Evaluation of political candidate’s trust and commitment in social networks*

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Abstract

This research evaluates how voters perceive communication by political candidates in social networks, and how this perception influences the perceived trust and commitment. In order to do that, the research analyses and define both concepts shared values, opportunistic behaviour and trust, and measure them using reliable and valid measurement scales through a purposive sample obtained by means of a multichannel method. As a result, a causal model is presented, which indicates that searched values increase the level of trust, while the opportunistic behaviour reduces the level of trust. Moreover, trust has a direct and positive relationship with commitment.

**Keywords**: Social networks, Trust, Commitment, Shared Values, Political Candidate.

**JEL codes**: M31, M37.

1. Introduction

Over the last few decades, trust has become one of the main concerns within the domain of communication and politics. The reason underlying this is based on the widely accepted idea that trust and social capital are in decline in many advanced democracies such as the United States or the United Kingdom (Hardin, 2013).

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Trust and offline trust relationships have been a research topic addressed in many disciplines since the 1950s. Thus, lines of research on trust can be found in a wide range of fields including philosophy, sociology, psychology, management, commercialisation, ergonomics, human-computer interaction (HCI), industrial psychology and e-commerce (Corritore, Kracher and Wiedenbeck, 2003). The fact that it has been studied from different fields has given rise to a large number of definitions, approaches and conceptualisations. This diversity of definitions of this complex construct means having to choose one from among them and the one chosen for this study is that of Rotter (1971) because it fits the context of this work well, as well as being widely accepted among researchers working in the field of trust. Accordingly, we define trust as “the hope that an individual’s or a group’s promise can be relied on”.

The literature identifies the trust construct as an essential element in a relationship when uncertainty or risk is present (Pavlou, 2003). In the current stage of the economic and ethical-moral crisis that Spain is undergoing, trust becomes of vital importance, thereby justifying the interest shown in research on the trust in and commitment to political candidates held by electors. Furthermore and as a novel research contribution, this study has focused on the communication that arises and is conducted in the social networks. In short, the aim here is to determine whether this new means of communication used by political candidates is accepted by those with the right to vote and whether it helps them develop their trust, and its corresponding commitment, in the political candidate.

When trust in the social networks is studied, the association between trust and social relationship often appears (Mayer, 1990). Thus, the level of trust would be a measure of the belief in another entity and a measure of the belief in the honesty, competence, security and dependability of that entity (Mital, Israel and Agarwal, 2010).

The social networks have appeared as a platform that is becoming increasingly more influential. Researchers have begun to study how it is bringing about changes in communication and in interpersonal relationships (Zhang and Daugherty, 2009). Moreover, it is necessary to adopt and learn a communicative methodology about online media and to include the new information and communication technologies with the aim of arousing an interest in the public opinion and exerting an influence on the population so that they change and improve their attitudes towards the political parties and their candidates (Yousif and Alsamydai, 2012). Electoral and political programmes, as well as campaigns, must be dynamic. In this way they will be able to use the proposed changes to affect public opinion and the body of voters by employing both the traditional media (TV, radio, telephone, magazines) and the more modern ones (email, social networks, virtual communities, etc.), according to the target audience (Yousif and Alsamydai, 2012).

The first presidential election in which political candidates used the social networks as a tool for positioning themselves in the campaign was the 2008 presidential election in the United States of America (Hendricks and Denton, 2010). Yet,
the relationship between the social networks and political communication has been limited in many political campaigns, since they often depend on the traditional mass media to communicate with voters (Powell, Richmond and Williams, 2011).

The literature on communication within the field of politics acknowledges the role played by interpersonal communication in electoral or political campaigns. Hence, the aspects that receive most attention from researchers are interpersonal influences, opinion leadership and the conversations due to be held with other people (Powell and Cowart, 2003). Voters talk about political topics with others (Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1995), and use these conversations to evaluate information as they build up their own opinions (Mutz, 1998). Internet users are becoming increasingly more active in political issues, they have more power and they are more demanding in their relations with the traditional institutions, parties and political candidates (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). Consequently, research on social networks has identified a ‘latent need’ to trust the advice and recommendations to be found in the online environment. This latent need for information is even more obvious in politics and partly accounts for how opinions are formed in online settings (Sobkowicz, Kaschesky and Bouchard, 2012).

In this line, this research aims to study the communication of political candidates in the social networks and the consequences this has on the trust and commitment of persons with the right to vote. The conceptual study is based on the relationship marketing model proposed by Morgan and Hunt (1994), from which the main constructs of the proposed model have been extracted. The resulting model, although extended with second-order factors, has been deemed acceptable for research into the communication of political candidates in the social networks because, in many cases, it has been possible to apply the findings obtained in research into offline trust to an online environment, due to the similarities of the construct in the two settings (Corritore et al., 2003). The first element to be studied is the effect generated by the perception of the existence within the communication of values that are shared by the political candidate and potential voters as regards the trust in and commitment to him or her. The second aspect is whether the perception of opportunism or opportunistic behaviour by the candidate in those same communications reduces the potential voter’s trust in and commitment to the political candidate.

This paper is structured in the following way. First, the most closely related literature is summarised and each of the factors that make up the model is conceptualised by determining its variables and its structural relationships or hypotheses. Second, the method used in the empirical study that was conducted is described. A sample of 200 people with the right to vote, as well as being social network users and followers of political candidates, participated in this study. Third, the results obtained are presented and these are followed by conclusions and implications for practitioners. Finally, the limitations of the study are discussed and some issues to be addressed in future research are proposed.
2. Theoretical model and hypotheses

In the following, the latent variables that make up the model and the structural relationships among them or the causality hypotheses are reviewed.

Trust can be understood as the will to rely on an exchange partner that one trusts (Moorman, Zaltman and Deshpande, 1993). Morgan and Hunt (1994) claimed that trust exists when one of the parties has trust in the reliability and integrity of an exchange partner.

The literature suggests that trust in political candidates or the firm conviction that the party is worthy of trust is based on the fact that they are perceived as being reliable and upright. In short, they are associated with qualities such as being coherent, competent, honest, fair, responsible, useful and benevolent (Altman and Taylor, 1973; Dwyer and LaGace, 1986; Larzelere and Huston, 1980; Rotter, 1971). Within the context of politics, trust in a political candidate can be thought of in terms of relational trust, that is to say, the trust held by potential electors is a dependent part of the actions performed by the political candidate (Epstein, 1998; Hetherington, 1998; Levi and Stoker, 2000). Consequently, trust may change over time, according to how well (or how badly) the work being carried out by the political candidate to respond to the citizens’ expectations is perceived by those with the right to vote.

In the construction of trust in the proposed model, trust has been considered as the beliefs that a user of the social networks has about a political candidate and how his or her intention to use the social networks is perceived. According to McKnight, Cummings and Chervany (1998) and Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt and Camerer (1998), trust consists in trusting beliefs and intentions. Conceptualising trust on the basis of beliefs stems from a long history of research that considers that the essence of trust is grounded in perceptions about the candidate’s ethics (Ring and Van de Ven, 1994), about his or her capacity or competence (Gabarro, 1978), or about his or her predictability (Rempel, Holmes and Zanna, 1985), or about a combination of these characteristics (Giffin, 1967; McKnight, Choudhury and Kacmar, 2002). Hence, in the construction of trust in the proposed model, trust has been seen as a second-order construct made up of the following latent variables or factors: trustworthiness (the political candidate’s honesty and his or her promise to maintain it), benevolence (a political candidate’s motivation to act in the citizens’ interests) and competence (the candidate’s capacity to do what citizens need) (Flavian and Guinaliu, 2006; McKnight et al., 1998; Sirdeshmukh, Singh and Sabol, 2002).

Jones and George (1998) argue that shared values are the main vehicle allowing people to experience the highest form of trust: unconditional trust. The fact that two or more people share certain values about a topic generates a motivation between them; it could be said that they share an emotional identity that is characterised by a sense of belonging (Abizadeh, 2002). Shared values help people to trust and to create a propensity to trust (Brashear, Boles, Bellenger and Brooks, 2003; Dwyer et al., 1987). In this study and following in the same line as Morgan and Hunt (1994), shared values are considered to be a concept that is postulated as a direct precursor
of both the commitment relationship and the trust relationship (Dwyer et al., 1987; Nicholson, Compeau and Sethi, 2001). Accordingly, the following hypotheses are established:

\[ H1. \text{The more values are shared with the political candidate, the more trust in the candidate there will be.} \]

\[ H2. \text{The more values are shared with the political candidate, the higher the level of commitment to the candidate will be.} \]

The essence of opportunistic behaviour is deceit-oriented violation of implicit or explicit promises made about an appropriate or required behaviour (John, 1984). It is understood to have a negative influence when it comes to those with a right to vote achieving or maintaining their trust in or commitment to the political candidate. In society in general, reducing opportunistic behaviour among people can increase their mutual commitment, thereby furthering the development of a stable long-term relationship (Williamson, 1985). Within this field one notable study is that of Ting, Chen and Bartholomew (2007), which detects the lack of connection between the possible antecedents and consequences of an opportunistic behaviour in entrepreneurs and performs a preliminary approach to the matter. Unfortunately, a review of the literature did not yield any studies focusing on opportunistic behaviour between political candidates. For this reason and bearing in mind the contributions made by Ting et al. (2007) on the relation between opportunistic behaviour and trust and commitment, we understand opportunistic behaviour to be a second-order factor consisting of two antecedents, namely, uncertainty and information asymmetry. According to Ting et al. (2007), uncertainty refers to the scarce information held by people and their limited rationality. Gifford, Bobbitt and Slocum (1979) point out that if one has insufficient information to make an accurate decision or a prediction, or it is not possible to distinguish between related and unrelated information, then a situation of uncertainty is experienced, which may leave one of the parties vulnerable to the opportunistic behaviour of the other (Whang, 1992). Due to our limited rationality, we are unable to foresee all the situations that could lead to opportunistic behaviour. These situations are aggravated by the high level of uncertainty, since the political candidate's actions can only be observed by what is seen of them or what is said about them, and not by what they really do (Ting et al., 2007). Information asymmetry occurs when one of the two parties possesses more information than the other (Ting et al., 2007). In general, information asymmetry means that the capacity to detect opportunism is limited for the party that does not have all the information (Kirmani and Rao, 2000). Consequently, the one with more information is given a greater chance to undertake opportunistic practices without being discovered (Wathne and Heide, 2000). We can therefore state that the fact that information asymmetry exists may give rise to opportunistic behaviours (Williamson, 1975). In this case, the political candidate’s possessing more information than those with the right to vote may lead them to adopt opportunistic behaviour.
Likewise, opportunistic behaviour has two consequences: trust and commitment. Hence, opportunistic behaviours can have negative results that reduce the level of trust (Bell and Anderson, 2000; Dwyer et al., 1987). Sabel (1993) also points out that opportunistic behaviour is the opposite of trust, since there is a negative relationship between them. If restrictions can be imposed on the opportunistic behaviour between two people or parties, then trust will improve substantially (Smith and Barclay, 1997). With respect to commitment, Rousseau (2001) considers that opportunistic behaviour is one of the variables that has a detrimental effect on it in relationships. Therefore, by reducing opportunistic behaviour between two parties it is possible for them to increase their mutual commitment, and in this way they will develop a stable long-term relationship (Luo, 2001; Williamson, 1985). Regardless of the type of commitment, we all need trust in order to maintain our relationships (Ting et al., 2007). This is the reason why commitment is the result of having trust in the proposed model and why, albeit indirectly, a political candidate’s opportunistic behaviour will ultimately affect the commitment of those with a right to vote, since it affects the level of trust.

Based on these results and relations analysed in the literature, we can formulate the following hypothesis:

**H3. The greater the political candidate’s opportunistic behaviour is, the less trust there will be in the candidate.**

Apart from opportunistic behaviour, trust is also influenced by the integrity, benevolence and competence perceived in the candidate. According to Aurier and N’goala (2010), the commitment relationship goes beyond trust, as it is based on a process of identification with the values of the candidate, of the group they belong to or the party they are a member of. Hence, the commitment relationship implies a psychological union, a concern for the well-being of a person or group; in short, we are referring to a process of identification with the candidate’s or the political group’s values that will be evaluated in order to decide whether the political relationship will be maintained in a longer term. Therefore, taking on a commitment towards a political candidate also implies that, either directly or indirectly, a commitment relationship is acquired towards the social group and, we might add, the political party it represents (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999; Gundlach, Achrol and Mentzer, 1995). As regards the relationship between trust and commitment, it can be said that trust is a first-order factor for the generation of interpersonal commitment in the relationship (Achrol, 1991; Moorman et al., 1992). People who trust others will be more willing to take on a commitment with that same person, that is to say, commitment is generated as a consequence of trust (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). We thus establish the following hypothesis:

**H4. The greater the level of trust in the political candidate is, the higher the level of commitment to the candidate will be.**
3. Methodology

As regards the design of this research, it follows a causal and quantitative approach based on information obtained by means of a primary source survey. The study is of a multichannel nature, since information was collected by carrying out the survey both online and offline. In the offline setting, the personal interviews were conducted by stopping people on the street, and in the online setting two different channels were used. The former consisted in a survey using a self-administered questionnaire sent out by email, disseminated by social networks and political opinion forums (Facebook and Twitter), and the latter was sent by mobile phone via the application Whatsapp. The population to be investigated was defined as individuals with the right to vote and residing in Spain who follow political candidates in the social networks. As there was no sampling frame and several channels were used to access the population, it was not possible to apply a probabilistic sampling procedure. The procedure chosen was non-probability judgemental or purposive sampling. The fieldwork was carried out during July and August 2013. The final number of persons interviewed with valid questionnaires was 200. This number is adequate for applying confirmatory factor analysis and structural equations (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson and Tatham, 2006). The profile of the sample consisted of males (58%) and females (42%), aged between 18 and 45 (100%), single (77%) and married (22%), with secondary (25%) and higher studies (71%), workers (65%) and students (19%).

The content of the questionnaire, together with the classification variables used, was made up of reliable valid measuring scales found in the literature and which had been employed in previous studies conducted to measure the variables and factors involved. Table 1 shows the scales used and the number of items, as well as the source or sources consulted. The items (variables) were measured using five-point Likert-type scales, where 1- totally disagree, 2- disagree, 3- indifferent, 4- agree, and 5- totally agree.

Regarding the data, first an exploratory factorial analysis and a confirmatory factor analysis were applied to explore the dimensionality of the construct and the reliability and validity of the measuring scales used. Modelling was then performed with structural equations in order to test the hypotheses or structural relationships of the proposed model.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Latent Variable</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shared values</td>
<td></td>
<td>SVOB1</td>
<td>In general, my values and the political candidate’s values are very similar.</td>
<td>Netemeyer, Boles, McKee and McMurrain (1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SVOB2</td>
<td>I believe in the same values held and promoted by the political candidate via the social networks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st order commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td>CMPP1</td>
<td>I feel proud of belonging to a political party.</td>
<td>Garbarino and Johnson (1999); Gundlach et al. (1995); Kelley and Davis (1994); Moorman et al. (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CMSI1</td>
<td>The long-term success of the political candidate and the party he/she represents are important to me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CMLO1</td>
<td>I am loyal to a political candidate or political party.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd order trust</td>
<td></td>
<td>TRIN1</td>
<td>Political candidates convey sincerity in the way they communicate in social networks.</td>
<td>Flavian and Guinaliu (2006), McKnight et al. (1998); Wrightsman (1991); Dobing (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TRIN2</td>
<td>The fact that political candidates communicate via social networks makes me perceive them as being more honest.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd order benevolence</td>
<td></td>
<td>TRBE1</td>
<td>I think that if I asked the political candidates a question on their social network profiles, they would answer my questions and try to help me.</td>
<td>Achrol and Stern (1988); Ting et al. (2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TRBE2</td>
<td>Political candidates really are involved and concerned about our opinions in the social networks, they do not only take their own into account.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd order competence</td>
<td></td>
<td>TRCO1</td>
<td>Political candidates are competent and efficient in their communication in social networks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TRCO2</td>
<td>Political candidates perform their communication functions in the social networks in an effective way.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd order opportunistic behaviour</td>
<td></td>
<td>OBUN1</td>
<td>The fact that a political candidate uses the social networks to express a decision he/she has made without having enough suitable information makes me think that he/she may adopt opportunistic behaviour.</td>
<td>McPherson (2000); Ting et al. (2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty</td>
<td></td>
<td>OBUN2</td>
<td>The fact that the political candidate uses the social networks to express forecasts about the consequences of his/her decision-making makes me think that he/she may adopt opportunistic behaviour.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information asymmetry</td>
<td></td>
<td>OBUN3</td>
<td>If the political candidate does not appear to be sure of him/herself in the communications made via the social networks, I think he/she may be adopting opportunistic behaviour.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>OBIA1</td>
<td>The fact that a political candidate enjoys access to privileged information about us makes me think that he/she may adopt opportunistic behaviour.</td>
<td>McPherson (2000); Ting et al. (2007)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Results analysis

First, an initial estimation of the intensity and significance of the loadings was performed using EQS 6.1. The result made it possible to observe that the intensity of the loadings was lower than 0.60 on the indicators OBUN3, TRBE2 and TRCO1, and so, following the recommendations of Bagozzi and Baumgartner (1994) and Bagozzi and Yi (1988), they were eliminated. All the other indicators presented standardised loadings above 0.70 and no significant relationships with other factors were obtained.

After extracting the above-mentioned indicators and applying confirmatory factor analysis, all the loadings and t values of the indicators were above 0.7 and significant at the p<0.01 level (Hair et al., 2006). Reliability was tested by means of three analyses (see Table 2). The first was with Cronbach’s α, values above 0.80 being obtained, and so this criterion was accepted (Carmines and Zeller, 1979). Secondly, a composite reliability (CR) analysis was performed, which is a measurement used as an alternative to the alpha and which also measures the internal consistency of the scale, but taking into account the influence of the other latent variables of the construct; the values obtained were above 0.80 (the same criterion as in Cronbach’s α). Lastly, an analysis of the average variance extracted (hereinafter, AVE) was performed. The results concerning each of the latent variables of the construct were higher than the required minimum of 0.5, that is to say, the variance explained by the latent variable is higher than that explained by the error measurement of the scale (Fornell and Larcker, 1981a, 1981b).

Table 2. Instrument for measuring the structural model: Reliability and convergent validity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st Order Factor</th>
<th>2nd Order Factor</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Loading</th>
<th>t value</th>
<th>Cronbach’s α</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>AVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SV. Shared Value</td>
<td></td>
<td>SVOB1</td>
<td>0.860**</td>
<td>14.072</td>
<td>0.864</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SVOB2</td>
<td>0.884**</td>
<td>14.610</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB. Opportunistic Behaviour</td>
<td>Uncertainty</td>
<td>OBUN1</td>
<td>0.768**</td>
<td>10.861</td>
<td>0.833</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>OBUN2</td>
<td>0.929**</td>
<td>14.313</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information Asymmetry</td>
<td>OBIA1</td>
<td>1**</td>
<td>19.950</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TR. Trust</td>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>TRIN1</td>
<td>0.922**</td>
<td>15.855</td>
<td>0.834</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TRIN2</td>
<td>0.780**</td>
<td>12.589</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Benevolence</td>
<td>TRBE2</td>
<td>1**</td>
<td>19.950</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>TRCO2</td>
<td>1**</td>
<td>19.950</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CM. Commitment</td>
<td>CMPP1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CMSI1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CMLO1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=200 **p<0.01; χ² = 116,426 (p<0.0001); df = 69; NFI = 0.919; NNFI = 0.920; CFI = 0.948; IFI = 0.949; GFI = 0.915; AGFI= 0.852; RMSEA = 0.089 * Correlations between items are not measured because they are one-item factors.
Therefore, and in view of these results, we can say that the measurement scales used are reliable for these purposes. This means that the items or indicators of each latent variable measure that variable and not another belonging to the construct, while there is also internal consistency among the indicators of each latent variable.

Discriminant validity was used to test the validity of the construct (Nunnally and Berstein, 1994). This was performed by applying the confidence intervals test (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988) and comparing the AVE and the square of the covariance between pairs of latent variables (Fornell and Larcker, 1981a, 1981b). The results presented in Table 3 show how none of the confidence intervals (in italics) include the value 1 in any of their limits, that is, the latent variables that make up the construct measure different aspects of it. As regards the AVE tests (on the diagonal), they are higher than the square of the covariance (below the diagonal) between the pairs of factors analysed, and therefore it can be said that the measurement instrument has discriminant validity.

Table 3. Measurement Instrument: Discriminant validity and confidence intervals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F1</th>
<th>F2</th>
<th>F3</th>
<th>F4</th>
<th>F5</th>
<th>F6</th>
<th>F7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F1</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>-0.049; (-0.271)</td>
<td>0.004; (-0.296)</td>
<td>0.826; 0.642</td>
<td>0.57; 0.322</td>
<td>0.632; 0.404</td>
<td>0.681; 0.453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.634; 0.402</td>
<td>-0.126; -0.426</td>
<td>-0.002; -0.298</td>
<td>0.005; -0.301</td>
<td>-0.098; -0.394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F3</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.268</td>
<td>-0.141; -0.163</td>
<td>-0.027; -0.303</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.26</td>
<td>-0.048; -0.332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F4</td>
<td>0.539</td>
<td>0.076</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.669; 0.453</td>
<td>0.694; 0.486</td>
<td>0.731; 0.523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F5</td>
<td>0.199</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>0.315</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.54; 0.308</td>
<td>0.465; 0.201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F6</td>
<td>0.268</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>0.348</td>
<td>0.180</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.637; 0.421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F7</td>
<td>0.321</td>
<td>0.061</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>0.393</td>
<td>0.111</td>
<td>0.280</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Below the diagonal: estimated correlation between the factors; diagonal (bold): AVE; above the diagonal (italics): confidence interval of the estimation of the correlations.

F1= Shared value; F2= Uncertainty; F3= Information asymmetry; F4= Integrity; F5= Benevolence; F6= Competence; F7= Commitment.

Testing the hypotheses of the model yields support for hypotheses H1, H3 and H4, although it does not offer evidence to support hypothesis H2. In the results obtained, hypothesis H1 is accepted, and it can be stated that when those with the right to vote see in the social networks that they share values with the political candidate, their trust in him or her increases ($\beta = 0.759; p<0.01$). Hypothesis H2 suggested that, additionally, trust also increased directly; yet, this hypothesis was not confirmed...
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(β= 0.032; ns) and thus for the shared value to generate commitment, it must do so indirectly through trust (H4). Hypothesis H3 is confirmed, and so when those with the right to vote observe opportunistic behaviours by the political candidate in the social networks, their trust in them is reduced (β=0.24; p<0.01). Hypothesis H4 is confirmed, and thus it is accepted that the greater the trust in a political candidate on the part of those with the right to vote, the more commitment they will have to them (β=0.666; p<0.01). The results of the hypothesis testing can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Results of the hypothesis testing

5. Discussion and conclusions

The findings of the study reveal that if candidates manage to increase trust by using the social networks, voters’ commitment to them will also increase. It is therefore important that people with the right to vote perceive the candidate as being upright, benevolent and competent, since this will increase the degree of trust in them (Flavian and Guinalíu, 2006; Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002). This research shows that shared values are a decisive factor in building trust (Brashear et al., 2003; Jones and George, 1998), although the shared value can be said to increase commitment only through trust. Therefore, when communicating via the social networks, political candidates should strive to develop beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that are commonly accepted in society with the aim of boosting the trust of those with the right to vote and thereby increase commitment through trust. It has also been shown that opportunistic behaviour or the perception of the existence of opportunistic behaviour on the part of a political candidate lowers the degree of trust of those with the right to vote (Ting et al., 2007). Accordingly, when the political candidate communicates via the social networks, he or she must be careful about how statements are expressed and display the greatest possible transparency.
Although we are aware that results can change in a short period of time due to the speed at which the online setting changes and grows, we recommend conducting further investigations to analyse possible changes. Difficulties were encountered in carrying out the fieldwork, mainly due to a low level of motivation to collaborate in the surveys owing to the poor image of politics and also the economic crisis currently affecting the country. We are therefore considering a study of the reconstruction of trust as a future line of research. This low motivation in the surveys has also limited the size of the sample, which should have been expanded or the results should have been obtained by means of the PLS (Partial Least Squares) program, since PLS regression is a useful technique when the researcher does not have enough theoretical support, the samples are not large and the field belongs to an online setting (Miranda, 2009).

Finally, this research ran up against important limitations when it came to using suitable scales due to the lack of previous studies related to the constructs to be investigated in the field of application, as is the case of opportunistic behaviour. There are virtually no studies that conceptualise this construct, and furthermore the literature does not draw a distinction between opportunism and opportunistic behaviour (Verbeke and Greidanus, 2009). Further research on the constructs and latent variables of the model, especially opportunistic behaviour, is therefore proposed.

6. References


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