



Political Communication via Social Media: Future Forward Party's Message Appeals and Media Format Usage on Facebook and Twitter and Links to Political Participation of Generation Z Audiences¹

การสื่อสารการเมืองผ่านสื่อสังคมออนไลน์:
รูปแบบและจุดดึงดูดใจในเนื้อหาสารบนเฟซบุ๊กและทวิตเตอร์
ของพรรคอนาคตใหม่ กับการมีส่วนร่วมทางการเมือง
ของเจเนอเรชันซี (Z)

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บทคัดย่อ

การหาเสียงเลือกตั้ง ปี พ.ศ. 2560 นับได้ว่าเป็นครั้งแรกของประเทศไทย
ที่พรรคการเมืองได้นำ เอาการสื่อสารผ่านสื่อสังคมออนไลน์เข้ามาช่วยในการ

หาเสียง (ประจักษ์ ก้องกีรติ 2018 และ 2019) พรรคที่เป็น ที่กล่าวถึงมากที่สุด ถึงการสร้างปรากฏการณ์จากการนำเอาสื่อใหม่เข้ามาใช้คือพรรคอนาคตใหม่ ที่ได้ดึงเอา ฐานเสียงจากคนรุ่นใหม่ซึ่งเป็นประชากรส่วนใหญ่ในโลกออนไลน์ โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่ง ในหมู่คนเจนเนอเรชั่นซี (Z) หรือคนที่เกิดในช่วง ปี พ.ศ. 2539 – 2543 มาเป็นฐานเสียงสนับสนุนพรรค ในขณะเดียวกัน ตั้งแต่มี กระแส ความนิยมพรรคขึ้นมา ก็เป็นที่น่าสังเกตว่าคนรุ่นใหม่ในประเทศไทยมีความ กระตือรือร้นในเรื่องของการเมืองมากขึ้นด้วย บทความนี้จะนำเสนอการศึกษา การสื่อสารผ่านสื่อสังคมออนไลน์ของพรรคอนาคตใหม่ และความเชื่อมโยงของ การสื่อสารจากพรรคกับการมีส่วนร่วมทางการเมืองของคนรุ่นใหม่ โดยเฉพาะ กลุ่ม ผู้รับสารที่อยู่ในเจนเนอเรชั่นซี ในการศึกษา ได้ทำกรณีวิเคราะห์จากแหล่ง ข้อมูลสองประเภท ได้แก่ ข้อมูลด้านเอกสาร คือสารจากพรรคอนาคตใหม่ ในเฟสบุ๊คและทวิตเตอร์ที่ได้รับความนิยมสูงสุดจำนวน 40 โพสต์/ทวิต และข้อมูล ด้านบุคคล คือการสัมภาษณ์แบบเจาะลึกกับกลุ่มผู้รับสารที่อยู่ในเจนเนอเรชั่นซี และเป็นผู้มีสิทธิ์เลือกตั้งในปี พ.ศ. 2562 จำนวน 22 คน โดยมีขอบเขตการ ศึกษาตั้งแต่วันที่ 21 มีนาคม 2562 – 21 มีนาคม 2563 และ แบ่งออกเป็น สองช่วงเวลาคือช่วงก่อนยุบพรรค (21 มีนาคม 2562 – 21 กุมภาพันธ์ 2563) และหลังยุบพรรค (21 กุมภาพันธ์ 2563 – 21 มีนาคม 2563) จากการศึกษา สรุปผลได้ว่าพรรคอนาคตใหม่มีการใช้จุดมุ่งใจเชิงเหตุผลร่วมกับอารมณ์ มากที่สุด ในสารของพรรคที่นำเสนอผ่านเฟสบุ๊คและทวิตเตอร์ อีกทั้งพรรค อนาคตใหม่ยังมีการนำเอารูปแบบการนำเสนอสารที่หลากหลาย มาประกอบกัน ในแต่ละเนื้อหา และมีการใช้รูปแบบที่หลากหลายมากขึ้นในช่วงหลัง พรรค ถูกยุบ นอกจากนี้ จากการสัมภาษณ์แบบเจาะลึก พบว่า กลุ่มผู้รับสารเจนเนอเรชั่นซี เห็นว่าการสื่อสาร ผ่านสื่อสังคมออนไลน์ของ พรรคอนาคตใหม่ ยังมีส่วน ในการกระตุ้นให้เกิดการมีส่วนร่วมทางการเมืองอีกด้วย

คำสำคัญ: การสื่อสารการเมือง, การสื่อสารผ่านสื่อออนไลน์, เครือข่ายสังคม ออนไลน์, การมีส่วนร่วมทางการเมือง, พรรคอนาคตใหม่, เจเนอเรชั่นซี

ABSTRACT

Thailand's 2019 general election has been regarded as the first time for the country to have news media, especially social media, as one of the crucial communication tools for a political campaign (Kongkeerati 2018 and 2019). Future Forward Party rapidly grabbed the most attention from Thai social media users, especially first-time voters who are mainly Generation Z (Gen Z), born in 1996 – 2000. In the meantime, Thai youth political enthusiasm sprung up since this party became popular. The present study investigates how Future Forward Party communicated with Gen Z receivers via online platforms and whether the party's online contents link to GenZers' political participation. The research methodology divides into two parts; textual analysis and in-depth interview. Both methods employ the same time frame, March 21st, 2019 – March 21st, 2020), which is separated into two periods – before the party was dissolved (March 21st, 2019 – February 21st, 2019) and after the party discontinued (February 21st, 2020 – March 21st, 2020). The textual analysis retrieved data from Future Forward's 40 most famous Facebook posts and Twitter tweets, while 22 Gen-Z informants, who were eligible for the General Election in 2019, imparted data to us via in-depth interviews. The results indicate that the Future Forward Party uses a combination of rational and emotional appeals in their Facebook posts and Twitter tweets. The party also introduces multiple presentational formats to online contents and even increases the variety after it disbanded. Furthermore, in-depth interviews with GenZ audiences signal that the party's online communication influenced their political participation.

Keywords: Political communication, Online communication, Social media, Political participation, Future Forward Party, Generation Z

Introduction

According to Kongkeerati (2018 and 2019), the 2019 Thailand General Election was noticeably the first time for the country to have new media, especially social media, playing an essential role in promoting political campaigns. After a big gap of time from the last successful election in 2011, the election also attracted new voters to participate in voting enthusiastically. According to the Department of Provincial Administration of Thailand, the country had over 7 million new voters, calculated as at least 14 percent of total Thai suffrages. New voters' voices became political parties' goal, yet not every party could successfully catch their interests.

Several media and scholars have mentioned the Future Forward Party to win the new voters' hearts. Many have ascribed that the majority of 3 million votes that helped the party to win the 3rd place in the election poured from the new voters, especially those in generation Z. This corresponds to Super Poll polling in August 2019, which revealed that most young people favored Future Forward Party, notably among those aged below 20 (81.9%) and 20 – 30 (67.4%) (Post Today 2019). Undeniably, its proper communication scheme took one of the keys to achievement in the election.

Since its establishment, the Future Forward Party had strategically emphasized online communication and received idolization from its target audiences – new generations. Not only social media accounts and an official website for audience reach, but the party had also linked trends or

phenomena to its activities by producing real-time contents (Mumman and Pensawas 2019). Its intention to resort to online communication indicates the influence of new media, specifically social media, to the party and its interest to convince the majority of users.

In 2019, online users in Thailand comprised 71 percent of its Thai population. Meanwhile, 62 percent of the Thai users were between 18 – 34 years old (Bullvyn 2019). For Facebook, people at the age of 18 – 24 and 25 – 34 majorities the total Thai users at 16 and 15 million accounts. Meanwhile, for people aged 35 – 44, 45 – 54, and 55 – 64, each group contributes to only single-digit million accounts (charathBank 2015). For Twitter, statistically recorded in January 2019, the platform had grown the most in South East Asia (Wongchaiyakoon 2019). Most users were people aged 15 – 24 (40 percent), followed by people aged 25 to 34 (26 percent). Knowing that social media majority users were from generation Z, political parties could take a significant step further of winning the election if they grasped how to impress the Zers.

In Toeyla's (2019) independent study entitled Media Exposure and Image Perception on Future Forward Party of People Aged 18 – 35 Years Old, the result shows that people aged 18 – 23 years old had the most media exposure to the party and were exposed to online media more than people at other age groups. Her study underlines the importance of online users at this age range to the Future Forward and leads to our question about the party's online political communication and its effect on the target audience.

As the winner of the election is a big party from another polar, the Future Forward winning the 3rd place in the election brought itself, along with Pheu Thai Party that won the second place, to lead the opposite side. Despite not winning a government role, the party never lost its internet popularity during its time inside and outside the parliament. In every parliament meeting, the party representatives' debate would often be mentioned and top-trended on Twitter. The party's activities, such as flash mobs, earned satisfying feedback from supporters in both the online and offline community.

Despite its popularity among the 3 million Thais, Future Forward's path in Thailand's house of representative did not stay long. The party and its leader Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit faced legal issues that one of the disputes eventually ended its journey in the parliament. On February 21st, 2020, nearly one year after the election, Thailand Constitutional Court adjudged the party to dissolve according to a 191-million-Thai-baht loan from Juangroongruangkit. The Court interpreted the party's debt as receiving a donation, considered violating the 2017 Thai Constitutional Law and 2017 Constitutional Act. The sentence disqualified the party leaders from involving politics for ten years, including refraining from registering for elections, administering political parties, and founding political parties, since the day of the sentence (Matichon 2020 and Daily News 2020).

Nevertheless, Future Forward's popularity was not taken away with the dissolution. On the day the party was judged, the party's announcement on Facebook drew more than 2.5 thousand shares and 1.5 million views. Moreover, the hashtag “#saveอนาคตใหม่” (save Future Forward)

was trending with over 1.77 million tweets on the same day. After the disband, Future Forward, temporarily naming its group as “Future Forward Movement,” continued its political activities outside the parliament. For instance, the group hosted “outside-parliament impeachment.” It also advocated the remaining Representatives of the ex-party, who were still qualified, persevere their works in parliament, especially to persist in the 1st official impeachment, held several days after the dissolution. In the meantime, the group’s first activity outside the parliament has brought the ‘1MDB’ dispute that the current government could be involved. The issue raised over 4.5 thousand shares and 1.9 million views from the group’s Facebook live, and more than 2.4 million “#1MDB” hashtag uses on Twitter.

Moreover, in the same week after the dissolution, students from over 20 universities demonstrated flash mobs and hashtag-trended opposing the government. After the party’s discontinuation, the awakened youth movement links to our curiosity about what the Future Forward has communicated to the youth via social media.

In this research, the question is how Future Forward Party utilized message appeals and media format in their social media contents, and how Generation Z audiences thought about the party’s influence on their political participation. Hence, the research was conducted based on two methods - textual analysis and in-depth interview, to study both message sender and receiver sides. The textual analysis was applied to study Future Forward’s online communication appeals and content formats, while the in-depth interview was utilized to collect the audiences’ opinions on political communication.

Political Communication

Firstly, we must know the definition of political communication. According to McNair (2011), political communication refers to purposeful communication about politics. Political communication embraces: 1) Any forms of communication relayed by politicians and other political actors to gain particular objectives, 2) Communication addressed to above actors by non-politicians, i.e., suffrages and activists, and 3) “Communication about these actors and their activities” that appears in “news reports, editorials and other forms of media discussion of politics, such as blogs and social media posts” (McNair 2011, 4).

Political communication, therefore, is any form of discussion related to politics. Besides, this does not merely include verbal and written communications, but also any other visual means of signification that contains the message and purpose of politics.

As for McNair (1999), political communication contains three elements: political institutions, citizens, and media. Political institution refers to political actors, including political parties, public organizations, pressure groups, terrorists, et cetera. The second element is the citizens. Citizens are the primary targets for all political communication types for their changing behavior. Without citizens, the political communication process cannot be completed.

Media is the last element of the political communication process. In McNair’s definition, media refers to media institutions, such as print media, broadcast media, and online media, including websites created

by media institutions. Media plays both as being a channel for displaying political information and as a message sender.

Additionally, Berlo's (1960) communication process is also regarded in this type of communication. In this study, the Future Forward as a political institution plays a sender role, which we will perceive its online contents as messages. Media is conditioned as a communication channel, while the citizens, which are the generation Z, represent the receiver role.

Social Media, Presentation Formats and Engagement Rate

Social media refers to a new media that senders dwell as a channel for spreading messages to receivers. Social media presents message exchange on the internet, wherein senders and receivers can interact. Nowadays, social media is the most commonly used of all new media types. Famous social media types are blogging, Twitter and microblogging, social networking, and media sharing (Vichitboonyarak 2011). Additionally, social media usage contributes to a community called a social network.

A social network, according to (Kaewket 2013), is defined as “online communities that connect to build networks for satisfying social needs in creating and emphasizing networks or social relations among people who have common interests or activities.” In using social media, users usually have ‘sharing’ behavior in the social network. The sharing refers to forwarding to other users in the same network. The shared information can be messages, articles, pictures, videos, et cetera (PCmag n.d.).

For Future Forward’s online communication channels, the group has two official social media accounts; Facebook page “อนาคตใหม่ – Future Forward” and Twitter “Future Forward.” Both accounts are popular among many Thai users, yet each has specific characteristics.

For instance, Facebook provides services to exploit social networks for personal and business purposes. When networks, which link users who are acquaintances or have common interests, expand, products, services, and other persuasions grow. Joyce Lucien (2014) distinguishes famous Facebook formats by content creators into six types; link, list, photo, place review, video, and infographics.

On the other hand, Twitter qualifies for both social networking and microblogging. The platform features fast news exchanging and trending that users can follow. Unlike Facebook, Twitter links people indeed with common interests more than using acquaintances. Twitter users are not required to disclose their actual identity. Wishpond.com categorizes formats widely applied in Twitter into six types; text, photo, video, Slideshare, news summaries, and links.

However, types of available content formats that users widely use can be conclusively shared between the two platforms, as they are both social network platforms, as follows: text, still image, sound, video, and link.

In persuasive online communication, receivers’ engagement can determine the popularity of each content. Each website or platform uses various numbers of activities based on its function. Facebook and Twitter

have both different and similar types of activities to rate engagement. Facebook uses the number of likes, comments, and shares as an engagement rate (Chaikositirom 2018), while Twitter resorts to the number of likes, comments, and retweets (Molek 2019).

Appeal Usage in Social Media Political Communication

Communication aims to urge behavioral changes (Iamnirun 2011), which dwells on successful persuasion. In Kongsamak's definition (2016), persuasion means when humans communicate to influence others. The influence is to change belief, value, or attitude. Attitude comprises perception, feeling, and behavior. Behavior can change into five levels: knowledge, understanding, realization, attitude change, and behavior change. In changing behavior, senders need to consider proper message appeals, which are the underlying tone of the message that senders try to pass on to receivers. Additionally, appeals have the power to magnetize receivers closer to the purpose of communication (Weilbacher 1984 and Hongcharu 2018).

Appeals have been exercised in media advertising for decades. The role of persuasive appeals has been studied since the early 1960s. Nowadays, appeal categorization varies from researcher to researcher, yet the most famous typology uses emotion for identifying. Similar to some other scholars, Prachon (2004) concludes appeals into three types – rational, emotional, and combination between rational and emotional appeals.

Rational appeals persuade receivers by using reasons, facts, and information that responds to human perception and logic. This type of appeal targets to attract receivers to picture their own advantages or characteristics of presented objects that will respond to their needs. (Weilbacher 1984 and Prachon 2004)

On the contrary, emotional appeals employ emotions and feelings to facilitate receivers' social and psychological needs (Cutler and Javalgi 1993 and Hongcharu 2018)

To illustrate what can be counted as emotional or rational appeals, researchers combine vastly different things into each category. However, for this study, which involves the context of political communication, the two types of appeals can be described as follows: rational appeals as uses of evidence, testimony and reasoning, and emotional appeals as uses of anger, fear, humor (including parody), motivation, guilt, and devotion to others, nostalgia, poignancy, pride, relief, sorrow, patriotism, achievement, aesthetics, and affiliation.

While the above two main categories of appeals seem to be opposite, they can gather into the third type – a combination of rational and emotional appeals. Indeed, combining the two different types of appeals has been widely accepted and successfully implemented in the advertising industry. Some believe that, by using both types, humans can practice both left and right brain, which results in them being able to make a better decision (Prachon 2004).

Many scholars observe that emotional appeals are more popular than rational appeals. Political scientists remark that in political communication practice, such as political parties' persuasive communication, emotional appeals draw more successful results than rational appeals. Similarly, Kongsamak (2016) states that, in general, messages with emotional appeals are more persuasive than messages without emotional appeals. However, Agres (1991) argues that emotional appeals are persuasive whenever rational appeals are not attractive enough or when reasons cannot differentiate the message.

Internet Communication and Political Participation

Future Forward exploited online communication to convince the audience to change or develop some specific behaviors. In the same way, online communication itself could result in changing or developing behaviors of users.

While some political scientists do not believe that the internet can bring about political participation (Bimber 2001), mass media theories indicate that telecommunication technology such as traditional media and the internet instead help increase participation (Tolbert and McNeal 2003), as a result of information that citizens can access.

Bimber (1998) points out that communication via the internet could lead to 2 changes. First, the populist – the internet could make individuals more influenced to government and politics since they can communicate to those authorities more easily via the new channel. In other words, the internet encourages decentralization in communication and adds channels

to access to information for citizens. Second, community – the internet could take a role in expanding the community. With the internet, physical distance, location, and cultural differences could no longer impel a community's emerging or existence. A community can always form whenever there is an interaction between individuals via an internet network at a particular time.

Coleman and Norris (2005) support the concept of internet and political participation that internet roles in a democracy can be distinguished into three functions: information function, communication function, and action function. Citizens can interact with government, representatives, or political groups' representatives in a new way via this new media, while the internet can also permit political parties, groups of interests, and new notions in the society.

Additionally, Price and Cappella (2006) found that citizens who express their opinions via online platforms tend to develop social trust, political participation, and community participation more than those who do not. In other words, online communication enhances citizens' participation, consultation, and debate, including engaging in political decisions.

In short, to the Future Forward as a sender, the internet facilitates it to have more channels to connect with targets. To the targets, it enhances the convenience for them to access the party's and the other political groups' information, making a better decision. Furthermore, communication on the internet can also bring about some behaviors, such as participating in political activities.

Methods

Textual analysis of Future Forwards online contents and in-depth interviews with the receivers' side have been conducted in this research. Data from both methods were divided into two periods – before the party dissolution (March 21st, 2019 - February 21st, 2020) and after the dissolution (February 21st, 2020 – March 21st, 2020).

Numbers of shares and retweets were introduced to rank Facebook posts and Twitter tweets from Future Forward's official accounts. Most engaged contents from Future Forward's official Facebook “อนาคตใหม่ – Future Forwards” and Twitter “Future Forwards,” and from the period of before and after the party was dissolved, were filtered down to top 10 from each platform and period for the analysis, to 40 contents in total.

To determine what types of appeals were applied the most, three types of message appeals – rational appeals, emotional appeals, a combination of rational and emotional appeals, were designated as an analysis framework. Furthermore, keywords, sound effects, and visual means were also observed to find each message's key appeals. The three following examples from the analysis process illustrate how we analyzed which content to which appeal.



Example 1: Facebook post with a combination of rational and emotional appeals (reason, evidence, and humor)

The content encloses reasoning, evidence, and humor. Official documents and stories displaying reason are used as rational appeals, while the video also includes memes and amusing sounds to make the content parody.

Example 2: Facebook post with a rational appeal (evidence)



Example 3: Future Forward’s tweet with a emotional appeal (humor)

The content mainly uses humor appeal in the message “how was it? Outside-parliament Impeachment by Natashor Romanoff” with emojis’ detective’, teasing the party’s representative Shor Pannikar Wanich by comparing her with Natasha Romanoff – one of the main characters from the superhero movie The Avengers, as Wanich strikes the government side with evidence of corruption involvement.

On the receivers' side, the sample group was chosen using the non-probability sampling method with a combination of judgmental sampling and snowball sampling. The judgmental sampling asked every informant with the same selection questions; whether the informant was born between 1996 – 2000, whether the informant has seen Future Forward's Facebook or Twitter content(s) before, and whether the informant was eligible for voting in the 2019 General Election. Sample choosing and in-depth interviews continued until the data reached saturation. Finally, the interviews were conducted in confidentiality with 22 informants, whose names were withheld and entitled from Anonymous Informant A to Anonymous Informant V. The informants were asked if the Future Forwards' online communication influenced their political participation before and after the party was disbanded.

Results

Future Forward's Appeal Usage and Media Formats in Social Media

Analysis of the text using appeal and online media format framework was conducted with 40 most engaged contents (10 from each platform and each period). The results can be described in the following tables.

Table 1. Appeals in contents and formats used in Future Forward's Facebook and Twitter before party dissolution

Appeals	Formats	number of posts
Facebook		
Rational - evidence	text and image	1
Emotional - motivation	text and video	1
Emotional - humor	text and video	1
Emotional - motivation & anger	text and video	1
Combination of rational & emotional - reason, evidence & humor	text and video	1
Combination of rational & emotional - testimonial & humor	text and video	2
Combination of rational & emotional - evidence, testimonial & humor	text and video	1
Combination of rational & emotional - evidence, testimonial & anger	text and video	1
Combination of rational & emotional - evidence & anger	text and video	1
Twitter		
Emotional - motivation	text	1
Emotional - motivation & affiliation	text	1
Emotional - anger	text and image	2
Emotional - humor	text and image	1
	text and video	2
Combination of rational & emotional - evidence & anger	text and image	1
Combination of rational & emotional - testimonial & motivation	text and image	1
Combination of rational & emotional - reason & relief	text and image	1

From table 1, the results show that before the dissolution, 7 of 10 Facebook posts displayed a combination of rational and emotional appeals. 2 posts came with emotional appeals, while only one post featured rational appeals. The appeals found in the combination of rational and emotional appeals comprised using reason with evidence and humor, testimonial with humor, evidence with testimonial and humor, evidence with testimonial and anger, and evidence with anger. For presentation formats, most posts depended on the use of text and video.

Meanwhile, on Twitter, 7 of 10 famous tweets carried emotional appeals, while the other three tweets utilized combination appeals. In the solely-used emotional appeal tweets, we found motivation, motivation and affiliation, anger, and humor applied as message appeals. Text and image and text and video were employed in these seven tweets.

Table 2. Appeals in contents and formats used in Future Forward’s Facebook and Twitter after the party dissolution

Appeals	Formats	number of posts
Facebook		
Emotional - motivation	text and video	1
Emotional - humor	text and image	1
Emotional - poignancy & motivation	text and image	1
Emotional - motivation & anger	text and video	1
Combination of rational & emotional - evidence & humor	text and video text and link	1 1

Appeals	Formats	number of posts
Combination of rational & emotional - testimonial and anger	text and sound	1
	text and image	1
	text and video	1
Combination of rational & emotional - reason & anger	text and video	1
Twitter		
Rational - testimonial	text and sound	1
Emotional - humor	text	1
	text and image	1
	text and link	1
Combination of rational & emotional - evidence and humor	text and link	1
Combination of rational & emotional - reason and humor	text	
Combination of rational & emotional - reason and anger	text and image	1
	text and video	1
Combination of rational & emotional - testimonial and anger	text and sound	1
Combination of rational & emotional - evidence and motivation	text and link	1

Unlike before the disbanding, the results from table 2 indicate that both Future Forward's famous posts and tweets applied a combination of rational and emotional appeals the most after the dissolution. On Facebook, 6 of 10 posts showed the combination of rational and emotional appeals, while the other four posts appeared only the emotional appeals. Appeals found in most posts reflected applying evidence with humor, testimonial with anger, and reason with anger. Format types adopted in most posts were text and image, text and sound, text and link, and text and video.

On Twitter, 6 of 10 tweets employed combination appeals, three tweets proceeded with emotional appeals, while only one tweet came with the purely rational appeal. In the six tweets, evidence and humor, reason and humor, reason and anger, and evidence and motivation were selected as appeals. Besides, text, text and image, text and sound, text and link, and text and video are displayed as presentational formats in most tweets.

Future Forward's Online Communication and Political Participation

We also conducted in-depth interviews with 22 informants who were Gen Z suffrages and had received messages from the Future Forward via Facebook and Twitter before and after the disband. There were two sets of information about their political participation related to Future Forward's online communication.

First, most informants agreed that, before the disbanding, Future Forward's online communication took an essential role in motivating them to participate politically. The informants added that most of Future Forward's messages that encouraged them were messages with useful and reliable information for receivers.

"Using supporting reasons in their talks definitely makes people believe, especially if the statement improves (get along with) actions, people will trust it more. Their messages are rational" – Anonymous Informant N

“They (Future Forward) would usually bring up astonishing topics, making us ‘wow,’ such as new and interesting topics. As a result, it feels like we are more engaged with them.” – Anonymous Informant V

Second, after the party was dissolved, informants who counted themselves for participating in a higher level of political participation, especially countrywide student flash mobs in March 2020, pointed that two factors were encouraging them to enhance participation; that is, Future Forward’s online communication and the party disband that emerged youth massive online movement. Similar to before the dissolution, the informants’ favored messages from Future Forward that presented useful information. However, the displayed contents were not only for receivers’ advantages but also for criticizing the opposition.

As stated, Future Forward’s communication seemingly was not found as the sole main factor that stimulated a higher level of participation in this second period. Indeed, the court decision to dissolve the party triggered the youth movement, which began via an online platform and elevated to offline activities. However, the informants added that the root cause was not directly just because of the dissolution. In the youths’ aspect, they destined the court decision as a tipping point for elevating the movement’s solidity, supported by negative attitudes towards the opposition that had developed throughout a period of time. With the higher intensity of the Future Forward’s online contents and the party’s critical situation, youths seemed to be moved to the more solid political activities.

“In my opinion, the party’s communication can be described in 2 aspects. The first aspect is the party’s personal feelings. This does not

have an impact on us at all. At least for me. It does not matter at all. If the party were fairly dissolved or judged, it would not motivate people to go out to the mob. Indeed, (it was due to) the information they offered (which) had clear evidence. For example, there is a real IO. This group is real. There is actual corruption. The 1MDB is real. These definitely make us go out because they disclose real information. On the other hand, if they presented some information with no supporting evidence, we would not be urged.” – Anonymous Informant B

“After the party was dissolved, the Future Forward really lighted up our motivation to go to the demonstration. If they (Future Forward) did not uncover the truths, people would not be this enlightened.” – Anonymous Informant R

“I think the party dissolution is not just a normal dissolution. Actually, it makes us university students and new generations angry. And when we are angry, there will be a movement.” – Anonymous Informant T

Conclusion

Though most highly engaged posts/tweets utilized combination appeals, the result remarked that most of the popular contents consist of emotional appeals, both as solely emotional appeal type and as a combination. In more details of what was revealed in each type of appeal, we found that Future Forward practiced anger, humor, and motivation the most. Moreover, after the disband, more anger and humor appeals were brought to implementation after the dissolution. However, most of the humor-appeal contents were observed as using a parody rather than

positive humor. The use of emotional appeals resembles Kongsamak (2016) about the persuasive message that, in general, a message that contains emotional appeals can persuade the audience more effectively than a message without emotional appeals.

However, more than half of the contents also included rational appeals. For example, in Facebook before the disband and in both platforms after the disband, most highly engaged posts/tweets had a combination of rational and emotional appeals. The combining of rational and emotional appeals complies with Prachon (2004) 's message presentation concept. As mentioned previously, Prachon emphasizes that using combination appeals will encourage receivers to make a decision better and faster, which in this sense, is Future Forward's contents that are full of persuasive messages aiming for receivers' conforming, trust, and other behaviors. In some cases, presenting a message with purely rational or emotional appeals might not create the audience's behavior change.

For instance, in messages for attacking the opposition, introducing only emotional appeals might not be enough to convince the audience or make them trust. Thus, rational appeals such as testimonials, evidence, or reasoning will need to be applied in the messages so that the receivers can believe in the messages and develop behavior change later. On the other hand, presenting only evidence might not be enough to urge the audience to reach the expected extent of reaction and behavior. Therefore, the other type of appeals will also be needed to use for spurring the receivers.

Another point of the Future Forward's online communication found in the study was its variety use of presentational format, and the variety specifically increased after the disband. To illustrate, both before and after the dissolution, Future Forward focused not only on choosing one format to convey the message, but most of their contents were also mixed with more than one format to make the message more complete. Not only that, after the disband, it was found that the Future Forward even used more variety of presentation formats. It is implied that the more Future Forward's desires to introduce more stress after the disband, the more diverse media formats were used, and more engagement was earned.

The two findings on the receivers' side also represent the possibility that Future Forward might be an influencer for the new generations' movement in Thailand. According to the interview result, we remark that, before the party was dissolved, contents filled with useful messages have made the Generation Z receivers feel important, creating their trust in the party. Meanwhile, after the dissolution, the more informative and intense messages, the more the trust from receivers would be strengthened, and the more the receivers are motivated to participate politically.

Besides the influence of the Future Forward's online communication, the study also suggests another finding of the youth movement after the party dissolution. As earlier stated, the verdict to discontinue the party was only the last straw but not the underlying cause of the movement; we assume that more factors aroused participation, such as experience and attitude that the youth had grown over time. Moreover, the stream that expanded from online to offline reflects internet communication and

political participation in how the internet expands community (Bimber 1998) and eventually leads to more political participation (Price and Cappella 2006).

Endnotes

- ¹ This article was edited and developed from a master's degree thesis "Future Forward's Online Political Communication and Political Participation of Generation Z"
- ² Author, student in Master of Corporate Communication Management program, Thammasat University
- ³ Thesis advisor, assistant professor of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication of Thammasat University
- ⁴ The Siamese revolution of 1932 or Siamese coup d'état of 1932 (in Thai: **การปฏิวัติสยาม 2475** or 2475 Revolution) was a coup d'état taken place in Thailand on June 24th, 1932 by the first political party of the country known as the Kana Ratsadon (People's Party). The revolution derived Siam from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005). *A History of Thailand*. Cambridge University Press.

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Interviews

Anonymous Informant A, University Student, 23 Years Old, Interview on April 18, 2020.

Anonymous Informant B, University Student, 22 Years Old, Interview on April 25, 2020.

Anonymous Informant C, Private Company Employee, 22 Years Old, Interview on April 22, 2020.

Anonymous Informant D, Private Company Employee, 23 Years Old, Interview on April 17, 2020.

Anonymous Informant E, University Student, 22 Years Old, Interview on April 10, 2020.

Anonymous Informant F, University Student, 22 Years Old, Interview on April 11, 2020.

Anonymous Informant G, University Student, 19 Years Old, Interview on April 16, 2020.

Anonymous Informant H, University Student, 21 Years Old, Interview on April 8, 2020.

Anonymous Informant I, Unemployed, 22 Years Old, Interview on April 15, 2020.

Anonymous Informant J, University Student, 20 Years Old, Interview on April 12, 2020.

Anonymous Informant K, University Student, 22 Years Old, Interview on April 18, 2020.

Anonymous Informant L, University Student, 23 Years Old, Interview on April 14, 2020.

Anonymous Informant M, University Student, 20 Years Old, Interview on April 12, 2020.

Anonymous Informant N, University Student, 23 Years Old, Interview on April 13, 2020.

Anonymous Informant O, University Student, 21 Years Old, Interview on April 11, 2020.

Anonymous Informant P, University Student, 23 Years Old, Interview on April 20, 2020.

Anonymous Informant Q, University Student, 19 Years Old, Interview on April 29, 2020.

Anonymous Informant R, University Student, 22 Years Old, Interview on April 30, 2020.

Anonymous Informant S, University Student, 21 Years Old, Interview on April 27, 2020.

Anonymous Informant T, University Student, 21 Years Old, Interview on April 27, 2020.

Anonymous Informant U, University Student, 20 Years Old, Interview on April 28, 2020.

Anonymous Informant V, University Student, 20 Years Old, Interview on May 2, 2020.

