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The Rhetorical Power of Political Slogans: Perceived Influence on Public Opinion and Governance

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ABSTRACT

Political slogans shorten political identities, policy statements and emotional appeals through a condensing process so that they can be easily recognized and repeated. This study investigates the perception of the audiences about the impact of slogans on public opinion, political judgment and political governance. Two hundred and eight respondents participated in an on-line, cross-sectional, quantitative survey with a structured questionnaire comprising of 15 closed-ended questions. Descriptive percentages were used as the sample is very small and cannot be generalized to the population level as this is a non-probability sample. Results show good perceived effects. The percentage of respondents who said that slogans impact the perceptions about the government policy was around three quarters, whereas 85.7% said that slogans impact the assessment of the effectiveness and trustworthiness of the government. 75.0% thought that emotional language had a greater influence than neutral language, and 92.8% said that the emotional impact had partial or full significance when assessing the impact of slogans. The media, amplification and historical context were also considered significant. Meanwhile, 92.1% agreed that slogans can be too simple to formulate complex political issues and can lead to misleading the public. The findings thus suggest that slogans are ambivalent democratic tools, because they can be used to draw attention, create a sense of community and mobilize involvement, but they also can replace affective surety for policy specifics. The study provides a theoretically integrated interpretation, based on the ELM, SIT, agenda-setting and framing. Its findings remain tentative and could be studied with larger-probability samples and experiments and by longitudinal design.

INTRODUCTION

Very few instances of political language reach the citizens as whole programmes, pieces of legislation or formulating longer arguments. In headlines, speeches, short videos, posters, repeated phrases and in campaign advertisements. The political slogan is in a privileged position in this cramped space. The successful slogan is one that people can remember, one that can be used on a variety of media, one that tugs at people's emotions, allows them to identify with it. It can turn an abstract programme into an apparently simple act of choice, a moral judgement of a political subject and give supporters language with which to live in solidarity (Boeynaems *et al.*, 2023). Slogans are certainly not purely decorative features in a political communication for these reasons. They are strategic rhetorical devices situated at the intersection of persuasion, identity, media visibility, and political power.

Slogan politics has been proven to stand the test of time. Expressions such as "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," "We Shall Overcome," "Yes We Can," and "Make America Great Again" became more than campaign language. These phrases encapsulated a story of identity, injury, national identity or change expected. However, recognisability doesn't equate to uniform influence. The same slogan can be someone's hope, someone's threat and for some it's just empty branding (Solís Gadea, 2022). The meaning of the text is subject to previous political decisions, social groups, media construction, historical understanding and credibility given to the speaker. The shortness of a slogan can thus give them rhetorical power and interpretational space.

These dynamics have been intensified by the digital media. Brevity, repetition, emotional arousal and easy-to-remix/copy content are rewarded on platform interfaces (Herrmann & Shikano, 2021). A phrase that was spoken at a rally can be spread through hashtags, memes, headlines, reactions (videos) and interpersonal messages in a matter of minutes. Citizens may cognitively take in a claim, even if they have not considered the evidence. Simultaneously there can be contestation in the networked communication, whereby opponents can parody a slogan, can give it other meanings and can repeat it to condemn its speakers. Slogan power is hence created contemporary by the interaction of various actors between political elites and the news organisations, platforms, activists, and users (Hager & Hilbig, 2020).

This process has a very great democratic meaning. Slogans can help to make public issues accessible, develop a vocabulary of collective action and mobilise citizens who might otherwise fail to get engaged in issues of public concern. But they also can hide compromises, individualize the systemic issues, demogemonize groups, and create a sense of inevitability behind disputed assertions (Mantovan, 2020). When symbolization (a slogan) becomes the main lens through which a policy is viewed, citizens might consider symbolic alignment and

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not institutional feasibility. When expectations of political leaders, the salience of issues or the reputational costs of some decisions are changed by repeated phrases, then it has an indirect effect on governance. The connection between slogans and governance is therefore seldom a simple causal line; it is a mediated relationship operating through attention, interpretation, identity, and public pressure (Chica Vélez, 2022).

There have been a lot of discussions on slogans that praise famous slogans or criticize fewer famous slums, but in both cases, they fail to explain the way that makes slogans effective (Sardoč & Prebilič, 2023). A rigorous analysis should consider all of the following questions: how are condensed messages processed, how are identity messages accepted, how does salience of messages change with repetition in the media, and under what conditions does emotional language influence the evaluation of messages? It should also differentiate between perceived influence and observed change in behaviour. Respondents could feel that slogans have an impact on political opinion without being able to accurately assess themselves (Kim *et al*., 2022). On the other hand, frames and vocabulary from a repeated phrase can be taken up by someone who denies influence.

The aim of this study is to explore the notion of slogan influence by using a small exploration survey. Reconstitutes the project evidence as the original document into a research design in journal format and reads the percentages with circumspection (Mucha, 2022). To put it another way, it isn't to say slogans themselves result in voting behaviour, or that they result in policy change. Instead, it is to understand the patterns of understanding the relationship between political rhetoric, public opinion, media amplification and governance on the part of respondents. Elaboration Likelihood Model, Social Identity Theory, agenda setting and framing are used as guiding models for the analysis (Chilton, 2023). These views account for the possibility of a simultaneous appearance of slogans as arguments, cues, marks of identity and media objects.

Research Aim, Objectives and Questions

The study aims to examine how political slogans are perceived to influence public opinion and evaluations of governance. Four objectives guide the analysis: to assess perceived effects on policy understanding and governmental evaluation; to examine the relative importance of emotional wording, media amplification, and historical context; to consider perceived relationships with political identity, voting, and opinion reconsideration; and to evaluate concerns about oversimplification and misleading communication (Hackenburg *et al*., 2022).

The corresponding research questions are: (1) How strongly do respondents perceive political slogans to influence policy perceptions and governance evaluations? (2) What roles do emotion, media amplification, and historical context play in perceived slogan influence? (3) How do respondents connect slogans with identity formation, voting decisions, and critical reflection? (4) To what extent are slogans regarded as reductive or potentially misleading? These questions are descriptive and exploratory (Kyei *et al*., 2023). They do not presume causal effects that cannot be established by a cross-sectional self-report survey.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A slogan is a short phrase of "syndetic power" that encapsulates a political truth or a people's hope. It's about an economy of communication, which is essential to its operations. Choices of a few words highlight some aspects and minimise others in the slogan. It includes an almost full-fledged interpretation on its own, yet has enough semantic freedom for viewers to bring their own issues to bear (MacDonald, 2020). This is the reason why slogans are efficient ways of transmitting information across heterogeneous groups, and at the same time precise. Supporters can say the same thing but have somewhat different expectations, rather than a more detailed programme which also may break down a coalition (Rafalowski, 2022).

The focus of Classical rhetorical analysis is on ethos, pathos, and logos. Ethos is often used in political slogans where the speaker is having to persuade people that they are competent, authentic, patriotic or have moral courage (Alon-Barkat, 2020). They call up pathos, either through hope, fear, resentment, pride, nostalgia or urgency. They tend to use a logistical form of usage, that is a causal or evaluative claim is not proved, rather it is implied. The slogan can indicate that a policy will restore greatness, or it will bring about justice, freedom or control but doesn't name an institutional processs (Soo *et al*., 2023). Thus, its persuasive impact, in part, relies on how favorable audiences may be to the attitude or behavior for which it stands and whether the audience thinks the slogan's sponsor is credible.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model differentiates persuasion that occurs when there is relatively high elaboration effort from persuasion that is more based on peripheral cues (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Slogans can be included in either procedure (Katz, 2022). A phrase can be used as a mnemonic tag for an considered policy stance, in which case, it can be useful to organise the central processing. In low motivation, lack of knowledge, distraction, or information overload, the same statement could be perceived as a peripheral cue that conveys information through the rhythm, familiarity, emotional tenor or source of its words, in lieu of detailed evaluation (Nikolaev, 2021). The ways of communication should not be viewed as mutually exclusive in political communication. An emotional cue can lead to greater thinking and the knowledge about the policy can influence the meaning attributed to the cue (Miles, 2023).

It is this point of view that makes the importance of repetition clear. The more familiar the statement, the easier it is to recall and, as a result, the more plausible and/or socially acceptable it seems (Kirgil, 2023). Repetition

also allows a phrase, a candidate, a movement or an issue frame to become associated with the candidate until the linkage becomes automatic. But the word repeated is not necessarily convincing (Boeynaems *et al.*, 2021). Too much exposure can result in fatigue or reactance, especially if recipients feel they are being manipulated. Thus, the effectiveness of a slogan is dependent on the message quality, on initial attitude, on source credibility, on political involvement and on the surroundings, in which the message is communicated (Boeynaems *et al.*, 2023).

Social Identity Theory implies that a part of self-definition is being part of a social group and comparing in-groups with out-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Political slogans are short verbal designators of membership. Periodically repeating a slogan in a rally, profile or conversation vocalizes the relationship of affinity and fixes a sense of consensus. A slogan can turn one complainant into a many which means one grievance becomes "we" and can define an adversarial "they" and can create a norm of what "we" members are supposed to believe or do. This identity function can be used to explain mobilization , as well as polarization (Solís Gadea, 2022). Something that is used as a positive expression within one group may be read as negative or threatening by others.

Slogans relating to a nation, a religion, a class, ethnic group, a gender, a generation or historical memory are particularly relevant to the identity processes (Herrmann & Shikano, 2021). This kind of reference arouses discourses that lead to events that are prior to the present campaign. Their strength is not just the actual words but also the group's history, on which they hang moral and affective implications. Reception can thus be influenced quite definitively by the historical context (Hager & Hilbig, 2020). What the word means can vary from community to community, depending on what their experiences of the state have been; for example, the meaning of freedom, justice, restoration, or liberation (Mantovan, 2020). One-sided analysis leaves out of account the fact that this language is socially situated, and yet it speaks a universal language.

According to agenda-setting theory, the more that the media covers a topic, the more important citizens will deem it (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Slogans help to do this by providing a short-hand for journalists and audiences. Using the same term in headlines, broadcasts, interviews, and platform feeds can boost visibility of the term and the issue it represents. Slogans do not always let citizens know what to conclude, but they can help to make it hard to ignore a topic (Chica Vélez, 2022). It can also establish the guidelines for assessing leadership, particularly if elections are based on constantly reiterated promises or threats.

The process of framing is somewhat different and is a topic of framing theory. Frames select "aspects of reality," set up "problems," diagnose "causes," make moral judgements and recommend "remedies" (Entman, 1993). Slogans are a fairly rare type of frame. Burden or contribution is a phrase to describe taxation, threat or humanitarian responsibility for migration and investment or waste for public expenditure. The chosen label provides the focus and eliminates any other options. Since the frames shape interpretation, it is not only a question of what policies actors are advocating, but also what words do they use to make a policy thinkable (Sardoč & Prebilič, 2023).

Media amplification is a loaded transmission process. Conflict, novelty, recognisable personalities and quotations are news values. Slogans fit in with these needs (Kim *et al.*, 2022). Social platforms provide algorithmic and network effects: messages that elicit emotional reactions are more likely to have additional reactions and be seen; congenial interpretations are more likely to be repeatedly seen by communities (Mucha, 2022). Selective Exposure can reinforce previous attitudes and help decrease exposure to counterarguments. Platforms, however, also reduce the expense of "corrective" speech, parody, and counter-slogans. Amplification can thus help to reinforce or to unsettle a slogan's proposed meaning (Chilton, 2023).

Emotion is not out of the realm of political judgement. Hope can broaden a perception of political possibilities; fear can increase a sense of risk; anger could lead to a sense of responsibility and inspire action; nostalgia can romanticize a selectively recalled past (Hackenburg *et al.*, 2022). Slogans can give the very quick orientation when citizens are faced with complex information, and its emotionally charged nature can help with this. However, simmering feelings can cause focus to become constricted and make it easier to perceive things as good or bad. Affective resonance should thus not be seen as evidence of irrationality or effectiveness in itself, but rather in the context of evidence, identity and country (Kyei *et al.*, 2023).

Slogans and government have an indirect conditional connection. Slogans can create an expectation among the public, organise supporters and make it more costly to renege on a promise. They can affect the political agenda for legislators when they perceive their popularity as a mandate (MacDonald, 2020). But policy results are also influenced by institutions, resources, bargaining, legal limitations, the capacity of the bureaucracy, and unknown factors. So it should be analytically incorrect to consider a policy shift to be attributable to a slogan just because the slogan was in the midst of a successful campaign (Rafalowski, 2022). Such slogans, however, can help define the framing of governance decisions and the justifications for them, which is a more defensible claim.

Ambivalence is followed by ethical evaluation. In a democratic system politics must be simplified, as not every citizen can follow each of the topics of political debate in all technical aspects. The principle of being concise isn't necessarily deceptive (Alon-Barkat, 2020). The ethical issue occurs when compression eliminates the qualifications needed to make an informed judgment, creates an enemy or advances disputed claims as facts. Political communication needs to be responsible and

bind memorable language to accessible evidence and commitments (Soo *et al.*, 2023). Media organisation must think in context before they merely repeat slogans; citizens must be able to read the media, be able to know the framing, the emotional, the trade-offs to be known that is not presented.

The integrated conceptual framework adopted here has the slogan exposure and the slogan characteristics as the communicative inputs (Katz, 2022). How a phrase is processed is influenced by emotional tone, historical association, source identity and the repetition of the phrase in the media. The mechanisms of principle interpretation are: cognitive elaboration and social identification. Perceived understandings of policy, government trust, influence in voting choices, issue salience, and disposition to rethink an opinion are possible outcomes (Nikolaev, 2021). The relationships may be moderated by political knowledge, previous affiliation, demographic background and media habits. There are insufficient data to test this full model formally but the model acts as a tool to guide the interpretation of the descriptive results in a disciplined manner.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross-sectional quantitative survey design was used in the study. This designation attempts to address an inconsistency in the source project that variously used the terms "interpretivism" and "induction," "mixed methods" and "interviews" and "focus groups," "thematic analysis," and "statistical analysis." The evidence provided is actually answers to 15 closed-ended questions on an on-line survey; there was no presentation of interviewing sample, qualitative protocol, transcript, coding procedure, or themes (Miles, 2023). The present manuscript will hence only claim what can be demonstrated to be supported by the available material.

The data was gathered using a Google Forms questionnaire which was shared by email and social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Messenger. There are 28 responses identified in the charts in the source report. This meant that recruitment was convenience and online. The eligible subjects were adults who could access the link and were able and willing to fill out the questionnaire (Kirgil, 2023). Given that there is no documented sampling frame and response rate, the sample should not be interpreted as representative of a national electorate and/or of any defined population. The design is suitable in respect to exploratory description but it cannot lead to generalisation outside of the participants.

The instrument included 15 questions related to perceived influence in governmental policies evaluation, perceived alignment to slogans on societal issues, perceived positive/negative influence of language, contribution of the instrument to public debate, governmental policy understanding, voting behaviour, the instrument's emotional intensity, perceived authenticity, influence of media, historical interpretation, governmental trust, critical thinking, emotional versus factual influence, reconsidering opinions, and oversimplifying (Boeynaems *et al.*, 2021). The number of response points was different for each question. Some provided agreement-level categories and others provided categories corresponding to frequency, extent, likelihood, or comparative-impact. This range includes multiple aspects of perceived influence, which makes it less comparable and therefore less possible to form a reliable multi-item scale.

Percentages are based on those given in the original document. Favourable categories that were conceptually similar were only aggregated where the source provided an overall percentage. There was no raw respondent level data set available to test for independent verification, reliability, cross-tabulation, confidence intervals, hypothesis testing or multivariable modelling. Since the sample size is small and the recruitment process, descriptive analysis is the most suitable one. The percentage is given one decimal place where provided, but with values based on 28 respondents being approximate as one respondent is about 3.6 percentage points.

The findings are coded to four theoretical domains. The first is: policy and governance evaluation (Boeynaems *et al.*, 2023). The second is about issues of identity, discourse and political action. The third is related to the communicative processes of emotions, media overrepresentation, and historicity. The fourth is about the quality of democracy, critical thinking, authenticity and oversimplification. This organisation does not consider each item in a questionnaire as a stand-alone result but allows to compare with the integrated framework.

Ethical safeguarding is stated in a conservative way. The filling out of the form was voluntary and the questionnaire did not focus on sensitive clinical or experimental procedures, but rather on opinions. Confidentiality, autonomy and informed consent should be upheld without formal ethics review, data-retention, consent script or institutional approval number provided by the report (Solís Gadea, 2022). Therefore, this manuscript does not make any claim to approval which can not be documented. The exact ethics statement of the institution from which the submission came should be included, and a statement confirming the requirement for formal review per applicable policy should be included.

The methodological quality is limited by the small convenience sample, the self-report nature of the measurement, the common method bias, and the unclear composition of the sample, in terms of demographics. Subjective influences, and the actual impact on behavior, may vary; retrospection may be skewed by social desirability and by inaccurate introspection. Additionally, the combination of response format may have led to acquiescence or awkward comparisons of category combinations. Finally, the cross-sectional study design is not suitable to determine temporal order or causal relationships between exposure, emotion, opinion, voting and trust. These restrictions are not technically small qualifications, but rather are an integral part of the interpretation (Herrmann & Shikano, 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The percentages explicit mentioned in the source document are summarised in Table 1. This tendency is evident on a general level with respect to policy and governance issues. Overall, 74.9% agreed that political slogans affect perceptions of government policies and decision-making while 10.7% disagreed. Likewise, 85.7% reported the extent to which exposure impacts understanding of government policies and governance structures at least somewhat. 85.7% indicated a moderate to strong influence of slogans on perception of effectiveness and trustworthiness of government. Such findings indicate that slogans were given a significant amount of meaning by most of the participants, but do not necessarily demonstrate that a specific slogan led to an increase or decrease in policy knowledge or trust (Hager & Hilbig, 2020).

Those who had responded also connected slogans with "language" and "politics". 75% said they always, often or sometimes used slogans to arm themselves with opinions on societal issues. 82.1% thought that slogans to some degree affect the public discourse and social attitudes. Further, 82.2% believed that to some extent, slogans were an expression of the intentions of the political parties or leaders, while those who disagree showed considerable scepticism about the authenticity. These perceptions fit with the notion of slogans as cues to identity and shared interpretive labels.

The link with electoral attitudes was less robust than with a number of attitudinal outcomes reported, but nevertheless strong. 60.7% agreed or disagreed to the effects of slogans on voting behaviour. This difference in response is significant. There was a greater inclination to admit that slogans influence general perceptions, than the use of slogans to determine their own voting choice. This discrepancy could be because there is real resistance in voting choices, or because there is "a third-person effect": in response to an environment's persuasive power, one overestimates the persuasion of others and underestimates of oneself.

Emotional characteristics were prominent. 57.1% of respondents believed that positive slogans were more influential than negative slogans, and 35.7% believed that they were less influential. 3/4 thought that neutral words are less effective than emotionally charged words. As an comparison to factual content, 92.8% chose categories where emotional impact receives at least a little bit of attention, while 7.2% chose even more factual impact. The findings indicate that (1) affective language is perceived as a key means by which slogans exert their influence and (2) the bifurcation between positive and negative language cautions against the notion that there is a universal better emotional dimension to language.

Strong endorsement was also given to media and history, as contextual factors. 68% agreed that the media would make a significant or very significant difference in terms of the impact of slogans on the public. At all, 93.6% indicated that they take historical context always, very often or sometimes into consideration when reading slogans. The results of this research suggest that a relational view of rhetorical power is justified (Mantovan, 2020). Subjects were not seen as believing that the meaning of the slogans was solely contained within the words of the slogans, but that the way the slogans were being circulated and the historical association that they had were recognised as influencing the meaning.

Two of the results show a fruitful tension with regard to reflection. There was a consensus (82.2%) that exposure to diverse political slogans to some extent improves critical thinking in the area of policy and governance. Similarly, 78.6% also said that they would be at least somewhat likely to change their opinion about a policy if they heard a convincing slogan. But 92.1% believed that slogans tend to be simplistic and can sometimes mislead the public, when it comes to political issues. For these reasons, slogans were seen by the respondents as having the potential to encourage reflection and to pose a danger to informed reflection. Briefness is both the attention to focus and the impetus to ask questions or foreclose inquiry.

Due to the lack of individual-level data, the differences between the genders, age, education level, political parties or media use could not be analyzed, although they were included in the source report. Legally no mean, standard deviations, scale reliability, correlation or tests of association can be presented (Chica Vélez, 2022). The findings should be interpreted as a description of the perspective that 28 respondents described, but not as the confirmation of a hypothesis. The high percentages indicate themes that are more worth testing than finding out population opinion exactly.

Discussion

The results delineate the political slogan as an ambiguous and powerful form of public discourse. Significant majorities related slogans to policy perception, governance evaluation, discourse, emotion and historical interpretation. The answers reinforce the main idea that 'slogans count' in that they construct political meaning (Sardoč & Prebilič, 2023). However, this study assesses beliefs of influence not an experimental measure of persuasion. The right conclusion is not that slogans decide attitudes and actions but that respondents see slogans as significant aspects of their political surroundings.

Elaboration Likelihood Model can be used to interpret the results. Respondents' focus on emotion and their openness to changing their evaluations of policies imply that slogans can elicit automatic processing based on cue and more reflective processing. Simplicity of a slogan can make the initial cost of trying to engage with an issue less; some slogans are memorable and offer a point of easy entry . But this simplicity could also lead to the acceptance of what is claimed without questioning. The model enables to reconcile the result that slogans facilitate a critical thinking ability and that they oversimplify. Processing is based on motivation,

Table 1: Consolidated Descriptive Findings (n = 28)

Survey domain	Reported favourable/affirmative response	Reported contrasting response
	74.9% agreed/strongly agreed	10.7% disagreed/strongly disagreed
Alignment with slogans on societal issues	75.0% always/often/sometimes	2.6% never
Policy and decision-making perceptions	57.1% yes	35.7% no
Contribution to public discourse and social attitudes	82.1% considerable/slight extent	None reported "not at all"
Effect on understanding policy and governance	85.7% at least some extent	Small minority "not at all"
Influence on voting behaviour	60.7% some level of agreement	28.6% some level of disagreement
Emotionally charged stronger than neutral wording	75.0% agreed	25.0% disagreed
Slogans reflect intentions of leaders or parties	82.2% some level of agreement	16.8% some level of disagreement
Media amplification	68.0% significant/great	None reported "not at all"
Consideration of historical context	93.6% always/very frequently/ occasionally	None reported "never"
Shape effectiveness and trust evaluations	85.7% strong/moderate influence	None reported "do not shape"
Diverse slogans enhance critical thinking	82.2% at least some extent	17.8% little/not at all
Emotional versus factual impact	92.8% at least somewhat emotional	7.2% primarily factual
Likelihood of reconsidering policy opinion	78.6% at least somewhat likely	21.4% unlikely categories
Oversimplify and potentially mislead	92.1% agreed/strongly agreed	7.0% undecided/disagreed

ability, prior knowledge and supporting information.

In this respect there is a strong perceived link with the social attitudes and alignment, which is in line with Social Identity Theory. Slogans enable citizens to identify a common problem/desire/enemy. Repetition creates membership and evokes a feeling of sameness of membership (Mucha, 2022). These processes can contribute to broadening civic mobilisation and unity, including among groups that have not been publicly recognised for their experiences. They may also be used to "harden" boundaries and to create a sense of disloyalty when it comes to disagreement. The contentious point to consider then is whether the identity-invoking slogan extends or extends democratic inclusion and whether it builds unity through exclusion.

The media-amplification effect is linked to an agenda setting and framing of interpretations. The political power of a slogan is the fact that the institutions bring it to the citizens' attention again and again and use it for an issue. The phrase can be efficiently quoted by traditional journalism, or it can be emotionally conveyed and easily shared on social media. Circulation is increased in each case, making them more accessible (Chilton, 2023). However, amplification has the potential to detach a phrase from any evidence and reiterate a campaign's preferred frame even under critical coverage. Journalistic responsibility involved the necessity of 'explaining the implications of 'memorable' language in terms of assumptions, omissions and policy implications.

The most accepted interpretive consideration was historical context. Theoretically this finding is significant as it calls into question purely textual analysis. Words gain political power when they are repeatedly used in other struggles, known to certain institutions, and evokes collective memory (Hackenburg *et al.*, 2022). A call to restore, reclaim, overcome, and/or resist, must follow with what past it calls forth and whose memory does it privilege? History can also be a strange entity, and the slogans can leave room for different groups to conjure different pasts. It is therefore important to investigate what audiences derive from the texts and not to presume that there is a single meaning.

There is a need for special attention to slogans and governance. The percentages reported reflect that respondents feel slogans have an impact on evaluation of government, trust and understanding of government policies (Kyei *et al.*, 2023). Such beliefs can have indirect impacts on governance, such as establishing expectations and symbolically testing performance. Even when a government's actions are reliant on complicated institutions, the government might be assessed according to its campaigning promise; thus, a slogan might

subsequently come to define the government in a way that wasn't originally intended (MacDonald, 2020). But slogans are no replacement for legislative, budget analyses, administrative, accountability and distributional effect analyses. Political communication research needs to link the rhetoric to these material processes, not make it a measure of policy impact.

It is interesting to note the 60.7% who said they were at least somewhat influenced to vote, as compared to the higher percentages who said they were impacted on general perception. Voting is a huge and identity-affirming thing to do, so perhaps they're hesitant to let a pithy phrase do the deed. Instead, they may report that they made their decision for a rational policy, performance, or values reason (Rafalowski, 2022). However, slogans can structure those very considerations by identifying those "values" and performances that are salient. Additional experiments might be conducted to assess the impact, or panel studies to determine whether there are longer-term consequences beyond the campaign itself.

The willingness to respond to negative, emotional slogans as opposed to nonnegative slogans is not a proof that stronger emotion necessarily leads to more effective persuasion. Positive and negative affect are different. Hope can convey efficacy, can convey a sense of collective possibility; anger can convey a sense of responsibility, can motivate participation; fear can convey a sense of attention to risk but can also create a sense of avoidance; nostalgia can convey a sense of continuity, can create an idealised sense of an exclusionary past (Alon-Barkat, 2020). To be an effective analysis, the emotion, the target, the audience, and the action tendency have to be stated. Clumping together all the emotional aspects in a single frame can, again, mask processes that work in opposite directions.

Oversimplification is the most obvious normatively cautionary result. There is a distinction between a summary that is easy to understand and distortion, but democratic communication also always forces a certain amount of condensation of complexity (Soo *et al.*, 2023). A responsible slogan should be able to be expanded: Citizens, who want to know more, should find coherent evidence, commitments, and an admission of compromises behind the slogan. Any manipulative slogan is immune to such expansion, since its influence is based on its vagueness, its ability to demonize or the error in facts (Katz, 2022). Media literacy programmes can help audiences to consider who is behind a slogan, what mood it triggers, what evidence it refers to, what this excludes, and who this serves.

Such results have implications for policy and political actors, journalists, civil-society groups and educators. Slogans should be field-tested among various kinds of groups to see if they are memorable to them, but also to see if they are misinterpreted or turn off unintended groups. Journalists must not accept campaign jargon as the standard way to report things without examining and analysing them. Concise language can be used to mobilize attention, and be connected to substantive proposal, by civil-society groups (Miles, 2023). Slogans may be used as teachable tools by educators to teach rhetoric, source evaluation, historical context and emotional tone versus empirical support in a discussion.

The paper also serves as an example of the need for methodological congruence. Evidence of causal influence needs either experiments, natural experiments, longitudinal evidence or a precisely specified observational design (Kirgil, 2023). For any statements of differences between subgroups, there must be adequate number in each group. Inferences of meaning require qualitative evidence that could shed light on the meaning that participants attribute to phrases. A perception can be identified through a small descriptive survey, but this cannot be given as both interpretive qualitative study and mixed research, as well as causal statistical study (Boeynaems *et al.*, 2021). Even if subject of inquiry modest, when alignment is clear, credibility is reinforced.

In future studies, the samples should be larger and more varied, standardized validated questionnaires should be used, and the data kept on individual respondents. Experimental designs might involve varying (1) emotional valence, (2) factual specificity, (3) repetition, (4) source credibility, and (5) historical framing. Paired audition (longitudinal) panels might measure length of time, and interviews or focus groups might discover the divergent meanings of the same phrase. A comparison of the results from this study with other cultures would be particularly useful given how slogans are received as a result of cross-cultural translation, political history, media system, and democratic institutions (Boeynaems *et al.*, 2023). Digital trace analysis may also analyze the evolution of a slogan from network to network without correlating involvement metrics and persuasion.

Theoretical Contributions

The first theoretical contribution of the study is offering a view of rhetorical brevity as a mechanism which is not a superficial characteristic. Shortening shortens the encoding, memorization and reproduction of a message. It also is a selection: a brief expression cannot convey all the causes, consequences, conditions, and qualifications surrounding a political issue. The absence of something is thus as significant as its presence (Boeynaems *et al.*, 2023). The power of a slogan is when it becomes the audience's standard "take-home line" that summarizes a topic. This process links with Cognitive Accessibility and Framing. Selections made repeatedly get more attention and more easily recalled, but other descriptions get less attention. Measurement should be distinguished between memorability, perceived accuracy, emotionality and behavioural intention in future and should not be placed under the general conception of influence (Solís Gadea, 2022).

The second donation is related to the elaboration of emotion. There is sometimes an opposition between rational processing and affective response in simplified

models. Such a hard-line separation is not reflected in the results. The group that highlighted emotional influence also indicated that variety slogans could be used to elicit an emotional response that might enable individuals to think critically and persuasive slogans might aid reconsideration (Herrmann & Shikano, 2021). Emotion can serve as a catalyst of attention, as an indicator of relevance and as a trigger for information search. It can also prevent reflection as it creates certainty or hostility. Thus, the point is not the emotion of the slogan, but the relation between a specific emotion, political knowledge, commitment to a group and/or its ideology, source credibility, and opportunities for verification. This conditional model of the Elaboration Likelihood Model provides more explanatory power in the political realm.

Thirdly, there is an analysis of linkages between the social identity and the circulation of media. It is identity cues that publicly display and get enacted over and over again that become politically relevant. A slogan is a brief statement of position which is posted on a poster, put on a profile or shouted at an event and is confirmed by repetition. Media coverage can create a sense of size and solidarity which is larger than what can be seen in reality. Dissatisfied with the assumed consensus, non-participation can be provoked or dissent can be silenced. Thus, an analysis of agenda-setting in combination with Social Identity Theory is warranted: Not only a measure of the salience of an issue, but also of the content of what is included in the definition of a political community and the extent to which such a community supports a claim should be analysed (Kim *et al.*, 2022).

Fourth, the study reveals a difference between the slogan acceptance and the slogan attribution. People can say the same thing but not agree with all of the policy implications that the authors had in mind. Slogans are semantically open, so that the same supporters can use the same term to invoke different expectations (Nikolaev, 2021). This coalition-building ambiguity may be advantageous for political leaders during election campaigns but may be disadvantageous when there is a need to make decisions when governments are in power. It is, therefore, worthwhile to investigate the degree of convergence of interpretative processes, that is, how close to each other speakers and listeners get in interpreting the meaning of a slogan. These two points can lead to highly repetitive, low interpretive convergence, which can lead to rhetorical excitement, but an insecure base for policy implementation.

Lastly, the results are consistent with a multilevel model of influence. Slogans catch the eye and can be remembered at the first level. At the second, they set up problems and arouse emotions or identity. At the third, they impact on evaluations of policies, group or person. This activity might involve sharing, protesting, donating or voting at the fourth. The impact of the fifth is also that aggregated reactions can impact media agendas, elite incentives, or governance decisions. Not everything that's evidence in one layer should be considered evidence in another layer. The main issue covered in the present survey is perceived impact in the middle layers (Chica Vélez, 2022). This clarification avoids the possibility of misunderstandings that can come from a high level of recognition or agreement that could be read as the direct evidence of policy change.

Practical and Governance Implications

The results indicate that attention to both memorability and semantic responsibility should be placed in mind for political campaigners. Phrases that cheer people up without them having a clear perception of what to expect if they join may generate initial excitement and eventual distrust. Therefore, using factual review, policy alignment and audience testing, across demographic and ideological groups, should all be part of the message development process. Questions should not only seek to ascertain what people recall or enjoy the language. It should evaluate their interpretation of the meaning of the phrase, who they feel it is addressing, what action they are calling for and how they feel about other interpretations, which may exacerbate prejudice or misinformation (Kim *et al.*, 2022). The more closely the meaning people publicize behind a slogan is similar to the meaning of the programme itself, the more defensible it can be.

In public institutions, slogans can aid communication when some of the administrative information needs to be conveyed to a large number of people. Short directions are typically needed for public health, disaster-preparedness, electoral-information, and civic-service campaigns. In the case of institutional communication, however, the game is different: it comes first of all the accuracy, the accessibility, the public trust, rather than the competitive advantage. A government slogan should be accompanied with a clear explanation of what it means, or at least to be easily understood in various languages, by various literacy levels, and the statement should be adjusted based on the new facts and circumstances. Authorities should not brand as aspiration what they can achieve as a performance. Assessment should focus on whether or not the message was understood and whether it had an impact.

The high perceived amplification effect highlights for journalists and editors the need for lexical independence (Mucha, 2022). Headlines, captions or questions which repeat the campaign slogan can have a longer impact, even if the actual content of the report is critical. There are steps newsrooms can take to minimize accidental amplification by avoiding predatory language, transcription, testing, and stating who is sayin' what. Where repetition is itself newsworthy (e.g., when a study reveals widespread use of the term), identify the degree of repetition and where the phrase is being used, who is using it, and any counter-frames. Longer slogans can be analyzed as objects instead of as convenient summaries, in order to maintain the contextual aspect of journalism. The question for the designers of platforms and their content-moderating agents is not whether or not short

political speech should be stifled (Chilton, 2023). The problem is that emotional intensity can be valued through engagement and not the informational quality. Recommendation systems can be used more deliberately, if there is more transparency about the functioning of these systems, easy to reach provenance indicators and friction is created before the mass forwarding of claims that are challenged. But researchers must also have access to data that do not leak information to and from privacy, in a way that enables them to differentiate between organic adoption and coordinated amplification. Interventions must be assessed for disproportionate political impact as culturally specific slogans may be interpreted differently by moderating rules, or by automated language systems.

Slogans are useful entry points for critical education with the media for educators and civil-society groups. Students can determine the speaker, audience, tone, historical context, underlying claim of causation, evidence that is missing, and proposed action (Kyei *et al*., 2023). They can make comparisons between a slogan and a manifesto, budget, speech, and independent data and then create alternative frames. These exercises teach citizens nothing about what political opinion to take. They develop the ability to understand rhetorical decisions and provide the appropriate support. This capability is especially crucial in an online landscape where information can spread and circulate swiftly before it gets professionally fact-checked.

Limitations and Research Agenda

There are a number of limitations that significantly limit the conclusions. The number of respondents (28) is too low to make stable population estimates and could be over-representative of those that are reachable through the researchers' online networks. Digital distribution is excluding or under-representing citizens who have low connectivity or low digital literacy; those who are unwilling to engage with politics on digital platforms (MacDonald, 2020). A demographic table was not saved in the report, the composition and diversity of the sample can not be evaluated. The percentages are therefore representative of the subjects only. They should not be confused for the apparently high accuracy they give – each person accounts for about 3.6% of the sample.

Limits of measurement are also significant. Questionnaire includes varying combinations and structure of categories as well as integrating direction, intensity and frequency. A few questions are leading questions, assuming influence, or the slogans are necessarily persuasive. Others request that the respondents rate categories of general nature, for instance positive, negative, neutral, emotional, factual, and do not give examples or operational definitions (Rafałowski, 2022). Responses can thus be based on different interpretations of the same words. Balanced wording should be used in the revised instruments, the response anchors should be consistent, multiple indicators per construct, where applicable, there should be reverse-coded items and cognitive pre-testing to ensure that the questions are understood as the participants intended.

Additionally, self-reported perceptions are used. People don't necessarily know where their attitudes come from and answers could be influenced by political self-presentation. A respondent could also reject all electoral influence, maintain an aura of independence, or deny to be less critical in order to claim an aura of knowledge. Common-method variance could have occurred since exposure, mechanism, and outcome were assessed using the same questionnaire at a single point in time. Perception needs to be complemented with behavioural/ experimental measures. Recall tests, response-time measures and controlled exposure, together with actual choices for sharing and delayed follow-up, could be helpful in elucidating when reported influence translates into observed change (Alon-Barkat, 2020).

No causal words/language are allowed. The survey does not manipulate exposure to the slogans nor is it possible to determine from the survey whether attitudes occurred before or after slogan exposure. Slogans that are congruent with existing political opinions can be recalled more easily and may indicate more congruence. Slogans can also impact trust and trust can impact on the interpretation of slogans. Socio-demographic characteristics, such as media consumption, partisanship, political interest, education and prior information, may affect the relationships observed and could be controlled at the respondent level. Future studies must change the way they are conducted to include preregistration of hypotheses, and random assignment or longitudinal measurement – if the goal of that study is causal effects (Soo *et al*., 2023).

The starting point for a robust next phase is a set of qualitative interviews to diverse political groups to find out what slogans and interpretations seem to be locally meaningful. The questionnaire could then be further adapted based on the cognitive interviews. In a larger stratified survey, exposure frequency, recall, credibility, emotional response, identity centrality, policy knowledge, institutional trust and behavioural intention could be assessed using validated multi-item scales. Validated measures, justified paths and sufficient sample sizes would be required to allow for the use of structural equation modelling (Katz, 2022). Experimental manipulation: Emotional valence, evidence, source and historical cue manipulated separately. An additional measurement would reveal if any change persisted after the exposure.

Insitutional and cultural context should also be discussed in comparative research. This rhetorical device can work in different ways in majoritarian and coalition systems of government, in established and newer democracies, or in different institutional settings, such as varying degrees of press freedom, or political trust. Translation alters rhythm, ambiguity, historical association (Miles, 2023). Locally spoken slogans can evoke more religious as well as liberationist slogans, but also regional and economic grievances, which imported theories may not adequately comprehend. Across countries research should, therefore, involve a generalizable framework and

interpret it appropriately for the specific context to avoid interpreting well-known examples of slogan politics as applicable everywhere.

CONCLUSION

Political slogans are little linguistic units that can have big communicative ramifications. In this exploratory survey, a large majority of the respondents saw slogans to play an influential role in shaping a policy understanding, public discourse, governmental evaluation and trust. The factors of emotion, media amplification and historical context were considered significant by many and there were many respondents who drew a link between slogans, voting, critical reflection and potential opinion change. Meanwhile, there was a huge agreement that slogans "distort issues and can deceive people.

In theory the results should be interpreted from an integrated account. Variations in depth of processing are explained by the Elaboration Likelihood Model, the concept of affiliation and boundary formation by the Social Identity Theory, the concept of visibility by agenda-setting, and the concept of selective interpretation by framing. Each of these views in itself does not prove slogans lead to policy change. Their importance is that they can help to illuminate ways in which short-term messages can become entangled in longer-term agendas to form opinions and governance.

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