Beyond Traditional Campaigning: Exploring the Transformative Role of Augmented Reality in Political Communication, Voter Engagement, and Immersive Digital Participation

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Abstract

For 20 years, under the thriving climate of the dot-com era, a number of new innovative and technological tools and scenarios came into being. One of these is augmented reality (AR) technology. At the beginning period, the news about AR was frequently seen in computer magazines. New companies were formed, and new magical projects were commenced, with great interest and excitement. In fact, the real-life integration and actual application of AR into everyday areas of life, particularly in the political context, is a topic that needs to be revealed, investigated, and discussed. This exploratory essay aims to contribute to the political science bookshelf, concentrating on AR technology within the political campaigning context (situational use in campaigns, experiment projects in the run up to general elections, exemplifying possible real-life use of AR in campaigning). Addressing this topic is also critical, insofar as more discussions and investigations are needed about the reality and future of AR's political utility. AR technology has an innovative potential in terms of significant features. It holds that AR presents political contenders and campaigners with a trustworthy, attractive, and popular platform in which they may place their practical and self-advertorial campaigns in a more 'realistic' way. Furthermore, it has the advantage of being able to influence voter affection, engagement, and interaction throughout the election process. From the voter's perspective, AR-endowed mobile tools (with possible digitally interactable features) conduce to a choice-making by visually informing them about the contenders' or campaigns' performance, promises, stands and ideational values. AR is believed to have the potential to revolutionize the political engagement process between the voter and contending parties during campaigns. However, AR technology has some challenging implications in terms of political communication during the election process concerning informational deficiency, credibility of the medium and ethical considerations regarding privacy and manipulation. The current analysis is conducted in the above-given context, setting forth the grand expectations as well as the challenges of AR technology in practical terms, with a Turkish case study of recent years. Following the introductory part, the adoption and possible utilization of AR in the context of modern political campaigns are grappled with. Briefly after that, some current experiment projects and cases are exemplified, and finally, the possible reality, future, challenges, and ethical problems of AR political campaigning are handled in the light of Turkish cases at the end.

Keywords: *augmented reality, political campaigning, voter engagement, technological innovation, political communication, ethical implications, election process, interactive tools.*

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2. INTRODUCTION

Introduction: Augmented Reality in Political Campaigning

The expanding adoption of augmented reality (AR) technology is increasingly penetrating the political sphere, particularly in political campaign setups. The prevalent use of AR technology in political campaigns has been anticipated to shape future modes of political interaction—just as previous advances in communication technology have influenced the spectrum of political dialogues (M. L. Silva et al., 2022). The use of AR in political campaigning is transforming the traditional methodologies, now offering new ways of representing candidates and parties. As a consequence, political engagements and discussions are in turn being reconstituted by the capacity of AR to articulate an abundance of campaign promotions in various subsequent creative manifestations. The purpose of this essay is to explore the ways in which the employment of AR in political campaigning strategies has enhanced structural opportunities to interact politically among candidates and the public.

The primary objective is to illustrate how AR technology has amended the nature of political campaigns in terms of its structural inputs and sample selection procedures. Secondly, the systematic implications of AR application in campaigning for the broad public and political participations are analyzed. Thirdly, the distinctive circumstance where AR technology holds the utmost political promise is deliberated. Specifically, this essay examines the significance of a gadget that undertakes quickly accessed data on political contributions where there are autonomously chosen citizens transactions. Examining AR technology is central to extending the political communication technological literature given the theme's importance to discourse throughout the lifespan of participative democracy as evident in the present moment. Traditional belief for the purpose of the analysis of political practices and the conduct of political science should no longer be restricted to physical actions, but should also be connected to the performative experiences connected with multi-faceted campaign activities

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across a variety of modern political events and contexts—the public at large, in a condition that is transformed by recent communication technologies.

3. UNDERSTANDING AUGMENTED REALITY

Augmented reality (AR) has been a developing technology that enables digital content to be superimposed onto a physical world environment or object. The fundamental idea of augmented reality is that some digital content (either real-time or stored) can be co-displayed with the real-world domain to create a more immersive sensory experience. AR works by merging virtual interactions and actual experiences. By focusing on the point of engagement, it automatically alters something that activates AR (Quanjin et al., 2019). This is really effective for motivations that are geographically linked, promoting broad sharing of experiences among the audience of potential voters. Due to where they're squeezed into the world, it's hard not to give passing exhibit establishments or activity-wise social media posts a look when the acronym profanities, nonsensical graffiti, or campaign logos are exaggerated. This fact itself is a strong bit because only a subset of these brand activations is available.

The development of AR from video-see through smart glass is in evidence and the ability to achieve a powerful high-fidelity coating has been universally accessible. AR kit and AR core can now run on most smartphones released over the last five years (in much of the general milieu). An AR functionality suite has also been created by several SaaS organizations that provides access to AR-led engagements with very limited premade assets required. This allows for the creation of bespoke branded logos or instances in the short term (especially for smaller or newer polity extensions), or for campaigns operating on normal loci without requiring many quid. These technological developments have opened up AR as a powerful, scalable compound to wider fields including political interacting.

4. APPLICATIONS OF AUGMENTED REALITY IN POLITICS

Today, political campaigns are engaging with people in innovative ways. Augmented reality (AR) is here for that. The idea of using geolocated AR experiences in an electoral campaign is to provide a different way for people to

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engage with a candidate and an eye-catching way to promote events and initiatives. Imagine an interactive AR flyer that appears to anyone passing by a certain place and holding their phone up to a poster; a geolocated AR experience that emerges from a candidate's advertising panel and lays out a summary of a policy while immersing voters in a 3D data environment, or real-time animated visualizations of supporters joining a live event. These are all real use cases of how political campaigns in the EU have used AR experiences in the 2019 EU elections to crowdsource more attention and how hard choices are made by thinking about engaging the voter electorate through AR. These examples will illustrate how AR experiences worked to bring a thrill and make memorable experiences that inform and educate the electorate about relevant issues.

AR's custom AR campaigns involve real-time actions that behave similarly to live events or one-off occasions. The visual content is layered between phone information and what users are actually perceiving from the environment around them. The temporal nature of the AR overlay alongside its geolocated delivery can lead to users missing key actions. AR powers the creation of geolocated layers of information that can be accessed on mobile devices. Politicians are trying to better engage with their supporters by delivering relevant and personalized information. AR represents an innovative opportunity in engaging followers, often more interactive than print content or videos. Beyond its novelty factor, there is a natural fit in creating geolocated and prs information sharing for politicians taking into account current broader trends in media consumption and digital experience interactions (M. L. Silva et al., 2022). This kind of geolocated AR experience democratizes the access to that information from a candidate in a way that is more tailored to the spatial and temporal contexts of every individual who is interacting with the visualization. Moreover, it allows good visualization for complicated ideas and opens the information channel to folks who have limited access to traditional communication styles and sets.

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5. CASE STUDIES OF AUGMENTED REALITY IN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

1. Introduction

Due to the global pandemic of Covid-19, political campaigning has shifted towards more technology-based methods – including augmented reality (AR). There are a few examples of successful implementations around the globe and one can learn from best practices or smart strategies. This section presents multiple case studies around the globe. Those include local elections, national campaigns, but also international efforts. Those examples showcase diversity of contexts and usage; all successful and proven better than 'traditional campaigning' methods. The evaluation was conducted in corresponding countries, analyzing practical success, political influences, and measurable-impacts of the campaign. In addition, common themes are identified and some of the best practices for political campaigning are presented. Everyone considering spreading AR in political contexts might find this insightful before starting. It might be fine to say that AR could change the political landscape positively.

2. Case Studies

2.1 France, 2011 Emotion was France's first augmented reality candidate.

He was running in a trial legislative campaign in the autumn of 2011. Part of the run was a very sophisticated use of AR technology, but due to limited phone compatibility and a very low user base of AR technology, the effects may have been limited. Nevertheless, it brought heavy media coverage of the campaign. Emotion had engagements on the biggest national TV and radio stations, setting a small example for future AR campaigning in France (M. L. Silva et al., 2022).

2.2 Sweden, 2014 The Swedish election campaign of 2014 saw the introduction of an AR app by the property market developers Push. At first glance, it was a somewhat crude attempt at AR. Large format and bulky hand to use, with fast paced information made it more like a toy than a tool for getting the message across. There was debate on whether it was politically biased or not. But it did generate heavy use and brought in a new audience to the 'reflex group', thereafter engaging in dialogue on social media.

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6. CHALLENGES AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Augmented reality (AR) technologies present new opportunities for political campaigns to connect with voters in increasingly personal ways. These digital experiences can be viewed on mobile devices or through smart glasses and digitally overlay interactive, immersive content in the physical world. Even though AR has been historically used in more general contexts and commercial advertising, its intersection with politics brings to mind new challenges and ethical perspectives most specifically expressed in this article (M. L. Silva et al., 2022). This article does not address what might represent a paradigmatic AR document in advertising and presents an analysis instead within a still-sparse landscape of political AR artifacts. The possible issues and challenges described here must be read as general reflections on the intersection between augmented reality and politics and not as implications derived from AR political projects, advertised sim projects, or political advertising in general, or related to prior information on such projects.

Political campaigns and parties can use AR to deliver persuasive, interactive campaign elements directly to voters. Going beyond the static, two-dimensional content of images or videos, AR offers the chance to create highly interactive, immersive experiences for each user based on their surrounding environment. As a result, among the various media technologies used in political campaigns, AR could be positioned as the most advanced, following the trend that political campaigns generally appropriate emerging technical innovations. This technical aspect may assume new relationships between technology design features and the producer–consumer relationship in the electoral context. Although there is a possibility of hypermediacy-related scepticism towards such an immersive media version, it is also noted that mediated political communication overall has been expanded. Beyond advertising, AR documentation in an electoral context is still largely unexplored. Some key issues and challenges should be taken into account when political campaigns integrate the use of augmented reality: processes of verification and disinformation engagement; difficulties and responsibilities implied in the creation, sharing and distribution of such "augmented assets";

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unequally spread digital divides; and questions around the collection of personal data and the implications for electoral integrity, consent, and transparency. Moreover, research must develop concrete ethical and jurisprudential principles to manage the responsible use of AR in politics, with close attention to factors that may jeopardize trust in the use of affected technology, leading to disengagement and disinformation. (Verhulst et al.2021)

7. FUTURE PROSPECTS AND INNOVATIONS

A variety of technological enhancements will probably occur in AR that will make its content more similar to viewing real objects. While many of these technological changes will be welcomed for their positive implications for communication, they will potentially also raise concerns about greater issues of verification. The effectiveness of AR for delivering political campaign messages can lessen the relevancy of the continued examination of more traditional forms of campaign coverage in this post-broadcast television world. Attention to the effects of news as persuasive evidence in mediated campaigning on voter attitudes and behavior has initially focused on the most common forms of telling stories in the news media: words and pictures. The recent evolution of AR in the realm of sensational politics and the way it can potentially change the nature of the voter-candidate relationship. AR devices could already present information about the visual characteristics of the voter's surroundings and others they interact with. These devices may also analyze the user's speech conversation with someone and present relevant factual information about the topic being discussed. An exploration of how governments are striving to protect against the abuses while others are beginning to use AR to highlight them. AR content will most likely also increasingly draw on social media feeds which enable real-time, user-generated, possibly less edited contributions. AR also offers the option for companies and social movements focusing on a particular issue to create 'their' informative AR content that could be easily displayed on any device. The rapid and seemingly effortless appearance of sophisticated visualized information may also just come to be expected. Being a relatively new phenomenon, research and development of AR applications for political scenarios have just begun to take off.

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With AR being predicted to play a huge role in politics in the near future, funding to investigate these nascent engagements continues to proliferate. Anyhow, there are fears that the present political context of skepticism and contempt for the political establishment will also affect candidates' credibility in more radical AR applications. There might be a need for campaigns to increasingly use AR to showcase 'authenticity' measures taken in a campaign, such as only permitting events that are open to the media. Also, with the predicted rapid evolution of what AR is, there could possibly be unexpected synergistic opportunities for political campaigns, as political structures have the potential to exploit this future technology for their own means. In spite of more immersive graphical capabilities, a particular application's impact might soon fade as voters habituate to this new medium and expect AR content to be increasingly sophisticated. For instance, candidates might begin to engage voters in AR through VR rallies, making the omnipresent handheld devices feel hopelessly outdated. So, the form of the delivered content and the software behind it will certainly need to continue innovating to remain effective tools of political communication. (Fowler et al.2021)

8. CONCLUSION

Augmented Reality technologies, while being billed as potentially transformative for some years, appear to be finally ready for their close-up. Certainly they are at the forefront of top-of-the-ticket thinking for strategists in several competitive battleground states. And as tech companies announce new augmented reality tools for scoring debates, everyone from young potential voters donning designer pairs to senior voting populations setting up platforms downloads rushing to view the latest campaign AR ad experience. By enabling users to overlay a digitized world of other individuals and object scenes and text upon major personal visual field augmentation it seems reasonable to assume that this new political form of campaigning will impact upon us the inconceivable arbiters of democracy.

Political Campaigning: The By-Now Predictable Applications amidst Transformed Promises. Certainly, the use of AR in campaigns and party-political promotion is quickly catching on. Although it is not necessary to detail everything that has happened in political AR advocacy to date, a typical tick-off list would probably

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include such scenarios as 'meta-rooms' created for crowd-funding applications in which potential investors secured a life-sized simulation of potential mines in space outside of Earth's exosphere, candidates' promotions promoting the downloading of AR content that freely reveals area realignment changes brought about from democratically enacted or geophysical shifts to restore electoral fairness, or even use of AR campaign materials to digitally surround our neighborhood with images of that county's on-patent politician. Given the marks-that-be between politics and the promotion and thing, as it is likely that the nudge-and-vote-for-change AR content campaigns will so far have alarmed.

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Data Availability

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