

# Gaming the Political Arena: An Analysis of Political Messaging on Twitch in Germany

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The growing support for populist parties among young voters raises the question of where and how young people, especially young men, receive political content. Supposedly a-political platforms, such as the streaming platform Twitch, which attracts large audiences, especially in the gaming community, remain largely neglected in the field of political communication. With its wide reach, Twitch is increasingly being used to appeal to young target groups, as already became clear in the US election campaign Trump vs Harris or the 2025 German federal elections where not only opinion leaders were active on the platform, but also the parties themselves streamed live (e.g., [Jungeuniongaming](#)) (Kim 2024). However, Twitch is not only gaining importance as a strategically political platform; Streamers combine political content with gaming to initiate debates and mobilize young target groups (e.g., US-American [Hasan Piker](#)) (Foxman et al. 2023; Harris et al. 2023). While the audience hardly visits Twitch as a source for political news, they might receive news peripherally as suggested by incidental news exposure (INE) (Tewksbury et al. 2001). INE occurs when individuals encounter news content while engaging online for non-news-related purposes (Schäfer 2023). Political content on Twitch is often emotionalized and simplified, which can facilitate the spread of disinformation (Boulianne and Lee 2022; Foxman et al. 2023). While Twitch users are more likely to participate in right-wing protests (Boulianne and Lee, 2022), discussions on topics such as climate change show less polarization than on platforms such as Twitter (Navarro and Tapiador 2023). Initial research approaches to political communication can be found primarily in the USA and Spain, while there is still a need for research in Germany and other European countries (Roca-Trenchs et al. 2024).

To date, there have only been a few studies that systematically examine the effects of the platform on the political attitudes and behavior of its users (e.g., Gürel and Eyüboğlu 2023). In particular, the question of how political content is perceived and processed on Twitch has not yet been sufficiently clarified. The role of moderation mechanisms also remains unexplored: it is unclear to what extent these measures influence the spread of disinformation and the quality and tone of political discussions (Ask et al. 2019). While initial studies show the important role of streamers as opinion leaders (Harris et al. 2023), the long-term influence on political opinion formation and voting behavior remains unclear. This study is part of a wider project to analyze the role of Twitch as entertainment media in affecting political opinion of young individuals. In this first explorative study, the aim is to identify and analyze political content on Twitch. We aim to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Which political topics are being discussed in gaming streams of the most followed male and female gaming streamers in Germany?

RQ2: Are there differences in topics between genders?

RQ3: Which topics experience high audience engagement, and what is the role of algorithmic curation?

Using Twitch's open-access API (Application Interface Wrapper), streams from the most influential German-speaking streamers who identify as male ( $n = 12$ ) or female ( $n = 10$ ) were scraped. Influence is assessed by the number of followers. Furthermore, streamers are only included if they have a clear gaming focus, address the German-speaking Twitch community, and have been active from January–March 2025. In total, 593 individual streams and chatlogs were available. With the help of computer-aided methods, including the use of large language models (LLMs) and transformer models such as GPT, the content of the streams is analyzed for political content. First, the streaming videos are converted into text data using OpenAI's Whisper and prepared for analysis. In the next step, topic modeling using BertTopic will extract topics from the streams. A network analysis of the active chat users will reveal high-engagement streams, providing an engagement metric. We will compare this with the overall viewer count of a stream to draw conclusions about Twitch's algorithmic curation of specific topics.

We expect to identify political content in streams from producers who do not identify themselves as political content creators. Furthermore, we will investigate differences of streamers who identify themselves as male or female regarding content, political alignment, and sentiment. We hope this first explorative analysis of political content on Twitch will reveal insights into the political news consumption on supposedly apolitical platforms and if this could be an indicator how especially young people base their voting decisions. It will expand the research on incidental news exposure by addressing Twitch as important social media and explore the effects on the gaming community – a community which is oftentimes overlooked in the study of political news and opinion formation.

In further analysis, we will particularly look out for populist messages and disinformation on Twitch, as well as the investigation of real-time interactions between streamers and viewers. The aim is to record how political content is disseminated and received by the community. The results of our research will provide

insights into how political messages and gaming merge on a platform like Twitch and, ultimately, what power they possess in the political arena.

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