Pointing Fingers

Is the Media to blame for the success of the AfD?

Alexander Beyer,
Denver McNeney &
Steve Weldon

Simon Fraser University
Truthiness

- Wahlkampfsommer:
  - Wahlkampf: 10%
  - Sommer: 90%

- AfD and not AfD:
  - AfD: 90%
  - Nicht-AfD: 10%
What we’re doing today.

Why could “the Media” be at fault?

The Data.

Campaigning in the Media

Special Election & everchanging Communications.
Two possible Mechanisms of Media Effects

Persuasion
Read and learn.

Priming
Can’t tell people what to think, but stunningly successful in telling people what to think about.
Data

Text-as-Data with Natural Language Processing

~ 8,500 Articles through computerized methods from focus.de | bild.de | welt.de | spiegel.de

🔥🔥🔥 Unique dataset. 🔥🔥🔥
Share of Party Mentions in Online News

Average over the Course of the Campaign

- CDU/CSU: 50.0
- SPD: 29.3
- AfD: 10.7
- FDP: 7.5
- Green/Grüne: 2.0
- Left/Linke: 1.0
Comparing Share of Party Mentions

Print

Online

- AfD
- CDU/CSU
- SPD
- FDP
- Green/Grüne
- Left/Linke
Share of Party Mentions in Online News

Actual Results

- AfD
- CDU/CSU
- SPD
- FDP
- Green/Grüne
- Left/Linke
Share of Topics mentioned in Online News
AfD’s mentions and support in polls
Change of mentions and support in polls
Did the media just give the people what they wanted?
BuTaWa 2017 – A special Case
The Demand Side

![Graph showing demand side with two lines: AfD-Mentions and Google Searches 'Refugees'.]
Media – public good vs. business

Business with measurable outcome.

Consumer?

→ Demand-Side
Twitter

4.5 m Tweets
Of all Tweets containing one of the Top 200 #Hashtags...

30.9

Pro-AfD

1.2

#NoAfD
Campaign Season on Twitter
Conclusion

Special Election

What does “it’s the journalists fault!” really mean?
Thank you!

abeyer@sfu.ca