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# Aristotelian rhetoric and Facebook success in Israel's 2013 election campaign

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – To contribute to the mapping of the social media discourse involving politicians and their followers during election campaigns, we examined Israeli politicians' Aristotelian rhetoric on Facebook and its reception during the 2013 election campaign.

**Design/methodology/approach** – We examined the Aristotelian rhetorical strategies used by Israeli politicians on their Facebook walls during the 2013 elections and their popularity with social media users.

**Findings** – Ethos was the most prevalent rhetorical strategy used, while pathos-based appeals attracted the most “likes”. The results point to some discrepancy between politicians’ campaign messages and the rhetoric that actually gains social media users’ attention.

**Research implications** – The findings indicate that Israel’s multi-party political system encourages emphasis on candidates’ credibility (ethos) in contrast to the prevalence of emotion (pathos) in typical election campaigns in two-party systems such as that of the United States. One possible explanation is the competitive nature of elections in a multi-party system, where candidates need to emphasise their character and distinct leadership abilities.

**Practical implications** – Politicians and campaign managers are advised to attend to the potential discrepancy between politicians’ output and social media users’ preferences, and to the effectiveness of logos-based appeals.

**Originality/value** – The study highlights the possible effect of the party system on politicians’ online rhetoric in social media election campaigns. Future studies should extend the analysis to other countries and political systems to determine the factors that correspond with online rhetoric during election campaigns.

**Keywords** Aristotelian rhetoric, Rhetorical strategies, Online rhetoric, Facebook, Election campaigns, Israel

**Article classification** Research paper

## Introduction

With the rise of social networking sites, and particularly Facebook’s inception in 2004, these social media platforms became hubs of political discourse during election campaigns (Kushin and Yamamoto, 2010). The 2008 US presidential race was even labelled by some “the world’s first Facebook election” (Fraser and Dutta, 2008; Woolley *et al.*, 2010). Subsequently studies have increasingly tried to understand and map the rhetoric that dominates politicians’ online messages as well as citizens’ reception of these messages (e.g. Robertson *et al.*, 2010; Strandberg, 2013). So far they have produced mixed results, with some indicating a deep, issue-based discourse surrounding political events, particularly within politically oriented groups such as students (Fernandes *et al.*, 2010), while others have revealed superficial and

entertainment-based exchanges between politicians and their followers (English *et al.*, 2011; Erikson, 2008). After identifying that both Obama's and Romney's online Aristotelian rhetoric on Facebook during the 2012 election campaign centred on emotional messages (pathos), Bronstein (2013) went as far as to argue that US politicians use Facebook to advance fandom rather than to promote serious discourse.

To contribute to the mapping of politicians and online political discourse on social media networks during elections, we apply Bronstein's (2013) Aristotelian rhetoric analysis method to a democratic political system that is different from the US two-party system, which has been the subject of most studies of online rhetoric to date. Extending analyses of Aristotelian rhetoric to other political systems is crucial since the two-party system is not common and only exists in a handful of other countries beyond the United States (most notably, the United Kingdom), while the multi-party system is more prevalent than the two-party system and characterises the Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Norway and Sweden), Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Indonesia, New Zealand, Brazil, Mexico and Israel, among other countries. Analysing online rhetoric in the multi-party system will therefore contribute to the global mapping of politicians' and followers' rhetorical online exchanges during elections, and to the generalisability of insights and findings. Analysis of politicians' output and its reception in a multi-party system will illuminate differences and similarities in relation to two-party systems, contributing to our understanding of the effect of political systems on politicians' online rhetoric and its reception.

Accordingly we chose Israel as the subject of our case study. Israel is considered to be a polarised multi-party system in which a large number of parties run for government (32 parties ran in the 2013 elections, 12 of which were elected). This system has the advantage of promoting pluralism but also gives rise to unstable government coalitions that depend on the cooperation of numerous parties for their stability (Rahat and Hazan, 2013). In our analysis we examined the Aristotelian rhetorical strategies used by five leading Israeli party leaders on their Facebook walls throughout the 2013 Israeli election campaign, and their reception, measured by the number of "likes" and "shares" these posts attracted. Facebook, the most popular social media platform today (Alexa, 2014) was selected as our platform for analysis since it was by far the most popular platform for online communications between Israeli politicians and social media users throughout the 2013 election campaign (Kabir and Urbach, 2013).

The study follows Bronstein's (2013) method, with one change. In the current study we analyse likes and shares rather than likes and comments. While comments are often negative

and can distort evaluations of rhetoric popularity, liking is an action that always expresses support and sharing often expresses support since by sharing, users place the post on their own Facebook wall. Further, while we argue that while sharing and liking are both actions that express support, sharing is considered to entail greater engagement with the subject matter than liking (Gerlitz and Helmond, 2013; Nicholas, 2013; Katz, 2014; Malhotra *et al.*, 2013). We therefore believe that sharing is a more relevant measure of politicians' rhetoric popularity than commenting.

The analysis of likes and shares illuminates the popularity of politicians' Aristotelian rhetoric strategies and their ability to engage social media users. In the age of social media posts that gain few likes and/or shares may attest to candidates' lack of online support, while messages that attract many likes and shares demonstrate candidates' ability to mobilise the support of online network members. Like and share realms have consequently become areas of competition in election races: candidates often publicly publish the number of Facebook likes and shares that their messages gain as an index of their popularity, and frequently urge their Facebook members to share or like their messages in order to boost these figures. For example during the Israeli 2013 elections studied here, the Likud party, one of Israel's largest political parties, boasted that Prime Minister Netanyahu's Facebook posts generated more likes and shares than the posts of any other Israeli politician (Bender, 2012a). In response the opposition party argued that Netanyahu "buys" his likes from Facebook.com (Bender, 2012b). Furthermore, in the recent election campaign politicians have increasingly used social media monitoring software that tracks the number of likes and shares their messages receive in real time, which allows them to adjust their future messages for maximum appeal (Merica, 2013).

### **Election campaign social media discourse**

The debate over the nature of social media discourse during elections is divided between studies that found that political discourse on online networks is mostly based on entertainment- and emotion-based discourse, and those that found that social media produce serious and informed political discourse, particularly when social media participants are members of groups with a strong political orientation. One of the early studies that argue for entertainment-based discourse was conducted by Erikson (2008) on Hillary Clinton's MySpace page during the 2008 US elections. The analysis identified that Hillary's interactions with MySpace members resembled the interactions of a celebrity with her fan

club: Hillary Clinton asked her followers to choose her campaign song, while visitors' comments, in turn, testified that they perceived themselves as being on friendly terms with her ("you go girl!"). Ancu and Cozma's (2009) analysis of MySpace discourse during the same election campaign reached similar conclusions. Baxter and Marcella's (2012) analysis of Scottish politicians' Facebook discourse during the 2010 UK general election campaign further supports arguments regarding mostly entertainment- and fandom-style discourse on Facebook. Similarly a study that aimed to understand the role of online media in the 2013 Japanese Upper House elections revealed that candidates' Facebook pages were flooded with expressions of admiration for the candidates rather than discussions of political issues (Xue, 2014).

In contrast several studies showed that social media discourse during elections sometimes concerns factual and reason-based information, particularly among populations such as students, who are already perceived as being more politically oriented than the general population. A study conducted on students' discourse during the 2008 US elections found that student communities actively followed Facebook political campaign messages, and posted comments that prompted political dialogue and civic engagement (Fernandes *et al.*, 2010). In a related manner Kushin and Yamamoto (2010) surveyed university students about their use of online media in the 2008 election and found that online discussions via social media, such as sharing and commenting, increased participants' political self-efficacy and political involvement. Bode *et al.* (2014) also found that participation in social network discourse strongly affected traditional political participation during the 2008 election. However, these studies involved students, who are known for their higher degree of political engagement and greater affinity for reason-based discourse in comparison to the general population (Pryor *et al.*, 2007), which explains the differences between their election discourse and the general population's political discourse patterns on social media.

### **Aristotelian rhetoric and social media election discourse**

The few studies conducted on social media discourse and Aristotelian rhetoric strategies mirror the above trends. English *et al.* (2009) conducted an online experiment examining students' responses to the persuasive impact of Aristotelian appeals on YouTube on the topic of a US health reform campaign (a main component of Obama's 2008 campaign), by comparing the persuasive power of a video that featured either a former Surgeon General (ethos), statistics (logos) or a humorous song (pathos) as its source of authority. In this study

students found the ethos appeal to be the most persuasive. The authors deemed this result positive as it arguably indicates that the participants were not attracted by the humorous song but rather by the speaker's credibility.

In contrast Bronstein's (2013) analysis of actual social media rhetoric used during the 2012 US election campaign found that 68 percent of Obama's posts and half of Romney's posts were pathos-centred, and that the social media discourse conformed to a pathos-style discourse. Bronstein concluded that politicians' outputs illustrate how their Facebook discourse is characterised by "fandom politics" (Jenkins, 1992), a style of discourse where politicians try to promote affection toward themselves and make social media members behave as fans, in order to allay the traditional suspicion that the public feels toward politicians. However, importantly, Obama's logos-based posts attracted more comments than did his pathos and ethos-based messages.

### **Facebook and Israeli election discourse**

Facebook is the most popular online social networking website in the world, with nearly 1.3 billion users worldwide (Facebook, 2014). It is ranked the second most popular website on the internet by Alexa's ranking system, after Google.com (Alexa, 2014). In Israel, where 67 percent of the population (or 4,000,000 Israelis) use the web, approximately half of the population are intense Facebook users; 87 percent of this group are over 18 and thus are considered potential voters (Kabir and Urbach, 2013). Facebook's dominance in Israel's social media arena is undisputed: in 2011 time spent on Facebook per visitor per month among Israelis was one of the highest in the world (Nissan, 2011). Furthermore, whereas in some other countries Twitter, the second most popular global platform, competes with Facebook for dominance, only 150,000 Israelis have Twitter accounts, further underscoring Facebook's leading position in Israel's web scene (Goldenberg, 2013).

An understanding of the Israeli election discourse environment is important for our hypotheses. Israel has a multi-party system and voters vote for parties rather than candidates. This structure does not, however, necessarily lead to discourse centring on political parties and their ideologies. In fact since the 1980s Israel has experienced a process of privatisation that has affected not only the economy but also various cultural dimensions of life (First and Avraham, 2009) and has led to the personalisation of politics as elections shifted from a focus on party politics to focus on candidates' personalities (Peri, 2004; Rahat and Sheafer, 2007). Peri (2004) argues that Benjamin Netanyahu in particular, who rose to the centre of Israel's

political stage in the 1990s and currently serves his third term as Prime Minister, promoted a style that emphasises candidates' personalities. Additional evidence of the personalisation trend is the tendency of candidates and party leaders in Israel to switch parties; for example, Zippi Livni, one of the leading Israeli politicians in the last decade, whose posts are also examined in the current study, switched parties four times in the last four elections. Importantly, the trend towards personalisation in Israel is mirrored in other multi-party systems. A recent study that compared media coverage of election campaigns in Germany (multi-party system) and the United Kingdom (two-party system) found that the trend towards personalisation characterises both countries' media outputs (Holtz-Bacha *et al.*, 2014).

The intensive use of Facebook by Israeli politicians in the 2013 elections also indicates personalisation. While the 2009 elections were accompanied by limited social media participation (Lev-On, 2011), the 2013 elections became known as Israel's first "Facebook elections" (Epstein, 2012; Kishik, 2012), as all the leading contenders maintained Facebook pages that allowed them to communicate intensely with their followers. In terms of the number of Facebook "friends" these pages were dramatically more popular than political party pages. To illustrate the centrality of Facebook in the 2013 elections, consider that three of the five leading candidates were frequently noted in the press for their intense Facebook activity: Yair Lapid, currently Israel's Finance Minister, was often labelled "Facebook minister" (Maltz, 2013), Naftali Bennett was labelled "the Facebook champion" (Kahana, 2014) and, as noted above, Prime Minister Netanyahu was publicly accused of buying Facebook members and likes (Bender, 2012b).

Nonetheless, ideology and serious political discourse is still evident and often balances the trend toward personalisation. Thus Israeli media election coverage is characterised by equal attention to party ideology and to candidates' personalities. In one of the most comprehensive empirical studies on Israeli media discourse to date, which examined the frequency of issue frames (items that focus on ideology) versus game frames (items that focus on the "horse race" between candidates during elections) in the 1949 and the 2003 elections, the researchers concluded that there was a balanced appearance of both frames on both Israeli television and in newspapers (Shenhav and Sheaffer, 2008).

Equally important, the multi-party system in Israel promotes fierce competition between the contenders, who are forced to emphasise their leadership abilities in comparison to other candidates who often hold similar ideological positions on various issues (Balmas *et al.*, 2014). Indeed Sheaffer and Wolfsfeld (2009) found that Israel's multi-party system results

in a more competitive environment than election campaigns in a two-party system. A multi-party environment that forces candidates to emphasise their character, credibility and leadership ability may lead to increased use of ethos rhetoric. Finally, the multi-party system in general, and Israel's polarised multi-party system in particular, is perceived as being less stable than the two-party system. In multi-party systems coalitions are unstable, as they typically rely on the support of multiple parties that can withdraw from the coalition any time they disagree with its policies (Rahat and Hazan, 2013). The most telling evidence of such instability is that Israel has held 19 elections in since its foundation in 1948 although elections are supposed to take place only once every four years. Further, the Israeli 2013 elections examined here are already being followed by another round of elections scheduled to take place in March 2015, after the coalition was dismantled before the end of its allocated four-year term.

The study's first hypothesis concerns the rhetoric used by politicians in their social media campaigns, and reflects the combined effect of the above trends, particularly the need for politicians in the competitive multi-party system to persuade voters that they are best qualified to lead:

*H1.* Israeli politicians will use more ethos-based messages that express their character traits and credibility, more than pathos or logos rhetoric styles.

### **The like button**

The like button, which replaced the need to comment "this is awesome", "great" or other forms of positive response, was launched on Facebook in 2009. The following titles of academic papers dealing with its role during elections indicate that the like button has become synonymous with entertainment-style discourse. These studies, whose titles include from "Does Scotland 'like' this? Social media use by political parties and candidates in Scotland during the 2010 UK general election campaign" (Baxter and Marcella, 2012), "Like me! Analyzing the 2012 presidential candidates' Facebook pages" (Bronstein, 2013) and "Please like me! Norwegian party leaders on Facebook" (Larsson, 2014), all note the superficial nature of elections in which candidates compete to receive the greatest number of likes from Facebook members. Analysts of the "like button effect" on political discourse argue that clicking the like button requires minimum effort and little engagement and thus it attracts members with lower political engagement who desire to befriend politicians rather

than to engage in a serious debate on the issues (Erikson, 2008; Vitak *et al.*, 2011). Based on the above, our second hypothesis is:

*H2.* Pathos-based messages will have the greatest likeability compared to either ethos or logos appeals.

### **The share button, information sharing, and social media**

Social psychology studies have long identified a link between data that trigger strong emotions and information sharing (Binet and Field, 2007; Dobele *et al.*, 2007; Poels and Dewitte, 2006). Strong emotions, such as disgust, were found to be central in decisions to pass along information, such as chain letters, rumours and urban legends (Heath *et al.*, 2001). In a similar manner central works on online shareability of information reveal the relevance of emotion-arousing content. An analysis of the most shared *New York Times* articles over a period of three months (Berger and Milkman, 2012; see also Berger, 2011) specifically identified information that triggers “high arousal” such as laughter, fear and awe, as having the greatest probability of becoming shared.

The majority of studies on social media use by various groups, including election discourse studies, also clearly and strongly indicate that strong emotion plays a powerful role in the shareability of information. Analyses of the features that make online videos viral also found that emotion-based features such as humour and whimsical content strongly promote shareability (Nelson-Field *et al.*, 2013; Shifman, 2012; Southgate *et al.*, 2010). This is true of Twitter as well: an analysis of more than 165,000 tweets found that emotionally charged Twitter messages are the most likely to be re-tweeted (Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan, 2013). A study on tweets collected from politically oriented users in the United States before the 2012 elections further indicated that emotion and sentiment played a key role in whether political tweets were re-tweeted (Hoang *et al.*, 2013). On Facebook an analysis of commercial goods’ shareability found that the inclusion of emotional sentiments was a particularly effective strategy (Swani *et al.*, 2013). Accordingly our third hypothesis is as follows:

*H3.* Pathos-based messages will have the greatest shareability, compared to ethos- or logos-based appeals.

### **Method**

Our study examines the Aristotelian persuasion strategies used by Israeli candidates on their Facebook pages during the 2013 national elections in Israel. The Aristotelian discourse

analysis method – which has been used by several other scholars in the past to understand the nature and impact of online network discourse during election campaigns (Bronstein, 2013; English *et al.*, 2009) – builds on Aristotle’s classic essay “Rhetoric”, considered by some to be the most important work on persuasion ever written (Golden *et al.*, 2007). The essay offers speakers three powerful and distinct persuasive appeals: *logos*, *ethos* and *pathos*. *Logos* refers to logic-based appeals, often using facts and figures. The second strategy, *ethos*, emphasises the speaker’s credibility and trustworthiness. The *ethos* strategy has long proved to be highly effective during campaigns, since studies have found that communicators’ characteristics and credibility strongly influence the perceived persuasiveness of their messages throughout election campaigns (Hovland and Weiss, 1951; Sternthal *et al.*, 1978). Finally, *pathos* is based on messages that appeal to the audience’s emotions and are designed to sway listeners by triggering emotions such as fear, anger and contempt (often through the use of humour, cynicism or empathy).

The analysis examines the Aristotelian rhetoric of Facebook posts written by five leading Israeli politicians throughout the January 2013 election campaign: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (Likud Beitenu), opposition leader Shelly Yachimovich (Labour), former opposition leader Tzipi Livni (Ha’tnua) and the two new contenders in the Israeli political arena, Yair Lapid (Yesh Atid) and Naftali Bennett (Habait Hayehudy). The politicians were selected on the basis of preliminary polls that (correctly) predicted their success in the elections. Data was collected from 7 December 2012 (one day after the final registration date for the 2013 elections, thus the official launch of the election campaigns) to Election Day, 22 January 2013.

To acquire the relevant posts, we used MAKAM, a social media trend tracking company, to identify all the candidates’ posts that gained more than 500 likes and/or shares in the relevant period (all posts that had received 500 shares or more had received over 500 users’ likes). In total our analysis covered 493 posts (each receiving more than 500 likes or shares) that appeared on the five candidates’ Facebook pages: 122 posts on Netanyahu’s page, 108 posts on Lapid’s page, 101 on Bennett’s page; 86 on Yachimovich’s page and 76 on Livni’s page. A random sample of 150 politicians’ Facebook posts reveals that over 85 percent of the posts received over 500 likes and/or shares each. This random sample also indicated that less popular posts (which attracted less than 500 likes or shares each) contained different combinations of the three rhetorical strategies. The posts were coded for rhetorical appeal and number of likes and shares as follows:

*Ethos* – Posts were coded as ethos if 75 percent or more of the post’s content was designed to convince readers of the candidate’s credibility or character, or establish a specific image for the candidate by recalling her accomplishments, life story or plans for the future.

*Logos* – Posts were coded as logos if 75 percent or more of the post’s content constituted an appeal to logic and reason. Such appeals typically present facts and figures to support the candidate’s claims, discuss party ideology, attempt to counter opponents’ allegations using statistics, etc.

*Pathos* – Posts were coded as pathos if 75 percent or more of the post’s content constituted an emotional appeal designed to persuade readers by appealing to their emotions, through the use of humour, fear, sympathy or anger.

The posts were coded by three coders who underwent training. A reliability test based on a random sample of 100 posts showed a high level of inter-coder agreement (Kappa coefficient above 0.857).

## Results

In this section a description of politicians’ usage of the different rhetoric strategies in their social media campaigns is followed by an analysis of the popularity of those messages, measured by users’ reception of those messages. Table 1 presents the distribution of candidates’ rhetorical appeals. In line with *H1* ethos was found to be the most frequently used rhetorical strategy, and logos was by far the least frequently used rhetorical strategy. Two of the five politicians in our sample made little or no use of logos: Lapid made no use of logos as a rhetorical method, while Livni used logos in only one post. Ethos was the strategy most frequently used by all candidates except Bennett, who used pathos slightly more frequently than ethos in his Facebook posts.

**Table 1.** Candidates’ use of rhetorical appeals in the 2013 Israel elections

Appeal:	Ethos	Logos	Pathos	Total
Candidate				
Netanyahu	54	5	43	102
	52.9%	4.9%	42.2%	100%
Lapid	49	0	27	76
	64.5%		35.5%	100%
Yachimovich	54	18	34	106

	50.9%	17%	32.1%	100%
Bennett	47	5	49	101
	46.5%	5%	48.5%	100%
Livni	63	1	44	108
	58.3%	0.9%	40.7%	100%
Total	267	29	197	493
	54.2%	5.9%	40%	

*Note:* The percentages represent the proportion of each rhetorical appeal within the candidate's total number of posts.

An examination of the popularity of politicians' Facebook posts indicates a greater number of likes ( $m = 3174.53$ ;  $SD = 4266.60$ ) than shares ( $m = 302.80$ ;  $SD = 400.01$ ) in the total sample. Differences in the popularity of the three rhetorical strategies, measured by the number of likes and shares each attracted, were measured using a one-way ANOVA (including Scheffe *post hoc* analysis). Table 2 presents the popularity of candidates' posts (measured by the number of likes and shares), by rhetorical appeal. In line with *H2* posts that used pathos attracted a significantly greater number of likes than either ethos-based or logos-based posts. Logos appeals were also significantly more popular than ethos appeals, when popularity was measured by the number of shares. Findings indicated no significant differences between pathos and ethos, or between pathos and logos, in terms of number of shares. Thus *H3* was not supported.

**Table 2.** Popularity of rhetorical appeals on Facebook

	Ethos	Logos	Pathos
Like	2632.39 <sup>a</sup>	2563.38 <sup>a</sup>	4352.81 <sup>b</sup>
Share	272.37 <sup>a</sup>	440.97 <sup>b</sup>	353.49 <sup>ab</sup>

*Note:* Entries are means. Groups with the same letter do not have significant differences; all other differences are significant ( $p \leq 0.05$ ).

## Discussion and conclusions

The study examines Israeli politicians' Aristotelian rhetorical strategies used on Facebook posts during the Israeli 2013 elections, and the popularity of each strategy measured by likes and shares. Israel represents a case study of a democratic multi-party system where

candidates compete fiercely with each other (Balmas *et al.*, 2014). The move from party-centred to personalised politics, combined with the competitive environment of multi-party system election campaigns, motivates politicians to emphasise their character traits, credibility and leadership ability in comparison to the other contenders (Sheafer and Wolfsfeld, 2009). In line with our first hypothesis, which anticipated that the Israeli politicians would emphasise their character (expressed by the ethos strategy), ethos was indeed the most popular strategy used by Israeli politicians in their 2013 election campaign Facebook posts. This finding is in contrast to emotion-based discourse that characterises the two-party system election campaigns, including the 2008 US elections (Erikson, 2008), the 2012 US elections (Bronstein, 2013) and the 2010 UK elections (Baxter and Marcella, 2012). Thus we argue that the multi-party system led to online rhetoric where candidates emphasise their advantages over their competitors using ethos rhetoric. This finding highlights the importance of the need to continue to study politicians' Facebook rhetoric through the prism of political systems.

Although the study attributes the findings to differences in political systems, other causes may also account for the differences between US politicians' rhetoric and the prevalence of ethos in Israel politicians' online rhetoric, specifically differences between US and Israeli cultural values (Yarchi, 2014). The value dimensions of Hofstede (1980, 1994), Inglehart and Welzel (2005) and Schwartz (1994, 1999) illustrate that the United States and Israel share several values including equality in terms of power distance, individualism and self-expression. However, the United States is more hierarchical and traditional than Israel, and Israel has a higher level of uncertainty avoidance (a value that indicates that a society is dealing with high stress) in comparison to the United States (Yarchi, 2014). Accordingly high usage of ethos-based posts might be attributed to Israel's less hierarchical society, within which politicians may need to emphasise their personal characters in order to convince voters that they are uniquely qualified to lead.

The second important finding is the significance of pathos-based messages in attracting likes, which is in line with findings of other studies that link likes and entertaining content (Baxter and Marcella, 2012; Erikson, 2008). The act of liking, which reflects low engagement, corresponds with readers' affection for – in the case of these elections – images of Benjamin Netanyahu playing with his family in the snow or Zipi Livni hugging her soldier son who came home for the weekend.

Findings concerning sharing were less clear-cut than in the likes realm, and no single rhetoric appeal dominated sharing activity. The results illustrated the ability of pathos to

mobilise followers but also the potential of logos-based messages to attract shares. The power of logos-based appeals may reflect the Israeli cultural need for certainty noted above (Yarchi, 2014), which reflects an affinity for sharing informative and rational information. Another potential explanation is that those who tend to share are often more engaged social media users and thus they prefer logos-based discourse, as described by previous studies of social networking sites' election discourse of politically engaged groups in the United States, such as students (Fernandes *et al.*, 2010; Kushin and Yamamoto, 2010). Evidence suggests that politically oriented groups prefer sharing factual information (Mascaro *et al.*, 2012; Gerlitz and Helmond, 2013; Katz, 2014; Malhotra *et al.*, 2013; Nicholas, 2013; Pryor *et al.*, 2007).

Both Bronstein's (2013) analysis of US social media and the current study on Israeli social media found some discrepancies between politicians' output and social media behaviour. In the United States although the pathos strategy was the most prevalent, Obama's followers actually commented more on his logos-based posts (Bronstein, 2013). In Israel the analysis revealed that although Israeli politicians mostly used ethos, users' attention was most attracted by pathos for liking, and by pathos and logos for sharing. Thus ethos was arguably the least effective strategy. This discordance illustrates that campaign managers should consider a more balanced mix of rhetoric to maximise social media users' support. Specifically logos, the least used strategy, perhaps due to its image as a strategy with long-term effects (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986), proved to be a highly effective rhetorical strategy for promoting sharing and engagement.

Future studies should consider examining the usage and reception of rhetorical strategies in social media campaigns of other countries with a multi-party system, to evaluate the extent to which our findings can be generalised to other countries. Studies have identified various trends such as personalisation that are common across multi-party systems (e.g. Holtz-Bacha *et al.*, 2014), which should provide strong incentive for scholars to understand whether politicians' output and social media users' behaviour are similar in these countries.

### **Study limitations**

As in many other studies, coverage of all the aspects of Facebook discourse was beyond the scope of our study and resources. In our analysis we did not examine the profiles of Facebook visitors who share and like. Such an analysis might have illuminated the identity, nature, motivations and differences between Facebook members who share and like, and might better explain the differences between user behaviour in those two Facebook aspects.

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## Aristotelian Rhetoric and Facebook Success in Israel's 2013 Election Campaign

*Table 1*

*Candidates' Use of Rhetorical Appeals in the 2013 Israel Elections*

Candidate \ Appeal	Ethos	Logos	Pathos	Total
Netanyahu	54	5	43	102
	52.9%	4.9%	42.2%	100%
Lapid	49	0	27	76
	64.5%		35.5%	100%
Yachimovich	54	18	34	106
	50.9%	17%	32.1%	100%
Bennett	47	5	49	101
	46.5%	5%	48.5%	100%
Livni	63	1	44	108
	58.3%	0.9%	40.7%	100%
Total	267	29	197	493
	54.2%	5.9%	40%	

The percentages represent the proportion of each rhetorical appeal within the candidate's total number of posts.

## Aristotelian Rhetoric and Facebook Success in Israel's 2013 Election Campaign

Table 2

*Popularity of Rhetorical Appeals on Facebook*

	Ethos	Logos	Pathos
Like	2632.39 <sup>a</sup>	2563.38 <sup>a</sup>	4352.81 <sup>b</sup>
Share	272.27 <sup>a</sup>	440.97 <sup>b</sup>	353.49 <sup>ab</sup>

Note: Entries are means. Groups with the same letter do not have significant differences, all other differences are significant ( $p \leq .05$ ).