

FROM QUESTIONABLE INCIDENT TO POLITICAL SCANDAL: THE IBIZA AFFAIR'S SCANDALIZATION ON TWITTER

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ABSTRACT *Political scandals have become an everyday phenomenon, among other things, due to the crucial role of social media platforms as they shape how scandals unfold, are reported upon by journalists, and are perceived by the audience. This article examines the process of scandalization and journalistic discourse on Twitter in Germany and Austria against the background of the so-called Ibiza affair. Through a critical discourse analysis of 885 tweets from 149 influential political journalists, this study seeks to add to the understanding of scandalization on Twitter. Building upon the functional phase model by Burkhardt (2015, 2018), the study finds that those previously identified phases of a (political) scandal in print media coverage are shortened on Twitter, indicating a different scandalization dynamic on social media.*

KEYWORDS

SCANDALS, JOURNALISM PRACTICE, SOCIAL MEDIA, TWITTER

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INTRODUCTION

Political scandals have become an everyday phenomenon, among other things, due to the crucial role of social media platforms, which provide diverse information and multifaceted perspectives on political and public issues for a digital audience. Especially Twitter, as “one of the most popular social networking platforms, and one used extensively by media and political junkies” (Freelon, 2019, p. 2), legitimized mainly by the early adoption among journalists, is relevant for contemporary reporting (political) scandals.

However, the way scandals unfold, are reported upon, and are perceived by the audience has fundamentally changed. Social media platforms have created new opportunities for the polarization of scandalous objects or issues due to increased online visibility and different actors’ involvement in the discourse (Burkhardt, 2018, p. 19). The audience can now directly participate in the scandalization process, while journalists especially use Twitter to report on events almost instantaneously as they happen. As stated by Masullo Chen (2019): “The social media age [...] made it easier, and quicker, for the media and the public to share news of scandal” (p. 169).

Social media platforms also shape journalistic norms and practices according to their specific technological affordances (Lasorsa et al., 2012; S. C. Lewis & Molyneux, 2018; Parmelee, 2013) and, therefore, the dynamics of scandalization within the networked public sphere. Arguably, social media can be helpful “to create and expand audiences, increase geographical reach, respond more quickly than ever before to news events and issues” (Bowd, 2016, p. 129). However, the speed-driven demand for sharing breaking news stories on social media inevitably leads to tensions over the accuracy and verification of information (Reinardy, 2010).

Against this background and the (still) existing importance of journalists in scandalization processes, as they indirectly frame elite perception and influence the forming of public opinion (Entman, 2012, pp. 27–28), this study aims to analyze the process of scandalization and (political) journalistic discourse on Twitter in Germany and Austria. Therefore, a critical discourse analysis of 885 tweets from 149 influential political journalists regarding the so-called Ibiza affair as a high-profile exemplary scandal from 2019 was conducted. The present study finds that the functional phases of a (political) scandal are condensed compared to legacy media coverage, indicating a great temporal scandalization dynamic on social media. This article complements research about journalistic scandalization practices on social media, which provide an environment for journalists to identify, share, and amplify (political) scandals.

LITERATURE REVIEW

During the past decade, social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter have transformed the creation and dissemination of information, which gains importance, especially under exceptional circumstances like scandals. In this context, research about

Twitter for journalistic reporting and political scandals is valuable, as “the mediatized scandal not only touches the moral sensibilities of the outraged public, but also provides information about the journalistic system within which the scandal is identified as such” (Krackovsky, 2021, p. 185).

Research about scandals is characterized by its heterogeneity of conceptualizations (e.g., Just & Crigler, 2019, p. 34; McNair, 2019, p. 78). To specify the terminology of a political scandal for this study, the author adopts the notion by Burkhardt (2018; see also Thompson, 2000, p. 13), who differentiates between scandals as something referring to actions or events involving publicly recognized transgressions and mediatized scandals which “are communication processes induced by mass media that trigger public outrage by means of a postulated violation of the general moral model of the social reference system” (p. 22).

SCANDALIZATION PRACTICES ON TWITTER

Social media have become an integral part of journalistic work. Journalists have widely adopted Twitter, especially due to, among other things, the possibility of continuous news updates (Armstrong & Gao, 2010; Lasorsa et al., 2012; Molyneux & Mourão, 2019; Vis, 2013). This adoption process results in a situation in which “breaking news has become a kind of breathless routine, a form of predictable punctuation marking out a news day” (J. Lewis & Cushion, 2009, p. 316).

Against this background, a new dynamic of scandalization emerged, which “made scandals *hyper-public*, meaning the audience could learn about them through news reports and watch or listen to every salacious detail unfold right before their eyes” (Masullo Chen, 2019, p. 168). Although social media can increase the visibility of a potential scandalous issue and get a broader range of actors involved in the media discourse (Burkhardt, 2018, p. 19; Trottier, 2018), it is essential to acknowledge that journalism still plays a crucial role in shaping the social significance of scandals. The impact of social media is somewhat limited without the reach of traditional mass media and journalistic reporting (Burkhardt, 2018, p. 20; Kepplinger, 2018, pp. 58–60).

Journalistic activity on social media regarding scandals centers around three main dynamics:

First, new media technologies enable and encourage journalists to speed up their reporting and content dissemination while providing them “a glimpse at the continuously unfolding phenomenon of opinion online, which they can draw from for their reporting” (McGregor, 2019, p. 1074) and support the constant demand of news content. Therefore, Twitter is essential to the news industry’s speed-driven practices (Heravi & Harrower, 2016, p. 1202; Lee, 2015, p. 227). The social media platform is also a place where journalists look at what is happening and get newsworthy issues to use in their reporting (Kapidzic et al.,

2022; von Nordheim et al., 2018). At the same time, they seek to distribute their content and breaking news via Twitter to generate reach and visibility among the audience, especially elites like politicians and other journalists (Cornia et al., 2018).

Second, mediatized scandals are the outcome of mass media communication processes in the public sphere and other sub-publics (Burkhardt, 2018, p. 22). There, different interconnected agendas, social structures, and actors interact at a specific time and location (Allern & von Sikorski, 2018, p. 3016). While journalists still play an essential role in raising public awareness of issues, this dynamic has become bidirectional due to Twitter's practical and technological affordances (Neuman et al., 2014). Social media also serve as information sources and allow users and actors involved in a scandal to communicate by expressing their opinions, influencing how scandals are perceived and evaluated by the public (Vorberg & Zeitler, 2019). In this regard, scandalized individuals can mobilize their followers by placing information and messages (Kepplinger et al., 2012, pp. 175–176).

Third, Twitter is a place to create media hype (Pang, 2013; Roese, 2018), which corresponds to news flashpoints. Waisbord and Russell (2020, p. 377) describe them as "[...] moments of content alignment when headlines and stories in mainstream and alternative media, trends, and hashtags in social media, popular bloggers, and discussion forums address the same topics". Both phenomena are initiated by an event or issue (a minor incident or extraordinary occurrence) that receives significant attention from journalists and the audience. Additionally, social media have expanded society's ability to observe and created a limitless number of potential scandalizing actors who might trigger such events (Coombs & Holladay, 2021; Eisenegger, 2016, p. 42).

FRAMING OF MEDIA SCANDALS

Journalists contribute to media scandalization by selecting certain aspects and further interpreting existing news and issues. In this regard, journalists and other communicators apply frames through textual structures in media coverage and, by doing so, give meaning to events: "A *scandal frame* must be applied, repeatedly and prominently. [...] In this view, scandal demands a narrative identifying an individual villain as causing the socially significant problem" (Entman, 2012, p. 28). The media's selection of news impacts the moral assessment of events and potential subsequent actions.

As stated by Entman (2012), the sequence of framing in political scandals can be interpreted as a cascade of frames that amplify each other and are established and communicated through communicative networks, textual information in (online) news and interpersonal communication, and public opinions. Against this background, Miller and Riechert (2001) argue that addressing an issue requires developing a distinctive frame in public discourse and implementing relevant measures. Key or trigger events are framed as significant with extensive media coverage (Boesman et al., 2017; Brosius & Eps, 1995;

Mourão et al., 2021), where “one frame comes to dominate debate, and decision makers set public policy to conform to it” (Miller & Riechert, 2001, p. 113).

The applied frames are not static but are somewhat influenced by various factors, such as the degree of correspondence between the new event and existing frames, journalists' involvement, and the specific frame's temporal duration (Scheufele & Brosius, 1999). However, frames exhibit relative stability, fostered by journalistic co-orientation, the interconnectedness of individual journalistic elements, and their repeated activation and application (Potthoff, 2012, p. 139). On the one hand, the audience evaluation can be fundamentally influenced by media frames: “We can assume that media frames in scandals tend to induce audience frames that become more extreme as individuals strive for a consistent impression of the scandal case” (Kepplinger et al., 2012, p. 675). On the other hand, audience members in high-choice online news environments could not only get personalization news according to their attitudes but also deliberately choose information, and therefore “it becomes less likely that allegations [...] develop into full-blown scandals” (von Sikorski & Kubin, 2021, p. 53).

THE FUNCTIONAL PHASES OF MEDIA SCANDALS

The media operates with cycles or serialized reporting where particular narratives and dramaturgy emerge from existing journalistic routines, which affect the audience's perception of the scandal (von Sikorski & Knoll, 2018). Although these patterns extend over several weeks, months, or even years (Thompson, 2000, p. 72), it can be stated that scandals are characterized by significant temporal dynamics and a high journalistic narrative density (Burkhardt, 2018, pp. 20–24).

Different phase models have been developed for conceptualizing the media scandal process. Several of these models differentiate between four media scandal phases (e.g., Kepplinger, 2018, pp. 37–40; Wilczek, 2016). For example, Thompson (2000, pp. 72–77) identified a pre-scandal phase, where journalists become aware of an issue, either on their own or through their sources, and informally disseminate information about the issue to their journalistic peers. In the second phase, the facts about the issue are revealed and publicly assessed by journalistic reporting. In the third phase, the reporting has led to a public statement of the involved persons or groups in the scandal, or they have been heard in the public sphere, which ends the scandal as such. Finally, in the fourth phase, the scandalization is re-evaluated and reflected.

The functional phase model, the so-called scandal clock (Burkhardt, 2018, pp. 28–31; see also Burkhardt, 2015, pp. 178–205), which will be considered research-leading for this study, describes the process of public debate about a scandal in five chronological phases: the latency phase with key events, the upswing phase, the establishment phase with scandal climax, the downturn phase and the rehabilitation phase. Each one has different functions for political discourse. These phases can be described as part of media

hypes which are “triggered by a key event and feeding on the self-reinforcing processes of news production, expands one specific frame, which becomes dominant in the public arena” (Vasterman, 2005, p. 516).

During the latency phase, the protagonists and key events are introduced. Even if the surrounding accusations are sometimes well known, the scandal suddenly emerges unexpectedly from the audience’s perspective (Burkhardt, 2018, p. 29). A scandalization has yet to occur, and only a few articles have been published. Moreover, not every mediatized scandal necessarily has a latency phase.

In the upswing phase of a media scandal, journalists contextualize key actors and events, increasing the public interest (Burkhardt, 2015, pp. 322–324). Initially, differing views are present in the reporting, but these converge over time, typically within two to three weeks (Burkhardt, 2015, p. 191). The duration of the upswing phase varies, and the number of publications fluctuates strongly.

During the establishment phase of a media scandal, social rules of conduct are used to evaluate the transgression of norms by those involved. At the same time, journalistic research work introduces new information, leading to more publications and reinforcing the audience’s interest (Langer & Gruber, 2021).

The downturn phase begins after the public finds an actor or group guilty or the accused admits the misconduct (Allern & Pollack, 2012, p. 13). During this phase, journalistic coverage decreases significantly, and the decision-making leading to the scandal is reviewed. This phase serves as a review of the discourse processes that took place before, and the reaction of the scandalized person is publicly considered (Burkhardt, 2015, p. 199).

During the rehabilitation phase of a media scandal, if the reaction of the scandalized person is no longer considered scandalous, the scandal is marginalized, and the state of emergency returns to normal. Coverage continues to decrease until the scandal is eventually displaced by other news. However, rehabilitation is not guaranteed, and the scandalized person may remain socially discredited (Burkhardt, 2018, p. 31).

THE IBIZA AFFAIR

Academic research has largely neglected the so-called Ibiza affair, although “arguably the biggest scandal since the Waldheim affair of 1986” (Karner, 2021, p. 253), as a binational relevant event, which was picked up upon by journalists in Germany and Austria. Moreover, widely discussed in social media discourse, the scandal can be described as an exemplary high-profile case of political transgressions with norm violations of individual politicians in their function as political leaders, followed by a significant political crisis.

The scandal centers around a meeting on July 24, 2017, at a finca on the island of Ibiza – hence its name – of the Austrian vice-chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache, his political protégé Johann Gudenus, and a woman who they believed was the niece of a Russian oligarch. The idea for staging the meeting came from a lawyer representing a former bodyguard of Strache, who owned incriminating evidence against the politician. Strache proposed, among other things, a (partial) takeover of the *Kronen Zeitung*, the leading print outlet in Austria, with the aim to influence journalistic coverage in favor of his political party. In addition, under the circumstances that he would become a part of the government, Strache held out the prospect of state contracts.

Unbeknown to both politicians, the meeting was taped by a private eye on the lawyer's behalf (Peters, 2023), and the video was later given to the German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. The newspaper, together with the news magazine *Der Spiegel* and the Austrian weekly *Falter*, reported about it on May 17, 2019. The following day, the politicians involved in the allegations resigned. In January 2020, the Ibiza Committee of Inquiry was set up to investigate the scandal comprehensively. The following months after his immunity had been revoked to investigate if he was also involved in political corruption related to the Ibiza affair, the Austrian chancellor Kurz resigned for personal reasons. Since then, a cascade of scandals followed, showing that the past journalistic representation of the events in Ibiza was accurate and that even more politicians engaged in practices related to the scandal (for an overview, see Eder, 2023). For example, the so-called *Inseratenaffäre* in 2021 revealed that politicians supporting then-foreign minister Kurz in 2016 had tried to skew public opinion by publishing manipulated polling data in return for advertising space by government institutions in the tabloid newspaper *Österreich/OE24* (Balluff et al., 2023). This incident mirrors Strache's plan to gain political influence through favorable journalistic coverage in the *Kronen Zeitung*, further indicating that the Ibiza affair provided a glimpse into the widespread political corruption in Austria.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, or Facebook play an essential role in scandalization as part of a digital public space where public opinion emerges (Habermas, 2022, pp. 165–166). Given that the audience gets their news on social media platforms like Twitter (Newman et al., 2021, p. 24), these (and other intermediaries) can shape the audience's perception of a scandal by providing information necessary for evaluation (e.g., von Sikorski, 2020). At the same time, journalists normalized new technology in day-to-day journalistic routines (Lasorsa et al., 2012), resulting in a fast-paced "1440-minute news cycle" (Bruno, 2011, pp. 64–69).

Against this background and the extent to which journalists' normalization of Twitter influences them (e.g., professional norms, routines, and output), it is asked whether the temporal dynamics of scandals differ on Twitter compared to findings from previous research regarding print media.

METHOD

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) focuses on understanding structures of meaning and discourses as they unfold. The related analytical frameworks include the analysis of communication in texts and other media and broader social-cultural practice (for an overview, see Fairclough, 1995; Kelsey, 2017). Bouvier and Machin (2018) define discourse analysis as an approach to analyze “how some have the power over the discourses – and therefore the ideas, values, and priorities – that define our societies” (p. 178).

Against the background of how social and political issues are represented and debated on social media platforms both by organizations and individuals alike, KhosraviNik and Unger (2016) state that critical discourse analysis could be used to analyze discursive practices on social media: “The core theoretical principles of CDS [critical discourse studies], such as problem orientation and a focus on linguistic/discursive features, abduction etc., are still relevant to new spaces for discursive practices” (p. 230).

While social media provide new possibilities for various actors to participate in social media discourse alongside legacy media, “both macro/political/industrial and local communicative notions of power are still at play” (KhosraviNik, 2017, p. 583). Therefore, the content produced by journalists and media organizations still provides a particular frame of reference in discourses which manifests in a kind of consent (Bouvier & Manchin, 2018, p. 178).

As van Dijk (2015, p. 468) argues, critical discourse analysis does not follow a unitary theoretical framework or methodology. Recent developments in discourse analysis practices have shown that a mixed-method approach can support the analytical process (Duchastel & Laberge, 2019). The quantitative analysis of structures allows for extracting communicative patterns by reducing complexity. To explore discursive representations, qualitative measures complement the quantitative analyses by offering a nuanced and in-depth understanding of meaning. Therefore, to answer the research question, a qualitative thematic analysis was conducted to analyze the discursive practice of journalists on Twitter alongside a quantitative content analysis to demonstrate the dynamics of the scandalization process on Twitter. The social media platform is especially relevant as a sphere where “users present their identities, try to convince and persuade, troll, display their emotions, foment revolutions, and attempt to set the agenda” (Bennett, 2022, p. 887).

DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLE

Following the research goal to analyze how journalists on social media posted during the Ibiza affair, tweets from influential political journalists with active Twitter accounts were collected. The influence of the journalists was measured according to Razis et al. (2022), who incorporated the most recent activities of a Twitter account and a followers-

to-following ratio in their metric. The sampling process is based on prior methodological considerations, focusing on “case selection strategically in alignment with the inquiry’s purpose, primary questions, and data being collected” (Patton, 2022, p. 1173). Therefore, 18 national quality newspapers¹ and weeklies, news magazines, and their online offshoots in Germany and Austria were selected (see Table 2). They were selected as they represent the journalistic elite in both countries (for classification, see Greck, 2017, pp. 235–258), which makes them particularly relevant for defining (online) discourses. The study uses a homogeneous sample of political journalists from such news outlets as they remain relevant for elite perception by society and the forming of public opinion (Entman, 2012, pp. 27–28).

The accounts were identified via the database *ZimpeI* according to their journalistic beat and respective reporting topics. The sample consists of 149 journalists (62.42 % dailies, e. g., Standard, Kleine Zeitung, or Kurier, and FAZ, SZ, or taz; 8.05 % weeklies, e. g., Falter and Zeit; 29.53 % news magazines, e. g., Focus, Spiegel, Stern, Profil, Trend, and News).

This study uses data collected from Twitter through the R-package *rtweet* (Kearney, 2019). Overall, the analyzed corpus comprises 885 manually sampled tweets from *#IbizaGate*, *#IbizaAffäre*, or *#StracheVideo*, as well as those that mentioned the Austrian political scandal without using such hashtags. They were analyzed from roughly two weeks following the first article about the scandal until the inauguration of the expert government (May 17 to June 3, 2019).

FINDINGS

In general, journalists tweeted about the scandal for roughly two weeks. Across both countries and media outlets, most tweets were posted during the second day after the scandal was reported, with a share of around 29% of all tweets (GER: 63.81%, n=497; AT: 36.19%, n=388). Within the first three days, over 60% of all tweets (N=885) were posted (see Table 1).

Regarding the average number of tweets by journalists about the Ibiza affair, on the first day, 85 tweets per day were posted, followed by the second day with the most tweets on average (129 per day), and a steep decline during the third day with 56 tweets on average. These patterns are similar in Germany and Austria.

¹ Quality newspapers adhere to journalistic quality features such as relevance, ethics, impartiality, comprehensibility, and accuracy (see Urban & Schweiger, 2014). They report on various topics and primarily strive for information journalism that provides reliable information for the audience.

Table 1. Number of tweets by date, Germany and Austria

	Germany		Austria		total		M (SD)
	n	percent	n	percent	n	percent	
17. Mai 2019	89	52.35	81	47.65	170	19.21	85 (5.66)
18. Mai 2019	164	63.81	93	36.19	257	29.04	128.5 (50.20)
19. Mai 2019	67	60.36	44	39.64	111	12.54	55.5 (16.26)
20. Mai 2019	49	69.01	22	30.99	71	8.02	35.5 (19.09)
21. Mai 2019	30	47.62	33	52.38	63	7.12	31.5 (2.12)
22. Mai 2019	25	50.00	25	50.00	50	5.65	25 (0.00)
23. Mai 2019	8	22.86	27	77.14	35	3.95	17.5 (13.44)
24. Mai 2019	15	57.69	11	42.31	26	2.94	13 (2.83)
25. Mai 2019	14	48.28	15	51.72	29	3.28	14.5 (0.71)
26. Mai 2019	9	56.25	7	43.75	16	1.81	8 (1.41)
27. Mai 2019	9	50.00	9	50.00	18	2.03	9 (0.00)
28. Mai 2019	3	75.00	1	25.00	4	0.45	2 (1.41)
29. Mai 2019	3	42.86	4	57.14	7	0.79	3.5 (0.71)
30. Mai 2019	3	75.00	1	25.00	4	0.45	2 (1.41)
31. Mai 2019	5	55.56	4	44.44	9	1.02	4.5 (0.71)
01. Juni 2019	2	28.57	5	71.43	7	0.79	3.5 (2.12)
02. Juni 2019	1	16.67	5	83.33	6	0.68	3 (2.83)
03. Juni 2019	1	50.00	1	50.00	2	0.23	1 (0.00)
total	497		388		885	100	

Regarding the different media outlets, there are three per country of which journalists tweeted the most. In Germany, journalists from the news magazine *Der Spiegel* posted 22.33% of all tweets ($n_{\text{GER}}=497$), closely followed by their colleagues from the tabloid *Bild* with 21.53% and the daily newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (21.33%). In Austria, journalists from the daily newspaper *Der Standard* tweeted the most, with 28.35% of all tweets ($n_{\text{AT}}=388$). In second place is the *Falter* with 27.84%, which is remarkable given that there are only two journalists in the sample, followed by journalists from the *Kleine Zeitung* (11.86%).

Table 2. Number of tweets by outlet, Germany and Austria

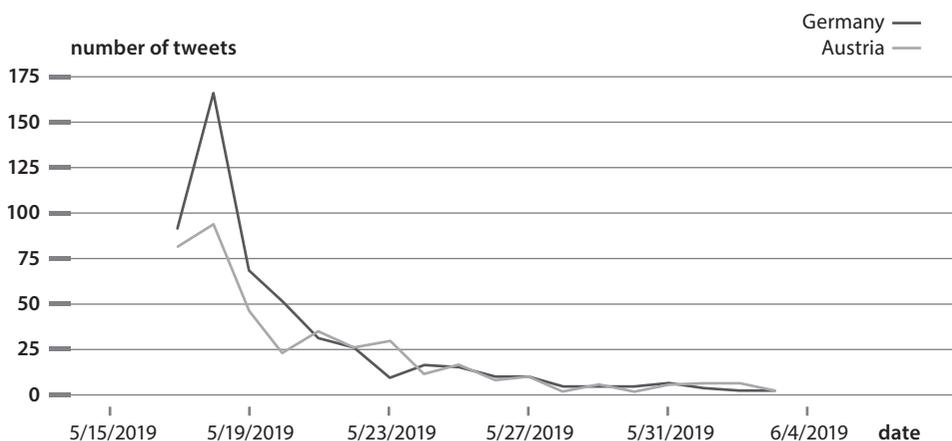
Country	Outlet	Journalists (n)	Total posts (n)	Posts per country (percent)
Germany	<i>Der Spiegel</i>	10	111	22.33
	<i>Bild</i>	10	107	21.53
	<i>Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ)</i>	10	106	21.33
	<i>Die Tageszeitung (taz)</i>	10	71	14.29
	<i>Die Zeit</i>	10	49	9.86



	<i>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)</i>	10	28	5.63
	<i>Die Welt</i>	10	15	3.02
	<i>Focus</i>	7	8	1.61
	<i>Stern</i>	10	2	0.40
total		87	497	100
Austria	<i>Der Standard</i>	10	110	28.35
	<i>Falter</i>	2	108	27.84
	<i>Kleine Zeitung</i>	10	46	11.86
	<i>Kurier</i>	10	35	9.02
	<i>Die Presse</i>	5	32	8.25
	<i>Kronen Zeitung</i>	8	25	6.44
	<i>Profil</i>	10	18	4.64
	<i>Trend</i>	3	13	3.35
	<i>News</i>	4	1	0.26
total		62	388	100

Despite the different numbers of journalists in the sample, the number of tweets by those three outlets covers about two-thirds of all tweets during the scandalization process (GER: 65.19%; AT: 68.05%)

The diagram of tweets regarding the scandal reveals the following dynamic of journalistic communication: After a sharp rise, the Twitter activity of the sampled journalists both in Germany and Austria peaked on May 18, followed by an overall drop in journalists' Twitter activity. Nevertheless, Twitter activity also indicates a short-lived peak in Austria on May 23.



▲ Figure 1.
Twitter activity by date, Germany and Austria

Based on the functional phase model by Burkhardt (2015, 2018), the following phases can be identified in the context of the Ibiza affair on Twitter:

The latency phase starts immediately after the first article is published. For example, Maximilian Popp from *Spiegel* tweeted three minutes after the publication: "Urgent: FPÖ leader Strache held out prospect of state contracts in return for election campaign aid: [#StracheVideo](https://t.co/sfj56HxKH1)" (@Maximilian_Popp, 2019)². The scandal emerges suddenly and unexpectedly, even from other journalists' perspectives. For example, Fabian Schmid, a journalist at the Austrian *Standard*, initially responded with "Wow!" (@fabian_schmid, 2019) and his colleague Rainer Schüller with nothing more than: "☺" (@RainerSchueller, 2019), indicating him being somewhat speechless about the scandal.

A scandalization process also occurred, although only a few articles had been published. Some examples were:

What a #Sittenbild! @HCStracheFP & @JGudenus The secret Strache videos – <http://FALTER.at> @falter_at #sicherheitsrisikofpö #stracheVideos (@barbaratoth)

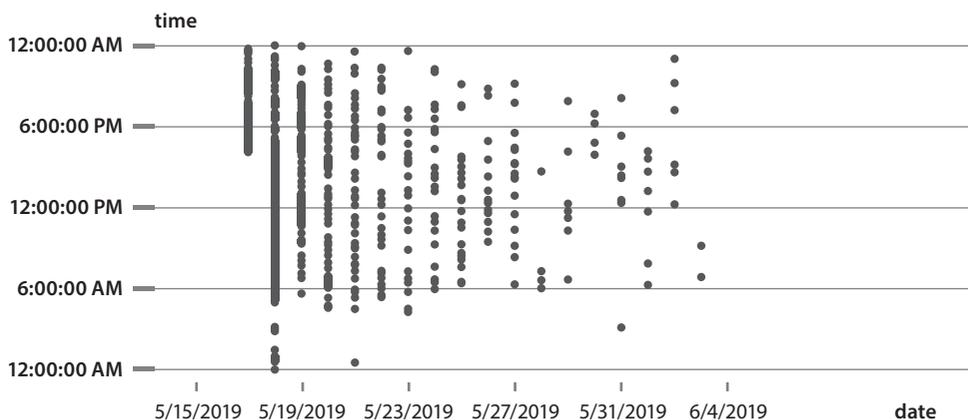
I mean, there are dozens of sentences in this video that would be valid reasons for resignation on their own. I am really gobsmacked. (@fabian_schmidt, 2019)

Strictly speaking, as the first article was published in the afternoon of May 17, the latency phase only lasted until the following day. However, the simultaneous publication in different media outlets indicates an extended latency phase, where not only the issue is scandalized, but also further contextualized.

The upswing phase started on May 18, with the journalist posting more tweets regarding the issue. Differentiated views are absent in the journalists' tweets compared to other scandals. Instead, Strache was ominously framed as the key actor in the scandal. The initial events of the scandal were no longer directly reported upon but rather the fallout of the scandalization. After the initial reporting about the scandal, two events happened in rapid succession, which contributed to Twitter communication by political journalists: Strache stepping down as vice chancellor of Austria, and Austria's chancellor Sebastian Kurz declared the end of the political coalition between his party, the conservative ÖVP, and Strache's right-wing FPÖ. These circumstances led to a steady stream of journalists' tweets where they reported and commented about the events in nearly real-time.

For instance, Gerald Winter-Pölsler, a journalist from the Austrian *Kleine Zeitung*, tweeted during the live broadcasted resignation speech by Strache: "A 'political assassination'?!?! Seriously? #Stracherücktritt" (@KLZWinter, 2019). Other journalists also reported live from the Austrian government district, where a political demonstration occurred.

² All cited tweets are translated from German to English.



▲ Figure 2.
Twitter activity by time, overall

During the following establishment phase, journalists researched new information and contextualized the events of the day before, which led to less Twitter communication in the sample. Especially the political future of Austria and other politicians of the FPÖ, like Herbert Kickl or Norbert Hofer, were discussed:

From my point of view, Kickl can hardly be held. The Ibiza video is proof for the West that FPO is heavily Russia-susceptible. Western services will put cooperation on hold as long as FPO controls the security department (@MichaelJungwirth, 2019)

Does the "Straxit" harm the right-wing populists? @BILD (@RalfSchuler, 2019)

Norbert Hofer has been Heinz-Christian Strache's deputy since 2005. Does anyone really believe that he was unaware of Strache's power fantasies and probably corrupt reveries? And if not, what does that say about his knowledge of human nature? (@fabian_schmid, 2019)

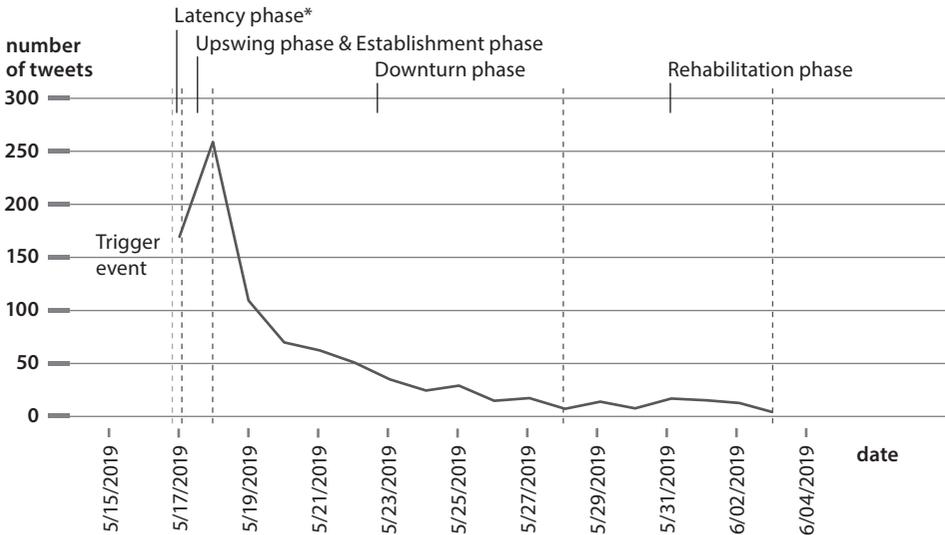
After Strache resigned from his political positions, the downturn phase began, with a significant decrease in tweets related to the scandal. Twitter communication decreased during the next few days when the state of emergency and need for reporting returned to an average level until other topics displaced the scandal (rehabilitation phase). Another small peak in Twitter activity stems from an investigative story by *Die Presse* about the lawyer who financed the videotaping.

DISCUSSION

This study explores the applicability of the functional phase model of scandals by Burkhardt (2015) on social media and, more specifically, Twitter. Therefore, the Twitter communication of political journalists in Germany and Austria regarding the Ibiza affair as a high-profile scandal case was analyzed.

The results indicate that the dynamic of social media increases the speed and diffusion of scandals (Burkhardt, 2018), and major news outlets' coverage on social media also benefits from such new patterns as they share hyperlinks to their websites and content (Barkemeyer et al., 2020). While the ideal-typical progression pattern of mediated scandals extends over several weeks, months, or years but always more than one day (Thompson, 2000, p. 72), the operational phases of the scandal on social media are shortened and performed in relatively rapid succession. For example, the latency phase during the Ibiza affair only lasted a few hours. Overall, far greater temporal dynamics seem to characterize scandalization on social media, more than in legacy news outlets or even digital reporting. Furthermore, the time delay between the event and the first journalistic coverage is shortened, which echoes the findings by Zulli (2020), who identifies a "liveness" of social media news reporting during political scandals.

Following the functional phase model by Burkhardt (2018), the scandal cycle regarding the Ibiza affair revealed the following development:



▲ Figure 3.

Number of tweets by date, overall

* A several-hour-long latency phase; a further extension in other online and print media

Consistent with previous research, the functional phases on Twitter largely follow the dynamics of hype cycles with a trigger event (i.e., the first article about the scandal) which functions as the starting point of the scandalization process and a following media hype with the potential for being covered by journalists as it a) meets specific news values like elite status, moral transgression, and hypocrisy (McNair, 2019, p. 80) and b) allows to be reduced from a complex issue into an “archetypal image (or theme)” (Giasson et al., 2018, p. 169). Furthermore, the time frame of the Ibiza affair also supports the findings of Wien (2018) regarding the duration of such media hypes. Borrowing here from Vasterman (2005, p. 508), the sharp decline in news stories could result from *not* making news and reporting on news events following news values instead. As the theoretical concepts of media hype and media scandal are related, they function in a symbiotic relationship where “a news-reporting story is easily converted into a news-making story and vice versa” (Elmelund-Præstekær & Wien, 2008, p. 249). Furthermore, three different narrative themes were presented by the journalists: First, the initial allegations focusing on Strache; second, the political turmoil and end of the political coalition between the ÖVP and FPÖ; and third, the relatively short-lived discussion about the legitimacy of the video production (see also Burkhardt, 2020, p. 7).

Journalists from specific news media tweeted more than others. The possible reasons are manifold: First, media organizations encourage or even expect their journalists to be active on social media, which can influence tweeting behavior (Lasorsa et al., 2012). Second, personal preferences and comfort with social media vary among journalists. Some may naturally gravitate toward frequent tweeting, while others prefer a more reserved approach (see e.g., Tandoc & Vos, 2016). The sample’s composition further indicates that journalists in leading positions, such as deputy editor-in-chief, editor-in-chief, and managing editor, specifically engage on Twitter. Third, journalists from *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Falter*, who were actively involved in reporting about the Ibiza affair, tweeted more frequently as they might see it as part of promoting their work.

To conclude, the findings add to research on the role of Twitter as an integral part of journalistic work for breaking news and political events of public relevance by focusing on a shifting scandalization process to social media, which could be related to a deep mediatization where “all elements of our social world are intricately related to digital media and their underlying infrastructures” (Hepp, 2020, p. 5).

This study also has limitations. While Twitter provides reliable data for research purposes regarding journalistic practice, when selecting specific data related to the research subject, it is necessary to avoid losing sight of the actual research goal. Against the background of the methodologically justified considerations to focus on influential political journalists in Germany and Austria and the selection of media outlets, an overall generalizability beyond the Twitter communication of political journalists should be critically reflected upon. Even though the Ibiza affair can be described as a prime example of scandalization dynamics, the journalistic communication analyzed in this study is closely related to specific scandalized political actors within a particular time on a particular social media platform with its own affordances and by specific journalists.

Furthermore, the data collection has the usual limitations regarding access via the Twitter API, such as data loss.

Future research could explore the mutual observations, references, and interactions between social media, their users, and news outlets during the scandalization process, as social media have changed the communicative figurations of political journalism, which Hepp (2013) defines as “patterns of processes of communicative interweaving that exist across various media” with a “thematic framing’ that orients communicative action” (p. 623). Even legacy media are now closely following social media trends, integrating them into their reporting on (political) scandals, enabling hybrid formats, and organizing forms of netizens’ participation where these audience members voice their opinions about scandals.

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OD INCIDENTA DO POLITIČKOG SKANDALA: AFERA IBIZA NA TWITTERU

Maximilian Eder

SAŽETAK *Politički skandali postali su svakodnevna pojava, između ostalog, zbog ključne uloge društvenih medija koji definiraju način na koji se skandali odvijaju, kako o njima izvještavaju novinari te kako ih publika percipira. Ovaj članak istražuje proces skandalizacije i novinarskog diskursa na Twitteru u Njemačkoj i Austriji u kontekstu tzv. afere Ibiza. Kroz kritičku analizu diskursa 885 tweetova koje je objavilo 149 utjecajnih političkih novinara, ovo istraživanje nastoji doprinijeti razumijevanju skandalizacije na Twitteru. Nadograđujući Burkhardtov (2015, 2018) funkcionalni model faza, istraživanje pokazuje da su prethodno identificirane faze (političkog) skandala u izvještavanju tiskanih medija skraćene na Twitteru, što ukazuje na različitu dinamiku skandalizacije u društvenim medijima.*

KLJUČNE RIJEČI

SKANDALI, NOVINARSKE PRAKSE, DRUŠTVENI MEDIJI, TWITTER

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