9%	78.9%
Express opinions or leave messages	50	15.6%	20.2%
Join fan group	30	9.4%	12.1%
Use stickeraction	2	.6%	.8%
Initiate or join activity to show support	18	5.6%	7.3%
Subscribe newsletter	7	2.2%	2.8%
Make donation online	3	.9%	1.2%
Joined Volunteers	6	1.9%	2.4%
Writing essays	1	.3%	.4%
It depends	8	2.5%	3.2%
Total	320	100.0%	129.6%

Finally, as indicated in Table 8-1 and Table 8-2, it is found that respondents' different attributes were associated with their visits to party and candidate's campaign websites. Firstly, both tables shows that, in general, urban respondents (2010 results)

do pay more attention to party and candidate's campaign websites than rural respondents (2009 results) regardless of attribute differences. As compared to the 2010 elections, very few respondents had visited party's campaign websites in the 2009 elections. Meanwhile, respondents continued to be more attentive to the candidates' campaign websites than the party's campaign websites. Secondly, a tentative finding reveals that both age and education are important factors in the respondent's intention to visit party and candidate's campaign websites. The younger and the more educated a respondent, the more likely he or she is to visit party's campaign websites. This tendency is also found in the 2010 elections. Yet, more notably, the contributive effects of age and education were more significant than the 2009 counterpart. As for vote participation, a moderate relation was found in that respondents whom had visited party and candidate's campaign websites were also more likely to cast their ballot in the 2009 and 2010 elections than those respondents whom did not. Unfortunately, the total number of respondents having these experiences was still not significant enough to produce solid conclusions.

Table 8-1 Attributes of Party Website Visitors in 2009 and 2010 Elections

	2009		2010	
	N	%(% of Obs)	N	%(% of Obs)
Gender				
Male	29	1.1(2.1)	92	2.6(5.4)
Female	34	1.3(2.6)	104	3.0(5.9)
Age				
20-29yrs	13	0.5(2.8)	47	1.4(8.2)
30-39yrs	17	0.6(3.7)	53	1.5(8.0)
40-49yrs	24	0.9(4.2)	47	1.4(6.7)
50-59yrs	6	0.2(1.1)	29	0.8(3.9)
60yrs/above	3	0.1(0.5)	20	0.6(2.5)
Education				
Primary/ below	0	0(0)	1	0(0.2)
Junior High	10	0.4(2.5)	14	0.4(3.8)
Senior High	20	0.7(2.9)	71	2.0(6.4)
College	11	0.4(3.6)	25	0.7(5.6)
University/above	21	0.8(3.7)	84	2.4(8.3)
Vote Participation	50	1.9(2.4)	177	5.1(5.9)
Vote	13	0.5(2.2)	19	0.5(4.3)

Not Vote				
N=2683			N=3476	

Table 8-2 Attributes of Candidate Website Visitors in 2009 and 2010 Elections

	2009		2010	
	N	%(% of observation)	N	%(% of observation)
Gender				
Male	44	1.6(3.2)	122	3.5(7.1)
Female	56	2.1(4.3)	126	3.6(7.2)
Age				
20-29yrs	18	0.7(3.9)	73	2.1(12.7)
30-39yrs	32	1.2(6.9)	74	2.1(11.2)
40-49yrs	36	1.3(6.3)	54	1.6(7.7)
50-59yrs	9	0.3(1.7)	27	0.8(3.6)
60yrs/above	5	0.2(0.8)	20	0.6(2.5)
Education				
Primary/ below	0	0(0)	1	0(0.2)
Junior High	8	0.3(2.0)	12	0.3(3.3)
Senior High	42	1.6(6.1)	90	2.6(8.1)
College	24	0.9(7.9)	34	1.0(7.7)
University/above	25	0.9(4.4)	111	3.2(11.0)
Vote Participation				
Vote	88	3.3(4.2)	224	6.5(7.4)
Not Vote	12	0.4(2.0)	24	0.7(5.4)
N=2683			N=3476	

Conclusion and Discussion

This essay intends to explore citizen's participation in party and candidate's campaign website. This is done through combining both qualitative in-depth interviews with website managers and survey results and reveals several findings of significant importance.

First, the main function of campaign websites continues to be conservative in that it aims at information provision rather than interactive communication or mobilization. The supply side from the party or candidate have maintained their

websites as a forum for the announcement of activities and platforms. Likewise, voters who visited the websites were mainly to search for information. Of course, the websites did demonstrate a clear comparative edge, such as providing detailed, updated information and quick interactions between voters and candidates. The 2009 and 2010 experiences clearly show that party and candidate's campaign websites were still relatively static..

Secondly, in general, citizen's participation in party and candidate's campaign websites is not yet popular and selective. Despite high rates of internet penetration, citizens did not take full advantage of internet facilities for political engagement. The number of campaign website visitors was far from significant as compared with the number of internet users. Equally important, the digital gaps between the urban and rural areas, the high educated and low educated people, and the younger and elder people were notable. These digital gaps had obstructed voter's capacity to actively engage in internet campaign activities.

Thirdly, individual candidate has more incentives to create viable campaign websites than political parties. Both the interview and survey results had pointed out that candidates were more attentive in maintain a functioning website in campaigns. This could be due to the different functions of party campaign websites and candidate's campaign websites. On the one hand, political party had to orchestrate the whole process of campaign. On a party's campaign website, core campaign themes, general campaign information, and common party platforms would be the main elements. At most, the party's website would provide a crucial schedule of events and urge its supporters to participate in certain activities. It would be difficult to market its candidate in detail or to maintain an interactive communication with supporters. On the other hand, information provided by a candidate's campaign website tend to be personalistic and interactive. They would showcase records of the candidates' past performance, policy stance, and interactions between candidate and his/her supporting groups. More specifically, the implementation of new internet forums such as *Facebook*, blogs and *plurk* had effectively gathered young voters who were difficult to reach in campaigns. Hence, for those internet users, candidate's campaign websites were more attractive than party's campaign websites.

Lastly, but not the least, campaigning on the internet has rapidly developed in Taiwan over the past two decades. Even though the dominant type of internet campaign has been information giving, it does not preclude the increasing popularity of two-way communication between the party/candidate and internet users. The

survey results of candidate's campaign websites showed that certain respondents had written messages, joined fan groups, and initiated or participated in action during campaign process. It is anticipated that, at least for those young and educated citizens, the internet will continue to be an important for political engagement. Low cost and communication efficiency i will ensure that internet political participation will be a thing of the future.

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