

## **Social Media and Election Campaign on Youtube: Analyzing User-generated Video in Kaohsiung Mayoral Election**

by

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### **Abstract**

The objective of this research study was to explore the social media are now widely used for political protests, campaigns, and communication in developed and developing nations, but available research has not yet paid sufficient attention to experiences beyond the Asia Pacific region. This collection tackles this imbalance head-on, compiling cutting-edge research across six continents to provide a comprehensive, global, up-to-date review of recent political uses of social media. The user-generated videos (UGV) developed as a new means for online political involvement and discussion during the 24 December 2018 Kaohsiung Mayoral Election (KME2018). This study first analyzed the keyword searches for KME2018, related to UGVs and observed their content characteristics, and then selected 50 videos for textual analysis. Instead of a campaigning tool, UGVs were primarily UGVs created by candidates to share participatory experiences in elections or express their political opinions. In terms of content characteristics, the UGVs can be categorized into UGV Participatory Behavior. The analyses show the numbers of records uploaded UGVs in political events revealing the strong political attitudes and sensationalism. Satirical and controversial tend to receive lots of view counts and sensitive comments. In the setting of DPP party, a long-ruling party of Kaohsiung has intense control of mass media within the city, the massive amount of Kaohsiung UGV's content uploaded to support the campaign and political comments showed strong growing favorable attitudes of winning the voters' hearts that led to the predictive victory of the election.

**Keywords:** Political participatory; Kaohsiung Election; user-generated content; user-generated video; textual analysis; observation.

### **Introduction:**

The successful usage of social media in the Kaohsiung Mayoral contest campaign of Daniel Han Kuo-yu has established his popularity support via mainly these social media platforms;

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YouTube, LINE, and Facebook as integral parts of the political campaign toolbox. Some analysts attribute Han's victory to a large extent to his social media strategy. Han's social-networking Facebook link helped him set records in terms of donations and grassroots mobilization. Shortly a year ago before his victory, Daniel Han, with the help of his daughter Coco Han to plan and executed enormously amount of UGVs uploaded on YouTube to let the web community know how the pitch "Make Kaohsiung Great Again" his communication effective to gain his supporters (Ketagalan Media, 2018). As this example demonstrates, after the rise of candidate social media links in 2018, YouTube in 2017 (the Donald Trump Campaign), Liberals post donations, online fund-raising in 2016 (Yasseri, 2016), and blogs in 2010 (Hanson, Haridakis, Cunningham, Sharma, & Ponder, 2010), YouTube has become a legitimate communication channel in the political arena as a result of the various campaigns in the world.

YouTube is established in 2005 as one of the most popular video sites on the Web today. It has gained popularity amongst today's voters want a quick way to catch up on the latest elections buzz and they've found it in online video. Since April 2015, the world has viewed more than 110 million hours of candidates and political issues-related content on YouTube worldwide. Google acquired YouTube (Google buys YouTube for \$1.65bn, n.d.) and is one of their most popular peripheral properties. YouTube was the first large-scale video sharing site on the Web, and it is available in nearly every country and over fifty different languages that anyone can upload content and makes an astonishing array of watchable content.

### **User-generated Video (UGV):**

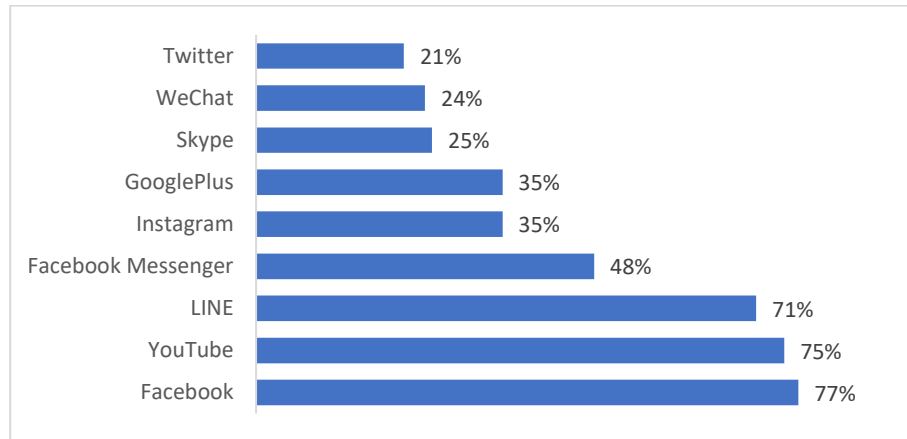
The original idea behind UGV was to provide personal status updates (Liang & Liu, 2012). However, Daniel Han has utilized UGV periods posting various short video of every imaginable topic, ranging from political news to personal lifestyle information in a variety of formats, e.g., short video, chatting, press interview, KOL interviews, to the extent of cutting hair, and pet caring that can create impact on young and old voters and followers during his election campaign. Especially in the weeks leading up to elections, political issues are clearly on the minds of many users. In addition, Han formulated his air-strike campaign strategy of social media communicating effectively via short video with the electorate and trying to mobilize supporters. While some political analysts are already turning to the "YouTube sphere" as an indicator of political opinion, others have suggested that the majority of the messages are "pointless babble" (Ross, Terras, Warwick, & Welsh, 2010).

Most UGVs on YouTube were short and of small file size between less than 4 minutes and not more than 20 minutes. In this study, UGV is defined as "public accessible audiovisual content created by non-professionals for non-commercial purposes." (Cheng, Liu, & Dale, Understanding the Characteristics of Internet Short Video Sharing: A YouTube-Based Measurement Study, 2013). Some popular videos are great contributed to the total view counts of YouTube videos. (Cha M., Kwak, H., Rodriguez P., Ahn, Y., & Moon., S, 2009). Social media or peer recommendations were related to how viewers contributed to the popularity of UGVs on YouTube.

### **Penetration of Leading Social Networks in Taiwan as of 3rd Quarter 2017:**

First, we look at why social media is the power of election campaign and rapid penetration rates as illustrated by the chart below. As of the third quarter 2017, 80 percent of the population

were active social media users. The most popular social network was Facebook with a 77 percent and YouTube tailing slight behind at 75% of penetration rates.

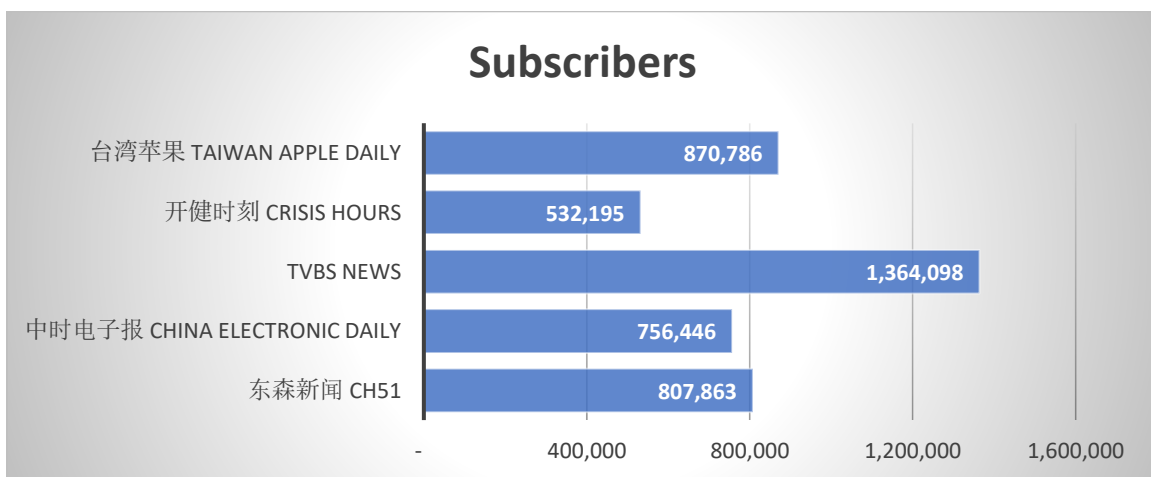


**Fig 1 Percentage of users active on social media**

**The Objective:**

The aim of this study is threefold. First, we examine whether YouTube is a vehicle for online political deliberation by looking at how people use UGVs to spread information about political issues. Second, we evaluate the amount of YouTube UGV video uploaded has predictive gain to win an election of communicating political sentiment in a meaningful way. Third, we analyze whether the comments of activities on YouTube can be used to predict the popularity of candidates in Kaohsiung election 2018.

**Political Use of UGVs:**

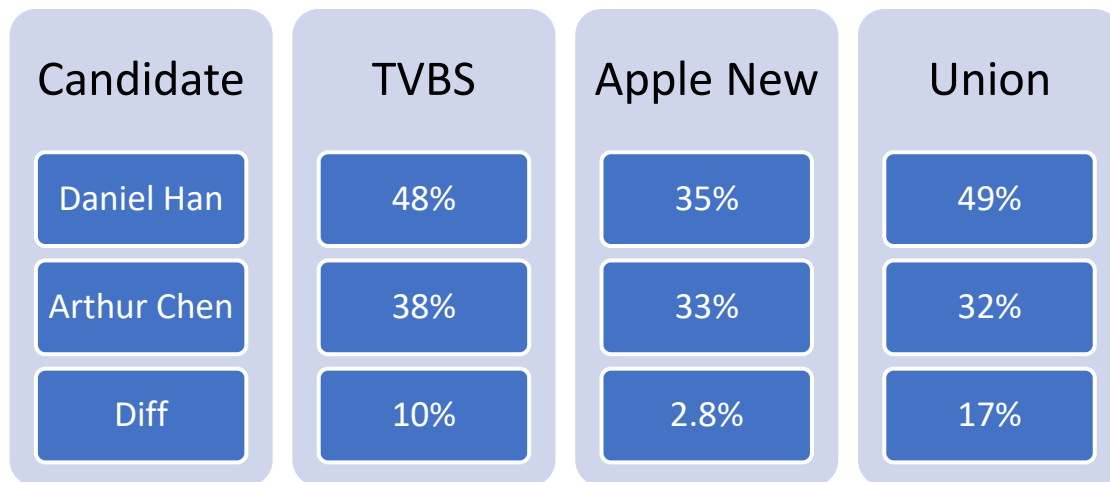


**Fig 2 Top five news media on YouTube<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>2</sup> Social Bakers, 2017

YouTube first developed an influential social media tool for political campaigns during the 2016 US Presidential Election. In 2007, YouTube and CNN held joint debates for presidential candidates and attracted millions of Americans who sent in video-recorded questions. This event emphasizing citizen participation demonstrated the power of YouTube as the most powerful social media tool second to Facebook (Chou & Fu, 2017) comparable to the impact of television on Nixon and Kennedy’s debate in 1960. The social media has become a greater positive effect on campaigns in the elections has been proved again in the “Nine Union”<sup>3</sup> elections also called local elections of civil servants in the China-Taiwan region in last 2014 mayoral election. Some scholars observed that social media had become the critical media platform of candidates’ campaigns in political elections (Dapeng & Chungying, 2016).

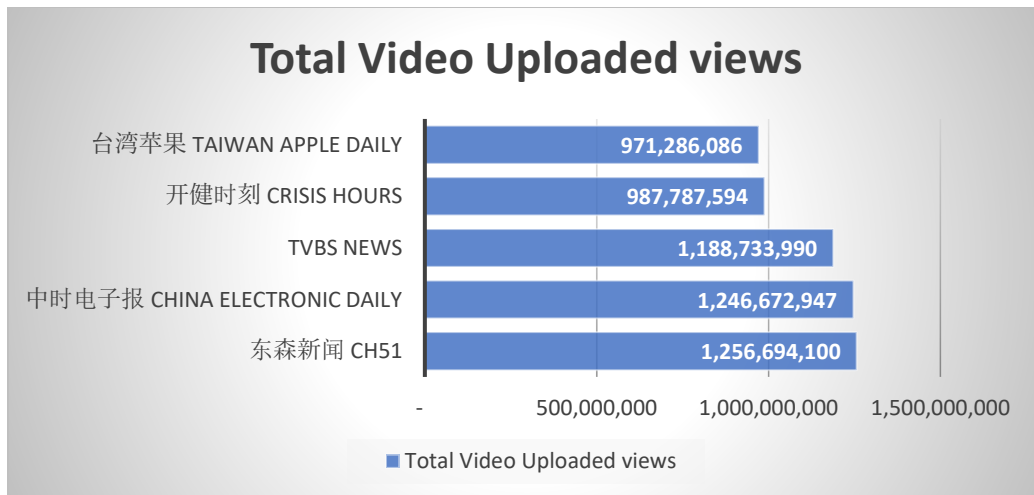
YouTube served as an online echo chamber for structured elements of the electoral cycle as it provided on-demand videos for millions of voters. UGVs supporting or attacking Han, the opposition KMT party’s candidate went viral and obtained myriad hits of 2.3 million views. (Musser, 2009) with popular KOL nickname Chief Executive (馆长) interviewed over his live broadcast which expressed a poorly managed city of Kaohsiung sentiment topics were highly influential on the 2018 campaign results. As most KOL broadcast mayor contest candidates on YouTube news media uploaded with analytics discussion to predict Han’s good use of viral video marketing resulted in his victory in the KME2018 election (Fig: 3).



**Fig 3 Tabulation of Statistics**

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<sup>3</sup> The local elections of civil servants in Taiwan region in 2014, also called the “Nine Union” elections, were held in December 2018. Six direct-controlled municipalities in the Taiwan region elected the new term’s mayors and city councilors in direct-controlled municipalities and elected the new term’s mayors and county magistrates, city and county councilors, village and town magistrates, village and town citizen representatives, village and li representatives, district Mayor of native mountain districts, and representatives of native mountain districts. What differentiates these elections from others is the combined election of mayors and city councilors in direct-controlled municipalities and mayors, county magistrates, city and county councilors to reduce election expenses and social costs. On November 29, 2014, the local elections of civil servants in Taiwan region, also called “Nine Union” elections, were held and 6 mayors of Direct-controlled municipalities, 16 mayors and county magistrates, 375 city councilors in Direct-controlled municipalities, 532 city and county councilors and 198 village and town magistrates were elected.



**Fig 4 Top news media uploaded views**

The KME2018 clearly see YouTube’s influence increased with Han, and the cycle of communications accelerated (Krashinsky, 2012). Both candidates Han and Chen uploaded different online videos for their target supporter groups and the cycle of response videos became faster. However, some studies, like Baumgartner and Morris (2010), argued that social media and UGV did little to inform or contribute to the public discourse of political issues. McKinney and Rill (2009) found that the impact of YouTube debates on youths showed insignificant differences from traditional television.

In terms of comparing media exposure, Towner and Dulio (2011) experimented on a YouTube channel to examine the effects of 2008 the US presidential campaign UGVs and traditional media videos on young Americans. They found that exposure to UGVs increased the level of cynicism towards the government. However, exposure to both types of videos did not affect viewer’s perceptions (Yasseri, 2016) and attitudes of candidates. Another study on the impact of YouTube’s political parody videos showed that videos from sources with highly persuasive intents had a greater influence on political attitudes (Lim & Golan, 2011). They also found that these parody videos may even motivate certain viewers to engage in “corrective” action by participating actively in political discussions.

Notably, UGVs cannot be viewed as the sole determinant of political attitudes. Taking YouTube as a basis, Jenkins (2006) warned that such online videos could not be understood in isolation from other social media where they could be discussed in greater depth and substance. He argued that dialogues taking place on YouTube tend to take on a less rationale slant, littered with fractured logic and misinformation (Jenkins, 2006).

## **Background of China-Taiwan Mayoral Contests:**

### **1. The China-Taiwan Mayoral Elections and Social Media**

In this study, we use 104,003 rating published in the weeks leading up to the mayoral election of the national parliament in China-Taiwan which took place on November 24th, 2018. After 4 years in a grand coalition with the Democratic People’s Party (DPP), the Candidate of former member of elected legislator of Taiwan Mr. Daniel Han Kou-yu (韓國瑜), a member of

the Kuomintang (KMT) - was running for city mayoral contests, an unknown candidate airdrop into Kaohsiung to compete with the long-serving as the vice mayor of Kaohsiung Arthur Chen Chi-Mai (陳其邁) of the DPP party and well supported by former mayor; Mdm Chen Chu.<sup>4</sup>

On a local level, and specifically the mayoral contests, this narrative of national dissatisfaction fed into a series of mismatched races in which DPP candidates ran up against more compelling KMT counterparts. Nowhere was this more evident than the southern city of Kaohsiung, where reborn KMT candidate Han Kuo-yu comfortably defeated the DPP's Chen Chi-Mai, confounding observers who had not given his so-called "Blue wave" due credence.

Han without funding from its KMT party, being alone KMT ranger air-dropped into Kaohsiung single-handedly fought a furious campaign through exploiting the power of social media Facebook and YouTube and won popularization of voters' hearts within an astonishingly short period of 6 months-campaign. It was an unprecedented winning event in global election history for the first mayor to use entirely the social media platform to campaign for his popularity in a minuscule budget campaign spending that worth studying and research, especially Han's election campaign strategy.

Given Han's lack of prior engagement with Kaohsiung or its politics – and the DPP's 20-year-long control of the city – this was widely expected to be at least a close contest. But Han's message – smartly intertwining promises of economic rejuvenation for Kaohsiung, a city he campaigns pitch as "old and poor" that impacted the Kaohsiung citizens a wake-up call that the city badly managed and almost going bankrupt with NT\$3 billion accumulated debts. During the initial campaign stage, he received almost no support from the KMT party, as he was seen as less likely to win the election, considering the traditionally deep-rooted Democratic Progressive Party in Kaohsiung. However, his popularity soared within months during the campaign period over the social media, in which also benefited astonishing and branded as the hottest Red Net<sup>5</sup> that any other KMT candidates wanted to associate with him for high exposure rates on every YouTube news media or KOL interviews. His mayoral campaign drew wide attention and support because part of his name resembles Korea<sup>6</sup> that he was rapidly swept away by the Korean wave popularity in China-Taiwan. The main focus of his campaign was on the air pollution and economic growth of Kaohsiung. Campaigning on what he called Kaohsiung's economic stagnation that has led to a brain drain of students to Northern Taiwan his campaign was able not just to turn out a usually dormant pan-Blue voting bloc in Kaohsiung but many pan-Green voters to switch sides with his promises of greater economic development.

## 2. Social Media Becoming the Deciding Factors:

Social media was widely regarded as the decisive factor for the boost in support for the Daniel Han during 2018 mayoral election. As most news TV media were widely perceived as state-control and often penalized for taking the ruling DPP party's side in the coverage of politics and elections, many voters turned to the Internet for alternative socio-political viewpoints as well as discussions

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<sup>4</sup> The former city mayor of Kaohsiung after KME2018 election, she ruled Kaohsiung consecutively for 3 terms. Kaohsiung was a stronghold of DPP and ruled consecutively for the past 20 years and 30 years for Kaohsiung City and Kaohsiung municipality respectively.

<sup>5</sup> Internet Celebrity is term as "Net Red" a popular word literally translated from Mandarin to English.

<sup>6</sup> Han Kuo is pronounced the same in Mandarin as the word for Korea (Chinese: 韓國; pinyin: Hán'guó), this phenomenon was referred to as "Hánliú" (Chinese: 韓流; referencing the Korean Wave).



on politics and election issues. In 2018, Daniel Han parties and supports began to experiment with social media for strategic outreach and interactivity with supporters and voters. According to (Lin & Hong, 2015), young people's political attitudes and voting behavior in the 2018 election were influenced more by social media than older Taiwanese. Taiwanese's political caricature bloggers received popularity among youths when they mocked current affairs in an entertaining and sarcastic style (Lim & Golan, 2011). Popular Han's fans bloggers like DJ Daddy Chang also produced a RAP video song to support Han's campaign that received 555,144 viewers. The outstanding political impact of the online platform has created challenges to block people's voice to support Han's campaign. According to (Dapeng & Chungying, 2016), YouTube began to be utilized as a political platform since the 2014 elections when bloggers posted videos of speeches at KMT elections rallies and interviews. KMT party members and supporters later used YouTube to post speeches of party leaders, events, and political activities. Some even created dedicated YouTube channels.

### **Work Methodology and Research Questions:**

This study focuses on analyzing the use of UGVs in KME2018 as no prior studies have dived into this emerging but critical political communication subject. Kaohsiung offers a unique context for the election UGV research as political parties were curtailed in four-week campaigning, including using social media and UGV. Online UGVs are usually viewed, share or comment by voters. Through textual analysis and observations, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the content characteristics of UGVs most viewed for the Kaohsiung 2018 mayoral election?
2. What is the participatory culture of UGVs on the YouTube platform during the Kaohsiung 2018 election?

After identifying keywords based on media reports, this study sought KME2018 election-related UGVs uploaded during the lawful campaign period (1 Oct to 1 Nov 2018) from blogs and Internet video sites, especially YouTube, the main platform for uploading and viewing of election videos. The appendix lists the numbers of videos found corresponding to selected keywords. It should be noted that some UGVs appeared under more than one keyword search.

To obtain the full picture of 2018 election UGVs, this study took a covert observational approach to study its UGV interactions with viewers with no interference. On YouTube's mediated computing platform, the observation primarily looked at how viewers watch videos, commented, and interacted with others. The observation results showed although non-media politicians created thousands of UGVs and the contents of which were highly persuasive, sensational, or parodic, and had a lot more views and comments. As such, this study focuses on analyzing the UGVs because they are likely to have great influence on voters political attitudes or participation (Lim & Golan, 2011).

Later, the textual analysis was conducted on the 150 UGVs uploaded during the election period. The coding scheme was adapted from (Shah & Marchionini, 2007) study on the US Presidential Election videos. UGV characteristics and users' responses were examined by looking at video contents, subjects, "view" counts, "like" counts, mood, as well as comment counts and content. The textual analysis in the context of UGVs was targeted at both UGV videos and





The popularity of UGVs can be inferred from views, likes, and comment counts. The results showed that more UGVs were more popular amongst viewers than competing candidate Chen having fewer recordings. As Han injected creativity and personal perspectives into the videos which made the content with originality and styles, they usually portray stronger political attitudes and emotional viewpoints, which clearly reveal authors' opinions of political parties and election candidates and impact the campaign message that resulted to gain not only are there more views, likes, and comments, but more reinforced emotions support and eventually votes.

**b. The content of Badmouthing UGVs:**

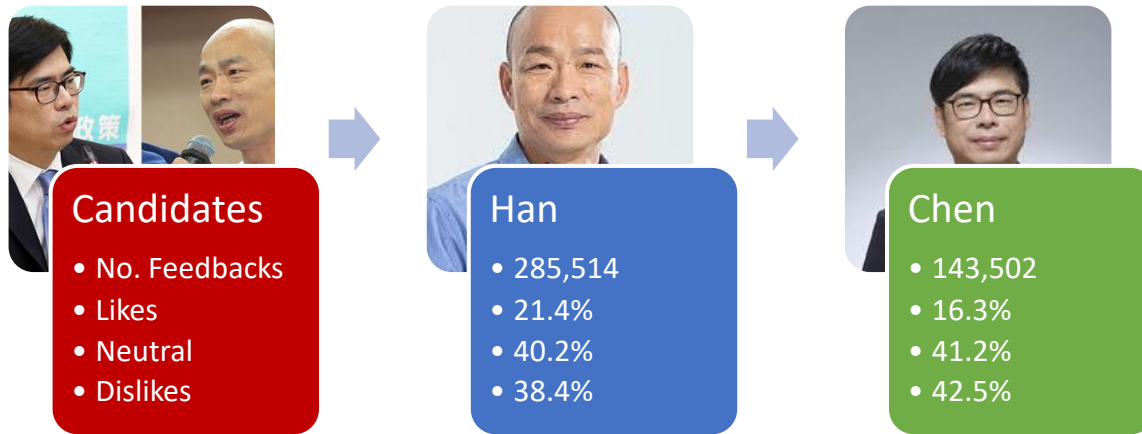
Majority of UGVs reflect highly-charged emotions with expressive emotional appeals. It created a reversal effect on the negative comments and encourage positive defense of fake or unproven negative comment from respective candidates, in this case, Han gained an upper hand in aspects. If the ruling party badmouthing against the opposition candidate after he had gained popularity through the strong endorsement of his fans exposing to UGVs defaming his background, political history, campaign promises, and election topics would either create no impact or reserve effect motivating his fans taking unconditional initiatives to defense for him on YouTube's comments.

In the analysis, authors and commenters often emerged as angry or pessimistic about particular problems addressed by these UGVs. They might engage in antagonistic interactions with other viewers, especially when they disagreed on perspectives regarding election issues. The pro-opposition UGVs usually illustrate fervent themes of "change" or sarcastic comments on the ruling party. A short edited UGV that contrasted suggestive and controversial statements made by Han, the opposition candidate with inspiring images and speeches made by DPP candidate. Its comments took a highly antagonistic and patriotic front to criticize the ruling party's leader.

**c. UGV Participatory Behavior in KME2018:**

**i. View, "Like" and comment:**

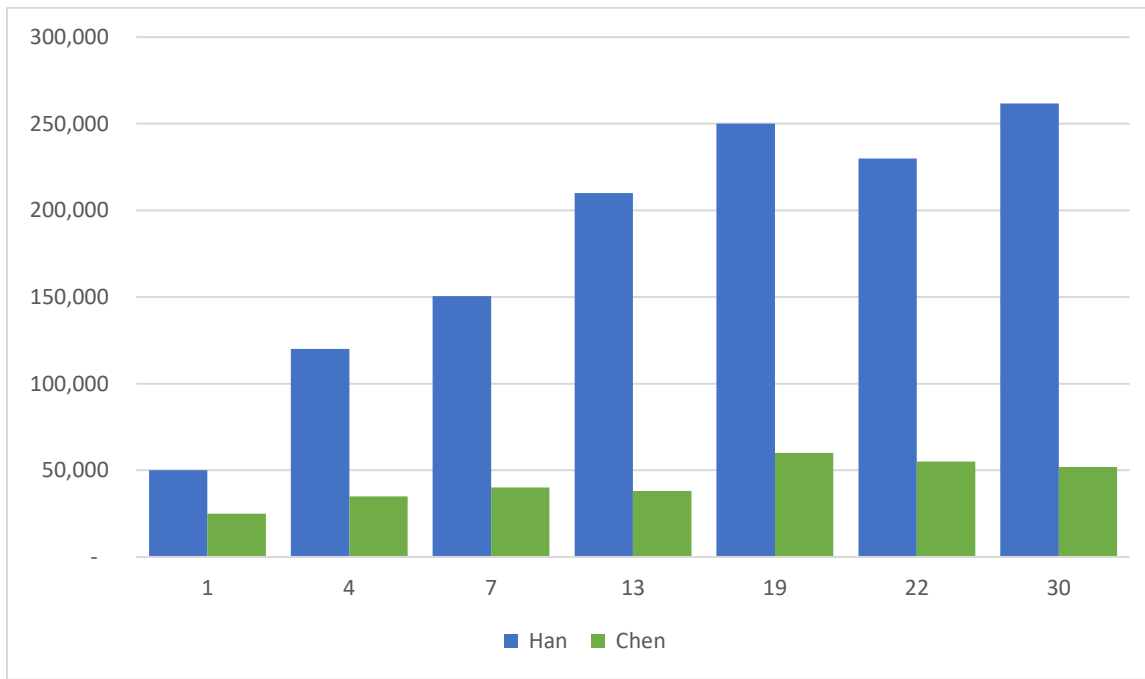
The view count and a number of "likes" for each UGV are straightforward indicators of community members' levels of interest. Among the selected edited UGVs, videos with controversial topics can have as much as over 500,000 views and over 1,500 "likes." Comparing two mayor candidates Arthur Chen and Daniel Han is one of the more popular topics during KME2018. The majority of voters feel Han was perceived as genuinely concerned about people's well-being and showing leadership qualities. This new phenomenon drew much attention and led to the creation of several related UGVs and viral distribution.



UGVs with controversial or entertaining content receive an average of over a hundred thousand comments, while Han obtaining as high as 285,514 mentioning his name. However, videos with irrelevant or repetitive content do not receive many responses. For example, a UGV that questions the transparency of the DPP's Party candidate Arthur Chen drew 143,502 comments, most of which were made up of passionate arguments among his fans on the validity of such an accusation.

Coco Han (Wang, 2018) managed Han's social media accounts for her father during the election campaign that led to his victory for KME2018. Coco, a 23-year-old senior university student who majored in sociology at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada, campaigned for her father on the streets and behind the scenes, prompting some to draw parallels with Ivanka Trump's role in helping her father, Donald, to the US presidency. The 23-year-old senior university student who majored in sociology at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada, formulated and campaigned for Han on the total social media activities and content, prompting some to draw parallels with Ivanka Trump's role in helping her father, Donald, to the US presidency.

A majority of the edited UGVs in the sample are pro-Han opposition, most comments are supportive of the Han party and pro-Chen comments became rare. It is also interesting to find out that most CGVs of Han has fewer negative comments that disagreed with Han's campaign message usually got shot down swiftly by his hundreds of thousand fans. In a pro-Han blog post with various UGVs and many pro-Han commented as much as 261,727 surfaced (Business Today Taiwan, 2018), contributing with majority positive and neutral comments. These pro-Han fans might have felt more encouraged to comment on Han's blog entry as they shared similar sentiments.



**Fig 5 Comparison of Han and Chen**

The popularity of UGVs, regardless of categories, can be observed from view, “like”, “neutral” and “dislike” and comment counts. Additionally, it should be noted that the numbers of views, “likes” and comments may not be necessarily proportionate to each other. For example, a commentary UGV by a local celebrity and a self-composed song in support for the Han had similar high view counts. However, due to the prominent author and controversial content, the former received 100,000 times more comments than the latter.

### **Discussion and Conclusion:**

The rapid distribution of UGVs via social networks fueled the online political discussions in KME2018. In this study, the results of observations and textual analysis examine content characteristics of KME2018, participatory interactions among UGV commenters, as well as their politics. Firstly, UGVs was only one of the many venues from which voters could obtain political information and form their opinions. The majority of KME2018 UGV contents were opinionated and polarized into pro and anti-ruling party. UGV may assess other information sources before coming to a decision. Secondly, the majority of relevant UGVs were simple recordings of election-related speech and events. They did not convey a clear political stand or opinion and thus had limited influence on political attitudes. Comparatively, original and emotion-laden UGVs, the focus of this study, are found to be more impactful in receiving lots of views and “likes” as well as comments.

UGVs were dominated by anti-government and negative sentiments in the Kaohsiung where most citizens were considered politically apathetic (Fox, 2015), the prominence of anti-ruling party KME2018 UGVs were the results of growing political enthusiasts, especially opposition supporters for Han who lacked channels to express their views through mass media.

The political UGV culture is in an initial stage in this country with strict media control. The production of politics-related UGVs is considered a risk in Kaohsiung, with many feelings fearful of the potential consequences. As a result, the surge in the number of UGVs and comments during the election period were voiced by the voters of their online political expressions and political opinions.

UGVs seem to be a convenient venue for the expression and discussion of political frustration rather than an intellectual exchange of political opinions. The study found much political dissatisfaction and anxiety identified from UGV content and comments. Most UGV contents contained highly-charged emotions that conveyed intense feelings of dissatisfaction. Sarcastic and mocking statements, crude language, and opinionated arguments dominate the UGVs and their comments.

Historically, opposition parties used new media to reach out to Kaohsiung voters due to the difficulty in obtaining exposure on mass media. They started to use YouTube to disseminate their beliefs beginning since 2006. This explains why the findings showed most of the election UGVs were the pro-opposition/anti-ruling party and pro-opposition UGV authors tended to be more productive with longer histories of uploading political videos than the ruling party. The phenomenon suggested a type of online networked politics (Kahler, 2009) in which opposition parties and supporters formed non-institutional politics of resistance and took collective actions against the dominant power.

According to (English, Sweetser, & Ancu, 2011), American users responded more to rational and credible 2008 election UGVs on YouTube-ification of political speech. Yet it is interesting to find that rationality and credibility did not play such a significant part in the KME2018. UGVs in Kaohsiung can be regarded as a crucial platform for citizens to express their political perspectives straightforwardly than in the US or other democratic countries where people can seek political information and voice out political opinions and party preferences freely via multiple channels.

Theoretically, this exploratory study contributes to the understanding of content characteristics and usage of election UGVs in a context with strong political and media control. This new media provides an echo chamber to express emotional perspectives and reinforces political attitudes through a selective exposure and participatory process via content creating, commenting, and consumption on social media.

### **Acknowledgment:**

The preferred spelling of the word “acknowledgment” in America is without an “e” after the “g”. Avoid the stilted expression “one of us (R. B. G.) thanks ...”. Instead, try “R. B. G. thanks...”. Put sponsor acknowledgments in the unnumbered footnote on the first page.

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## APPENDIX

CATEGORY	SEARCH TERM	TOTAL VIDEO GENERATED
<b>GENERIC TERM</b>	Taiwan election	329
	2018 Election	211
	Han Guo-yu	534
	Kaohsiung vote	345
	Taiwan Vote	385
	24 Dec 2018	
<b>POLITICAL PARTIES</b>	KMT Taiwan	329,378
	DPP Taiwan	429,763
<b>KEY CANDIDATES</b>	Han Guo-yu	261,727
	Chen Chi-Mai	51,968
	Chen Ju	

### 79% OF ONLINE ADULTS (68% OF ALL KAOSHIUNGERS) WATCH YOUTUBE

All online adults who use YouTube	79%
MEN	75
WOMEN	83
18-29	88
30-49	84
50-64	72
65+	62
HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE OR LESS	77
SOME COLLEGE	82
COLLEGE+	79
LESS THAN NT\$30K/MONTH	84
\$30K-\$49,999	80
\$50K-\$74,999	75
\$75,000+	77
UBAN	81
SUBURBAN	77
RURAL	81

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<sup>7</sup> Note: Race/ethnicity of Kaohsiung breaks not shown due to sample size. Source: Survey conducted via wechat Dec 26, 2018, Social Media: Youtube update as of Jan 2019.