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MSc in Economics and Business Administration

Cand. Merc. Brand and Communications Management

### **The impact of Political Marketing on voter consensus**

A case study of how the Movimento 5 Stelle has built and  
maintained relationships with voters through greater  
involvement

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## ABSTRACT

Many political parties have understood the importance of adopting marketing strategies and tools to use together with traditional political strategies in order to achieve better results. Politicians know that, if they want to obtain voter consensus, they have to communicate in a different way from the past and this is even more important considering the fact that the citizens' interest and the participation in politics has decreased. These features have been understood mainly by populist parties that have been able to gain power in many countries by using marketing strategies and by intercepting the discomfort of citizens.

The aim of this research is to understand and explain how the populist party of Movimento 5 Stelle, the strongest Italian political party, has been capable to gain an increasingly strong consensus by building and maintaining relationships with Italian voters by strengthening their political involvement. To analyze this phenomenon, a theoretical framework is developed by adopting and adapting different theories. In particular, Political Relationship Marketing is employed to investigate how relationships between political parties and voters are built and maintained; instead, the aspects of emotions and the use of social media are taken into consideration to examine how voters' involvement is enhanced. Furthermore, direct democracy is examined, and it is considered an additional factor that contributes to foster the relationship between political parties and voters.

In order to answer to the research question and test the hypotheses, both quantitative and qualitative methods are used: an online survey is developed having the Italian adults as sample and 7 interviews are conducted having only M5s voters as sample. The analysis of the data suggests that all the political parties, and not only populist parties, should pursue political marketing strategies to build and maintain long-term relationships with voters and to reduce voter volatility. In order to build and maintain these relationships, political parties should strengthen voters' involvement by understanding and appealing to their emotions and by developing a two-way communication thanks to the use of social media.

**Keywords:** Political Relationship Marketing, emotions, social media, direct democracy, populist parties, Movimento 5 Stelle.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Marketing is increasingly obtaining relevance not only in market activities, but also in other fields, such as politics. Many political parties and other actors are adopting marketing tools and concepts (Henneberg & O'Shaughnessy, 2009) to use together with traditional political strategies to achieve better political outcomes. In spite of the greater awareness of the importance of marketing in politics and the higher focus of scholars on political marketing studies, the application of marketing theories in politics is a relatively new phenomenon (Henneberg, 2004) and there is a substantial lack of theories and experiments in political marketing.

I believe that the success of political parties can be explained not only through traditional political theories, but also through marketing and/or communication theories. In particular, I have thought relevant to analyze how some political parties are more able than others to gain greater political consensus, i.e. more votes. To analyze this phenomenon, I have focused on how political parties build and maintain long-term relationships with voters by using and adapting a theory, called Political Relationship Marketing. Indeed, relationships between politicians and voters play a key role because politics is characterized by enduring social processes of interactivity (Henneberg & O'Shaughnessy, 2009) and relationships can help political parties to obtain more loyalty from voters and reduce voter volatility (Henneberg & O'Shaughnessy, 2009). From this perspective, the relationships between political parties and voters should be compared to the relationships between firms and customers.

Another important aspect, that allows to have a better comprehension of individuals' political choices and behaviors, is represented by emotions. Emotions influence people's habits and judgements and affect the decisions that people make. This process can happen with any kind of decisions that people make, including political ones. Many scholars, such as Brader (2005), MacKuen et al. (2007), Marcus (2017), Schollhammer (2015), Valentino et al. (2008-2011), have demonstrated the relevance of emotions in influencing how people vote, who they vote and why they decide to participate in politics. Given the relevance of appealing to emotions in order to change individuals' political behavior and decisions, I consider appropriate to evaluate the emotional aspect in my analysis to grasp how some political parties gain more political consensus than others.

The last issue discussed to understand the success of political parties concerns communication theories with a focus on the Internet and digital technologies. Political parties, as well organizations, have understood that the Internet is a mean that offers many opportunities (Dizon, 2010) and that today people increasingly use the Internet and social media to search for information rather than traditional media, such as Television, radio and newspapers. Thanks to these new means of communication, political parties can spread more information and reach a greater target, and at the same time, they can develop a two-way communication, i.e. they can spread information, persuade voters and give voters the opportunity to express their thoughts and ideas (Owen, 1999). Thus, the use of the Internet and social media may represent a useful mean for politicians to influence voters and get closer to them.

As an application of the above-mentioned marketing and communication techniques in politics, I have decided to analyze the phenomenon of populism by choosing the currently strongest Italian political party, Movimento 5 Stelle as case study. In the last years, we have seen the growing and continuous success of populist movements in many European countries, so that populist parties have entered Parliament in Greece, Italy, Hungary and in other countries, and they have gained most of the votes in political election in Italy, Hungary and Slovakia (Mudde, 2016). Although there are several strands of populism, there are some common characteristics to all the populist parties. As stated in Schollhammer (2015), populist parties are more able than traditional parties to appeal to emotions and take advantage of them in order to gain political consensus, especially during times of crisis and of general discontent. Another common element to all populist parties is their communication strategy (Dittrich, 2017). Unlike traditional political parties, populist movements and parties make a massive use of the Internet and social media through which they not only spread information and promote their political campaigns, but also involve and mobilize voters by encouraging a peer-to-peer communication, i.e. a two-way communication (Dittrich, 2017). The Movimento 5 Stelle (M5s, 5 Star Movement, MoVimento) is viewed as a prime example of a highly successful populist party (Hooghe & Oser, 2016) and I believe that it has been able to understand and appeal to the emotions of Italian citizens and use them to its advantages. Moreover, I think that the M5s is the Italian political party that has made the greatest use of the Internet and social media, making these means two of its strengths.

## 1.1. Research objective and research question

Applying different marketing, neuroscience and communication theories in politics to understand how political parties gain more consensus is not yet a deeply investigated area. Hence, my research wants to contribute to the development of a new framework by using several theories to illustrate how political marketing plays a key role for the success of political parties.

The aim of this thesis is to build a theoretical framework to understand and explain how a political party, especially a populist one, can obtain an increase in political consensus in times of democratic crisis by building and maintaining relationships with voters thanks to their greater sense of involvement in politics. The analysis will be applied to the Movimento 5 Stelle to grasp how this populist movement has been able to grow and become one of the main political parties in Italy. To understand how political consensus is achieved thanks to relationships with voters, Political Relationship Marketing will be used as the main theory; instead, to understand how the involvement of voters can enforce relationships, neuroscience theories on emotions in politics will be applied. I will also discuss the communication channel, with a focus on the use of social media as an instrument for voters' involvement. Finally, I will examine direct democracy to demonstrate how it can strengthen relationships between political parties and voters.

To meet these objectives, the following research question has been formulated: *How can a political party gain an increase in consensus by building and maintaining enforced relationships with voters through greater involvement?*



## 1.2. Terminology

In this section, I am going to provide the meaning of some important terms that I have used throughout my research.

**Emotion:** a response to the significance that circumstances hold for an individual (Damasio, 2000, in Brader, 2014, p. 390). In a political context, emotion is a result of the process by which individuals appraise the significance of a political situation and act accordingly (Smith and Ellsworth, 1985, in Searles & Ridout, 2017, p. 1).

**Emotional appeals:** communications intended to elicit an emotional response from some or all who receive them (Brader, 2014, p. 390).

**Anger:** a response to an object that is inhibiting or frustrating a relevant goal (Carver, 2004, in Searles & Ridout, 2017, p. 2).

**Anxiety:** also called fear by some scholars, is believed to be driven by innate mechanisms that allow humans to adapt to threatening circumstances (Gray, 1987; Hebb, 1949 in Searles & Ridout, 2017, p. 2).

**Enthusiasm:** a reaction to signals that have positive implications for a person's goals (Brader, 2014, p. 390).

**Political participation:** engagement of citizens in activities and events that might influence the government, its officials, and/or its policies. It may be online and offline (Zaheer, 2016, p. 279).

**Social network:** a website or a computer program that allows people to communicate and share information on the Internet using a computer or mobile phone (dictionary.cambridge.org).

**Direct democracy:** a term denoting a variety of processes and institutions, guaranteeing people's (direct) involvement in political decision-making. These processes include initiatives and referendums (Maduz, 2010, p. 1).

### 1.3. Thesis structure

<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	The motives of the thesis are explained together with the research objective and the statement of the research question. The definitions of some terms used in the research are provided.
<b>Chapter 2: Case study</b>	After a brief presentation of populism, the Movimento 5 Stelle is analyzed as the case study. The history and the rise of the MoVimento is explained, including the main characteristics, as the use of the Internet. The attributes of M5s voter is illustrated.
<b>Chapter 3: Literature review</b>	The theories used in the research are presented. These theories include Political Relationship Marketing, theories on emotions, in particular the AIT and Cognitive Appraisal Theory, and theories on communication. At the end of the chapter the theoretical framework, developed with the mentioned theories, is illustrated.
<b>Chapter 4: Hypotheses formulation</b>	Three hypotheses are formulated using the theories and the theoretical framework.
<b>Chapter 5: Philosophy of science</b>	Ontology and epistemology are discussed. Methodology is explained in detail, including the used research approach and the research design, i.e. the online survey and interviews. It is illustrated how I have developed the online survey and conducted the interviews, the respective samples and their validity and reliability.
<b>Chapter 6: Analysis &amp; discussion</b>	The chapter is divided into three paragraphs that correspond to the three formulated hypotheses. For each hypothesis, the results collected from the online survey and interviews are reported and analyzed. After the analysis, results are discussed in relation to the used theories and the developed framework.
<b>Chapter 7: Conclusion</b>	The most important outcomes of the research are highlighted, followed by the managerial implications. Lastly, the main limitations and suggestions for future researches are presented.

## **2. CASE STUDY**

### **2.1. Populism**

Albeit populism finds its origins in Europe in the 1930s when the European society and politics saw a radical change in their structures, current European social, political and media situations facilitate its rise more than ever (Mudde, 2016). Indeed, “the threat of terrorism, and anxiety about a massive wave of immigrants from the Muslim world, coupled with the widespread belief that the EU hinders rather than helps when it comes to such problems, have created a perfect storm for populism” (Mudde, 2016, p. 25). Populist parties are more able than traditional parties to gain consensus in times of economic crisis and cultural discontent due to their ability to elicit emotional reactions (Schollhammer, 2015). According to Schollhammer (2015, p. 19), “populism is the appeal to the emotional side and collective instincts of potential voters”. Hence, the rise of populism in Europe derives from a reaction “to a bundle of emotionally charged issues of the day” (Pinker, 2018, p. 338). In the last few years, Europe is facing a complex and difficult situation caused by the numerous attacks of ISIS in several cities, the economic crisis that has affected many countries, including Greece, Italy and Spain, and the process of withdrawal of United Kingdom from the European Union after the Brexit referendum. All these phenomena have contributed to the success of populist movements in the European political context.

Populist parties have gained a greater acceptance in many European countries, such as Greece, Italy, Hungary, Switzerland, Poland and Slovakia, where populists have managed to enter parliament. Moreover, in the most recent national elections in Hungary, Italy and Slovakia, populist parties have gained the majority of votes (Mudde, 2016). In Scandinavian countries, which are usually characterized by a high level of political trust and stability, populist parties have gained consensus, and this has allowed them to become established parties in the political system (Hooghe & Oser, 2016). During the 2014 European elections, populist and anti-immigrant parties gained many votes and they are now one of the main political party groups in the European Parliament (Hooghe & Oser, 2016). Even when populist parties are not in

power, they are able to influence the political context as it happened in the UK with the Brexit referendum (Pinker, 2018).

It is not easy to give an accurate definition of populism; over the years many definitions have been provided by scholars. In spite of this difficulty, populism is seen as an ideology based on the idea of splitting society in “the pure people” and “the corrupt elite” (Mudde, 2016); populism belittles “elites” and “experts” (Pinker, 2018). Hence, the basic idea of populism is that populist parties are the spokesmen of the interest of “the people” and they are in opposition to political elite, that is represented by traditional parties, indicated as the reason of the European crisis because they no longer look at the needs and wants of citizens (Hooghe & Oser, 2016). According to Pinker (2018), populism believes in the direct sovereignty of a country’s own people. It finds its ideology in the original idea that nations should be “ethnically homogeneous, orthodox cultural and religious values prevailed” (Pinker, 2018, p. 334), and that economies should be “powered by farming and manufacturing, which produce tangible goods for local consumption and for export” (Pinker, 2018, p. 334).

There is not a single coherent populist ideology (Hooghe & Oser, 2016): Prester (2012) and Kriesi (2014) have distinguished the various populist ideologies separating the left-wing oriented forms from the right-wing oriented forms (in Hooghe & Oser, 2016). Pinker (2018) believes that populism has the left-wing and right-wing varieties, even if it is more dominated by the right-wing. In both cases, the vote for the left-wing populist parties or the right-wing populist parties is classified as a vote of protest and discontent. However, left-wing populists are more concerned with inequality and economic exclusion; right-wing populist parties’ ideology is based on nationalism and the negative impact of ethnic diversity (Hooghe & Oser, 2016). Recently, in Italy with the Movimento 5 Stelle, a populist movement was founded that cannot be considered neither left nor right: the Movimento 5 Stelle has achieved its success “with a combination of environmentalism, anticorruption rectitude, and antiestablishment rage” (Mudde, 2016, p. 26).

An element that is common to all populist parties is their communication strategy: “populist parties and movements have increasingly been able to turn social networks into effective political communication platforms” (Dittrich, 2017, p. 3). Thanks to social media and social networks, populist parties have succeeded in achieving a higher number of followers and supporters than traditional parties. In their social media and social networks, populist parties and movements do not only communicate and share their views directly with citizens, but they are able to involve and mobilize them by claiming a “peer-to-peer-politics” (Dittrich, 2017). With the Internet, people, especially younger people, can continually express their flow of ideas (Pinker, 2018).

	<b>Populist parties</b>
<b>Main channels of communication</b>	TV, blogs, vlogs, social networks
<b>Communication style</b>	Direct, exclusive
<b>Intermediaries</b>	Few, if any
<b>Idea of representation</b>	Peer-to-peer politics, “will of the people”, anti-elites
<b>Manifestation</b>	Movement, anti-party
<b>Political practice</b>	Confrontational, logic of escalation
<b>Interaction with public</b>	Attempt to set agenda and manipulate the news cycle
<b>Political ideology</b>	Left, right, “neither left nor right”, issue-oriented

*Table 1: Ideal-typical features of populist parties.*

*Sources: Dittrich (2017). “Social Networks and the Populism in the EU. Four Things You Should Know”.*

### 2.1.1. Movimento 5 Stelle

The Movimento 5 Stelle (M5s, 5 Star Movement, MoVimento) is considered by many academics as a prime example of a highly successful populist party (Hooghe & Oser, 2016) and it is very different from other populist parties in Europe and in the U.S. The M5s describes itself as a non-party, “a horizontal, loosely structured, leaderless organization” (Bordignon & Ceccarini, 2015). Moreover, the M5s claims to be neither a left nor a right movement: it is “a post-ideological party that rejects the traditional political categories” (Bordignon & Ceccarini, 2015, p. 19). The Movimento 5 Stelle starts to take form between 2007 and 2008, but it is officially founded by Beppe Grillo and Gianroberto Casaleggio in October 2009. The origin of the M5s can be found in the movement “Amici di Beppe Grillo” (“Friends of Beppe Grillo”)

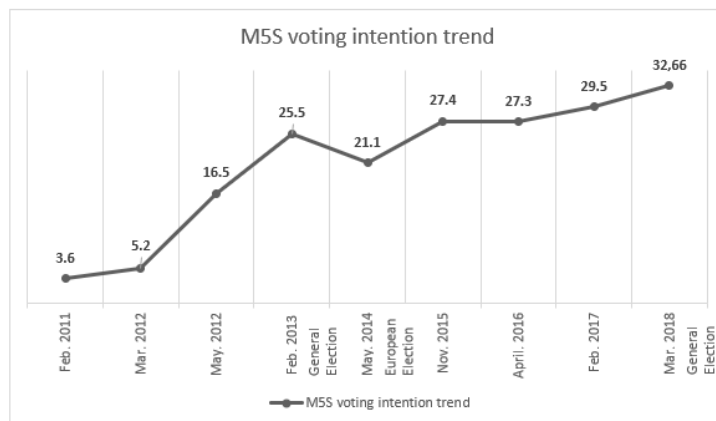
and in the blog “beppegrillo.it”, both established by the comedian and political activist Beppe Grillo (Bordignon & Ceccarini, 2015). The vision of Beppe Grillo and now of the Movimento 5 Stelle is to build a movement based on direct democracy with the idea of returning power to citizens. In its blog, Grillo addresses several current topics, such as jobs, economy and finance. In particular, the main arguments in Grillo’s blog are environmentalism, civil rights, legality, transparency, the rule of law, the problems of poverty and precarious employment (Bordignon & Ceccarini, 2015). The blog is characterized by active participation of citizens who can comment, take part into conversations and express their opinions.

In 2005, Beppe Grillo launches the initiative of the Meetup, an online platform that allows an easier communication and an easier way to coordinate: indeed, in the Meetup platform, Grillo’s people, so called “grillini”, can meet online to discuss their ideas and suggest new initiatives to promote improvements in local realities. The Meetup should encourage local-level participation and activism and it should increase civic and political involvement. Using this platform, people “are engaged, from the bottom up, in providing information, in mobilization and in active citizenship of a monitoring nature” (Bordignon & Ceccarini, 2015, p. 437). Later, the word Meetup is also used to indicate groups of local backbone cells of the Movimento where people can meet face-to-face (Mejstrik, 2016).

In 2007, Grillo launches the idea of the V-Days (Vaffanculo Day, translated as “Fuck Off Day”), the period of the mass demonstrations (Bordignon & Ceccarini, 2015). During the V-day in Bologna, in September 2007, 350.000 signatures are collected for a bill, proposing that: “1) no Italian citizen who has been found guilty at any one of the three levels of justice envisaged by the Italian legal system can stand for Parliament; 2) no Italian citizen can be elected to Parliament for more than two terms; 3) parliamentary candidates must be voted into office by preference voting” (Bordignon & Ceccarini, 2015, p. 430). The idea of Grillo is to organize mobilization days in Italian cities, during which denouncing the elites of politics and journalists and collect citizens’ signatures to present new laws proposed by the population.

### 2.1.1.1. The rise of Movimento 5 Stelle

The Movimento 5 Stelle is founded in 2009, but it achieves its first success in 2012 during the spring municipal elections and the autumn Sicilian regional elections, when the MoVimento obtained a high approval and since when it has started its continuous rise (Bordignon & Ceccarini, 2015). In February 2013 in the General Election, the Movimento 5 Stelle gains 25.5% (Viminale.it) and it becomes one of the main Italian political parties. Its success and rise continue during the years, so that the M5s wins in the municipal elections of important cities, such as Rome and Turin, and reaches 32.7% (Viminale.it) in the last General Election, in March 2018. In the 2018 General Election, the M5s surpasses traditional parties, such as Partito Democratico (PD, Democratic Party) that gains 18% and Forza Italia (FI, Forward Italy) that gains 14% (Viminale.it).



*Figure 1: M5s voting intention trend.*

*Source: own illustration based on Bordignon, Ceccarini (2015). "The Five-Star Movement: A catch-all anti-party party". Data collected from "youtrend.it".*

The Movimento 5 Stelle represents a unique case because few parties have been able to shake the surrounding political arena in less than 10 years and become the first national party (Maggini, 2013). Thus, it is important to understand how Grillo and the MoVimento have had the capacity to achieve this success. Many are the factors that have facilitated the M5s to become an important actor of the Italian politics: the first is the end of the bipolar party model, begun with the fall of Berlusconi's government, incentivized by the following period of Mario

Monti' government (Mejstrik, 2016) and the failure of Renzi's government. These events have caused the de-structuration of the Italian party system and a high electoral volatility (Maggini, 2013). Another circumstance that has advanced the rise of the M5s is the economic crisis: "uncertainty about the future and the demand for social protection clashed with the anti-crisis austerity measures, reinforcing the anti-politics sentiment" (Maggini, 2013, p. 2).

As for other populist parties, also the Movimento 5 Stelle has been able and it is still able to raise different emotions in people due to the use made by Beppe Grillo and "grillini" of "the classic populist rhetoric based on the anti-elitist approach and the dichotomy of us versus them" (Mejstrik, 2016, p. 8). The MoVimento has the capacity to appeal to different emotions in Italian citizens also thanks to powerful verbal and nonverbal messages characteristic of the communication of Grillo and the movement's members, such as the caricature of other politicians and theatrical gestures (Mejstrik, 2016). The Movimento 5 Stelle has taken advantage of the general discontent of Italian citizens towards the corrupt caste of Italian politicians who look for their own economic benefits (Mejstrik, 2016) and leave Italians in poverty. Indeed, in Grillo's and other members' speeches it is possible to identify continuous attacks to politics, to "economic and political power of large corporations; to consumerism and the domination of money; and to the European integration (Mejstrik, 2016, p. 8).

In conclusion, in the last years the Movimento 5 Stelle has succeeded in its intent of shaking the Italian political context and of becoming the spokesman for the Italians' dissatisfaction.

#### 2.1.1.2. Movimento 5 Stelle and the Internet

"Before the net, communication, knowledge and organization belong to the power; with the net they belong to all the people. (...) Collective knowledge is the new politics" (Youtube.it), these are the words in the video "Gaia" realized by Casaleggio. They perfectly depict the idea of the M5s of having the Internet at the center of its communication and fighting against traditional politics. Indeed, the Internet is the heart of the communication strategy, the organizational base and the ideological foundation of the M5s (Bordignon & Ceccarini, 2015).



The Movimento 5 Stelle represents the most obvious case of the connection between the Internet and populist movements (Dittrich, 2017).

The M5s has been able to mobilize Italians not only by taking to the streets and squares, but also through online communication on several social media. The fundamental principle of the M5s is to use new platforms of Web 2.0 as means for “freedom and direct democracy in the hands of the people” (Bordignon & Ceccarini, 2015, p. 21). Hence, the M5s does not want to use the Internet and its platforms only as a tool to spread its ideas and vision, but also as a tool to involve citizens and give them the opportunity to participate more actively in politics. Already before the MoVimento was established, Grillo’s communication was mainly on social media, in particular on his blog ([beppegrillo.it](http://beppegrillo.it)), where there are many comments under his articles and posts. Another element, used to allow people to participate and to have an active role, is the Meetup, a digital place for debates that are open to everyone.

Still today, the Movimento 5 Stelle heavily interacts with followers (Dittrich, 2017) and to do so, the M5s uses social networks, especially Facebook and Twitter where anyone can read and comment posts and tweets. The MoVimento has also its own blog ([ilblogdellestelle.it](http://ilblogdellestelle.it)) and it has created its own platform, Rousseau ([rousseau.movimento5stelle.it](http://rousseau.movimento5stelle.it)). The M5s blog is an online magazine where articles about the main news and events are written and published in real time; the articles can be commented and shared by any citizen on Facebook, Twitter and Google+. Rousseau is defined by the M5s as its own operating system and it is used to foster direct democracy. On Rousseau, people can propose new regional, national and European laws, vote for the choice of electoral lists and vote to define the political position of the MoVimento towards specific topics. Any user can access Rousseau as guest, but only those who sing up can access all the functions and participate actively.

<b>M5S main communication channels</b>
Website: <a href="http://movimento5stelle.it">movimento5stelle.it</a>
Grillo’s blog: <a href="http://beppegrillo.it">beppegrillo.it</a>
M5S blog: <a href="http://ilblogdellestelle.it">ilblogdellestelle.it</a>
Operating system: <a href="http://rousseau.movimento5stelle.it">rousseau.movimento5stelle.it</a>
Social networks: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube

*Table 2: The M5s main communication channels.  
Source: own illustration.*

	<b>Followers</b>	<b>Number of posts/Tweets/ video</b>
<b>M5S Facebook page</b>	1.200.000	Around 9 per day
<b>M5S Twitter account</b>	632.000	18.700 (total)
<b>M5S YouTube channel</b>	162.596	17.801 (total)

*Table 3: Number of followers and post/tweets/videos on the main M5s page.  
Source: own illustration. Data collected from the mentioned social networks.*

#### 2.1.1.3. The identity of M5S voters

In the 2013 General Election, the Movimento 5 Stelle obtained 25.5% and reached 32.7% in the 2018 General Election. It is an extraordinary result for a new political party because the M5s has not only strengthened, but also expanded. To have a clear understanding of 32.7% obtained by M5S, it is important to observe the sociological profile of M5s voters taking into consideration different variables, such as gender, age, employment and level of education.

At its beginning, the MoVimento was able to intercept above all the vote of men, while women represented a minority constituent (Carrieri, 2017). Thanks to the use of Internet platforms and social media as the main channels for communication, the M5s was immediately capable to attract the young and gain their support. Since its origins, the MoVimento is the most voted party by the unemployed, namely the class of Italians who have been most affected by the economic crisis (Carrieri, 2017).

After the 2018 General Election, the Movimento 5 Stelle is a cross-the-board party: it is not only a national party, but also an inter-class and generational party (ilsole24ore.com). Indeed, the M5s voters are uniform and distributed in all the variables, without significant imbalance. The unique weakness of the M5s is retired voters who still prefer to vote the Democratic Party (27.6%). In relation to gender, unlike the first years, the Movimento 5 Stelle obtained votes from both men and women: 32.8% of all the Italian men and 32.9% of the total of Italian women voted the M5s (Ipsos.com). There is also homogeneity in the registry vote; the M5s achieved consensus from both youths and adults: 35.3% of the total of Italian in the age range 18-34, 35.4% of Italians between 35-49 years old and 34% of Italians in the age range 50-64 voted the M5S (Ipsos.com).

In relation to the level of education, 29.3% of the total of university graduates and 36.1% of the total of high school graduates chose the M5s (Ipsos.com). The consensus is also high between voters who have middle school diploma (33.3%) and primary school diploma (30%). The M5s has demonstrated to be able to attract all the categories of active workers, breaking the traditional Italian occupational division according to which employees vote center-left and self-employed workers vote center-right (Carrieri, 2017). The M5s is the first party in every occupational segment, self-employed workers, employees, teachers, workmen, students and housewives, with the exception of retired (Ipsos.com). 37.2% of the unemployed chose the MoVimento and even public employees (41.6%), who usually voted center-left, voted the M5s (Ipsos.com).

Finally, it is interesting to understand where the increase in votes in 2018 compared to 2013 for the M5s originate from. 76% of Italians who voted the M5s in 2013 confirmed their choice in 2018, 14% of new votes came from dissatisfied voters of Partito Democratico, 8% from Forza Italia, 13% from Scelta Civica and 26% from those who voted for their first time (Ipsos.com). From a geographic point of view, the M5s achieved a higher consensus in the regions characterized by greater discomfort, such as Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria, Sardegna, Sicilia and some regions of central Italy (Ipsos.com).

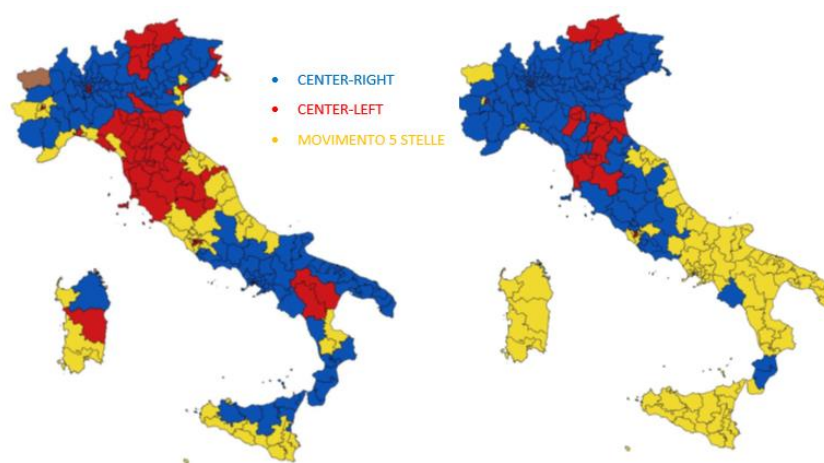


Figure 2: Winning lineup in the uninominal constituencies of the Chamber; comparison between 2013 and 2018.  
Source: Ipsos.com.

### **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **3.1. Political Marketing**

When people think about marketing and its functions, they associate these concepts only to business and the corporate world, although it is more than 30 years that marketing has been applied to non-profit organizations (Johansen, 2005). Traditionally, marketing is interpreted as “the process of identifying and meeting human and social needs” (Durmaz & Direkci, 2015, p. 31); indeed, the definition of marketing given by the American Marketing Association in 2008 is: “Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (ama.org).

Nowadays, marketing is no longer only linked to the sphere of the exchange of goods and services, but it also takes into considerations the distribution of ideas (Durmaz & Direkci, 2015). Following this line of thought, marketing theories have been applied in the political realm. “In the area of social and non-profit marketing, the application of marketing theory to the political sphere represents a fairly new phenomenon” (Henneberg, 2004, p. 4). By applying marketing into politics, a political party and a voter/citizen can be respectively identified as an organization and a customer; as Johansen (2005) claims, a political party is transformed into a professional organization. Marketing tools and concepts are increasingly employed by political actors, such as political parties, candidates, governments, single-issue groups and lobbying institutions (Henneberg & O’Shaughnessy, 2009). Political actors have started not only to act, but also to think in marketing terms (Henneberg, 2004). Due to the increased adoption of marketing in the political field by political parties and candidates, there has been a higher focus of scholars on political marketing studies.

There is no clear definition of political marketing. Researchers have given various definitions and explanations of what political marketing is. From a broader prospective, political marketing can be seen as an interdisciplinary field of marketing and political science;

thus, political marketing management can be defined as the use of marketing concepts, strategies and tools in politics (Henneberg & O'Shaughnessy, 2009; Henneberg et al., 2009). Political marketing is no longer only used as a communication tool, but it is an integrated approach implemented in order to manage politics, develop policy and campaign, and sometimes to govern (Henneberg, 2004). Wring (1997, p. 6) views political marketing as “the party or candidate’s use of opinion research and environmental analysis to produce and promote a competitive offering which will help realize organizational aims and satisfy groups of electors in exchange for their voters”.

According to Newman (1994, in Henneberg & O'Shaughnessy, 2009, p. 11), “political marketing can be used as a tool in a constructive manner if it follows the marketing concepts, which presupposes that there is an implicit service contract between the candidate and the voter”. O’Cass (1996) believes that marketing can be applied to the political sphere because in politics a transaction between voters and candidates occurs similar to the one that takes place between corporations and consumers: voters decide to give their votes to a candidate or a party and in return of these votes, the candidate or the party promises to govern better and to develop fair policies. Hence, O’Cass (1996) points out that the use of marketing “offers political parties the ability to address diverse voter concerns and needs through marketing analyzes, planning, implementation and control of political and electoral campaign” (in Menon, 2008, p. 4).

As we said above, political marketing is the application of marketing theories to politics. Since marketing is not dominated by only one approach, but by multi-faceted schools of thought, political marketing too is characterized by a variety of approaches (Henneberg et al., 2009). The approach of political marketing that I have chosen to analyze and employ in my research is Political Relationship Marketing that is the application of Relationship Marketing in politics. The reason why I have selected this approach is because it can give a substantial contribution in order to more deeply analyze and better understand the development of political marketing. Furthermore, Political Relationship Marketing is relevant in politics because it explains how social exchanges occur between different political actors and it is important to understand it since politics is characterized by social exchanges (Henneberg et O'Shaughnessy, 2009).

### **3.1.1. Relationship Marketing**

Before analyzing Political Relationship Marketing, it is necessary to step back and explain briefly what Relationship Marketing is. Palmatier (2008, in Sonkova & Grabowska, 2015, p. 197) defines Relationship Marketing as “the process of identifying, developing, maintaining, and terminating relational exchanges with the purpose of enhancing performance”. There are many other definitions of Relationship Marketing (Gronroos, 1994; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Morris, Brunyee & Page, 1998) and the majority of these agree that three are the key aspects of Relationship Marketing: 1) presence of engagement activities; 2) identifying the most important subjects and make them the target of relationship marketing activities; 3) generating benefits for all the parties involved (Sankova & Grabowska, 2015).

It is possible to state that with Relationship Marketing we move from a focus on sales to a focus on relations. Indeed, the main objective of Relationship Marketing is to develop customer loyalty and to do so, organizations attempt to develop closer relationships with their customers. In other words, “with Relationship Marketing, the focus is on building longer term relationships” (Lilleker & Jackson, 2014, p. 167). According to Morgan and Hunt (1994, in Hoang, 2015; Sankova & Grabowska, 2015), the success of the long-term relationships between organizations and customers is ensured by developing relationships characterized by an emotional content based on trust and commitment.

An organization, that applies Relationship Marketing Theory, not only wants to attract new customers, but it also addresses its efforts to maintain longer term relations with its current customers. This marketing strategy will represent a competitive solution for the organization. In order for a company to take advantage of the Relationship Marketing paradigm, it should follow and apply some key aspects.

1. First, it is necessary that the organization understands, identifies, and meets the demand of its customers (Hoang, 2015). In other words, for the company to establish and maintain long-term relationships based on trust and commitment with its customers, customers' wants and needs have to be understood and satisfied. Hence, a company should collect and analyze customers data and information.

2. In order to build relationships, an organization should interact with its customers and create an ongoing contact with them. As Duncan and Moriarty (1997, in Lilleker & Jackson, 2014, p. 167) affirm, companies should “develop conversations with their consumers and involve them in the product and service development processes”. This way, customers are closer to organizations and “Relationship Marketing can be seen as a process of participating in collaborative and cooperative programs and activities with direct customer to enhance or create the value of economic” (Hoang, 2015, p. 4). Following this paradigm, customers are no longer passive subjects to whom organizations sell products and services, but they participate in the process of value creation, so that they are named “clients”, “partners” or “associates” (Sankova & Grabowska, 2015).
3. Finally, for companies to communicate with their customers and increase customer engagement in the co-creation of value no matter the distance, they should use appropriate communication channels and tools, such as the Internet and social media. Thanks to the advances in technology and communication tools, companies can interact and involve more their customers, and simultaneously, customers have more chances to gain information about companies and be well-informed (Sankova & Grabowska, 2015). We can claim that the Internet now plays a key role in the development and maintenance of strong and long-lasting relationship between organizations and customers.

In conclusion, relationship marketing creates benefits for both customers and companies.

### **3.1.2. Political Relationship Marketing**

A variety of approaches applying different marketing theories in politics have been used in literature. In this thesis, the focus is on understanding Political Relationship Marketing and on analyzing its consequences.

The general idea of scholars, especially of Henneberg, O’Shaughnessy and Scammell, is that applying concepts and techniques of Relationship Marketing to politics can help create a

true relation between parties, politicians and citizens and, furthermore, it can help develop a new political aspect based not only on persuading citizens, but also on a greater listening to and consultation of individuals from politicians. According to Henneberg and O'Shaughnessy (2009, in Lilleker & Jackson, 2014, p. 169), Relationship Marketing can be applied both at “a micro level for parties and candidates, and at macro level for the wider political system”, and the contribution of Political Relationship Marketing can bring an important, even radical, change in politics.

As Relationship Marketing generates positive outcomes for both organizations and customers, Political Relationship Marketing produces a mutual benefit for both parties and citizens. On the one hand, citizens will be more involved and listened to so as to increase their interest in politics; on the other hand, because citizens are more willing to look for political information, politicians will have to deal with more educated and well-informed individuals and with more active citizens. In the majority of democratic countries, politicians have understood the importance of building long-term relationships with citizens and that these relationships not only have to be formed and maintained during electoral campaigns, but they also have to be continuously fostered. Indeed, “political exchanges are not isolated transactions, but an enduring social process of interactivity” (Henneberg & O'Shaughnessy, 2009, p. 10). In addition, building long-term and meaningful relationships may be useful in reducing voter volatility and electoral inactivity (Johansen, 20015); in other words, relationships may be the key to form loyalty towards a political party.

With Political Relationship Marketing, politicians focus their attention on citizens in order to gain their trust and commitment that will help build stronger and longer-lasting relationships (Henneberg & O'Shaughnessy, 2009). Thanks to the implementation of Political Relationship Marketing, it is also possible to create a greater dialogue between different social actors (Henneberg et al., 2009); the dialogue helps develop higher citizens' engagement and participation in the political world (Henneberg & O'Shaughnessy, 2009); in turn, engagement and participation will strengthen relationships between politicians and citizens. Hence, two aspects appear to be the key elements for the success of Political Relationship Marketing, in building long-term relationships between citizens and parties: the gain trust and commitment, and the development of a two-way communication in a way that increases citizens' involvement in politics.



1. In order to obtain individuals' trust and commitment, it is important that politicians identify and satisfy citizens' needs and wants. By understanding what citizens want and by paying attention to them (Henneberg & O'Shaughnessy, 2009), political actors can design tailored policies in a way that they can stimulate political interest, trust and engagement in citizens on a long-term basis. These factors will contribute to establish relationships between parties and individuals.
2. Another useful factor to appeal to a sense of political involvement among citizens that allows to build relationships with them is to create a direct dialogue, a two-way communication. If politicians want to approach a wider audience and convert supporters into activists, they have to listen to and communicate with them (Henneberg & O'Shaughnessy, 2009). The way to connect current and potential supporters to a political party is through interactive tools offered by digital technologies (Lilleker & Jackson, 2014). As Gibson and Rommele (2006, in Henneberg & O'Shaughnessy, 2009, p. 17) claim, "(...), it is clear that local actors will need to develop the participatory elements of their sites if they want to connect with their constituents and realize the opportunities they offer for enhancing their local profile". Digital technologies, such as direct emails and social media, allow politicians to reach a higher number of individuals, build an intimate dialogue with them and give them confidential information (Henneberg & O'Shaughnessy, 2009). Simultaneously, thanks to new digital technologies, citizens can give feedbacks, participate in policy forums and "be consulted more often (...), be actively solicited for their ideas on policy as well as their responses to new political suggestions intelligently regarded" (Henneberg & O'Shaughnessy, 2009, p. 13).

### **3.1.3. Political Marketing and Democracy**

Many democratic countries have seen a decline in the interest and participation of the population in politics. Indeed, one of the main challenges that governments are facing is to understand what pushes individuals not to choose a party and, so, to not vote (Johansen, 2005). As Floridia and Vignati (2014) state, we are witnessing a crisis in democracy.

There is not a single and universal definition of democracy; during the years, the concept of democracy has been re-adapted and re-interpreted by scholars who have developed different models of democracy, such as representative democracy, direct democracy, participatory democracy and deliberative democracy. However, the word democracy originates from Greek and it means that the power is exercised, directly or indirectly, by the community. Moreover, “democracy allows people to pursue their lives in safety, protected from the violence of anarchy, and in freedom, protected from the violence of tyranny” (Pinker, 2018, p. 200).

Lately, some scholars, such as Henneberg et al. (2009), have observed that pursuing Political Marketing by politicians can have a positive influence on democracy. First, Political Marketing, and especially Political Relationship Marketing, helps politics build and maintain long-term relationships with citizens. Furthermore, applying Relationship Marketing in politics means a direct dialogue with citizens; the dialogue is characterized by the fact that the public is listened to and can express its opinions. Hence, Political Relationship Marketing highlights the importance of citizens’ engagement and participation in politics (Henneberg et al., 2009), that are two of the main fundamental principle of democracy. Finally, Political Relationship Marketing provides a higher number of interactive tools and information sources that allow citizens to have a higher amount of available information (Sofyan, 2015). A well-informed and educated citizenry is essential for a fully functioning democracy (Valentino et al., 2008). In conclusion, Political Relationship Marketing may represent a way to achieve a better democracy (Henneberg & O’Shaughnessy, 2009).

### **3.2. Emotions**

Individuals believe they are consistent and rational decision makers (Lee et al., 2009). When they make decisions, they are often driven by emotional dynamics and they justify with rationality what they have decided with emotions. According to Gutnik et al. (2006), emotions influence people’s habits and judgements which, in turn, have an impact on decisions that people make. Damasio (1994, in Valentino et al., 2011) believes that emotions, both positive and negative, can improve decision making. Freud (1915, in Marcus, 2017, p. 3) affirms that

“consciousness is just the tip of the mental iceberg, with the bulk of mental processes occurring below the surface of consciousness”. Indeed, human behavior derives from unconscious neural activity and conscious processes are used to give a semantic justification. Because human beings are not only rational, but also social and emotional beings (Schollhammer, 2015), it is important to analyze emotions to understand the nature of humans. Besides from the prospective of decision-making, it has been observed that emotions are also important for the development and maintenance of relationships (Ekman, 1999).

Emotion “refers to underlying responses to the perceived relevance of external stimuli” (Brader, 2005, p. 390). Emotions are different from moods because behind emotions there is a reason to feel that specific emotion, so there is an explicit source; instead, moods do not derive from a self-identifiable referent (Marcus, 2000). Emotions are gathered in families that share similar characteristics, but each emotion is different from the other: they differ in their “appraisal, antecedent events, probable behavioral response, physiology, and other characteristics” (Ekman, 1999, p. 1). Emotions have such a fast beginning that they can occur even before an individual is aware of them. Emotions, both positive and negative, typically occur when humans are dealing with some life tasks and, hence, they affect the way people think (Ekman, 1999).

### **3.2.1. Emotions and politics**

In the past, literature was dominated by the Rational Choice Theory according to which citizens vote only the candidate or the party that promises them more economic benefits (Schollhammer, 2015). Recently, this theory has been questioned by scholars who have started to give more importance to emotions in order to understand how people vote, why they vote and why they decide to participate in politics. There is an increased awareness that “emotionality can affect how people approach politics” (Marcus & MacKuen, 1993, p. 680). According to Akerlof and Kantan (2011, in Schollhammer, 2015), citizens may vote a candidate who represents their ideals and norms, even if he does not represent their economic interests. The electoral success of some candidates in some countries is due to the fact that these

candidates struggle for people's ideals, such as "globalizations, racial diversity, women's empowerment, secularism, urbanization, education" (Pinker, 2018, p. 341). This is because individuals are also driven by other forces, such as emotions.

Emotions are used as an immediate appraisal of circumstances and for this reason they can influence political judgements (Marcus, 2000). Emotions are increasingly important in politics because "appeals to emotion can cause changes in how citizens respond to political messages" (Brader, 2005, p. 389). Emotional appeals can stimulate individuals' behavior in different ways. Hence, emotions can aid and enhance the quality of democracy (Marcus & MacKuen, 1993). During a political campaign, citizens acquire and develop new impressions on candidates and these impressions can modify their emotional responses. Valentino and his colleagues (2011) believe that there are some personal attributes, such as income, education etc., that do not vary from one election to another one, and so, they cannot explain people's political behavior and choice. Valentino et al. (2011) claim that it is important to highlight the crucial role played by emotions.

Many scholars have demonstrated how emotions can have an impact on public opinion, processing of information, political discussion, political tolerance and political attitudes (Searles, 2017). Another field of interest it is to learn how emotions affect political participation: there is a positive relation between emotions, especially strong emotions, and political participation (Schollhammer, 2015). Hence, emotions have a positive impact on involving citizens. In order to have a deeper knowledge of how emotions arouse political involvement in citizens and influence political participation, it is necessary to present two theories of emotions in politics.

#### 3.2.1.1. Affective Intelligence Theory

In 2000, Marcus and his colleagues develop the Affective Intelligence Theory (AIT) that focuses on preconscious impact of emotional reactions (Valentino et al., 2011). Unlike the Rational Choice Theory that affirms that "voters think and act rationally all the time and, in every circumstance," (Marcus, 2017, p. 7), the AIT holds that individuals are rational only in some situations and they have different decision strategies according to the situations in which

they are (MacKuen et al., 2007). The Affective Intelligence Theory states that voters have two main decision strategies available and they can shift from one to another one and back again.

Marcus and his colleagues claim that people can find themselves in two circumstances: familiar situations and unexpected and/or novel ones (in MacKuen et al., 2007). When people are in familiar circumstances, they rely on learned routines and habits; hence, they use decision strategies they used in the past. In the political context, it means that if voters feel to be in a familiar situation, they will maintain their ideological and partisan preferences (Marcus, 2017). Instead, when people find themselves in novel and unfamiliar circumstances, they cannot rely on past lessons, so they abandon their convictions and look for alternative solutions (Marcus, 2017). In politics, voters will try to learn more about the candidates/parties and they will make their decisions based on what they have learnt. Thus, according to Marcus (2017), people act under the guidance of two systems: in the first case, when circumstances are familiar, people's judgements are driven by system 1, called the dispositional system; in the second case, with uncertain conditions, judgements derive from system 2, known as the surveillance system.

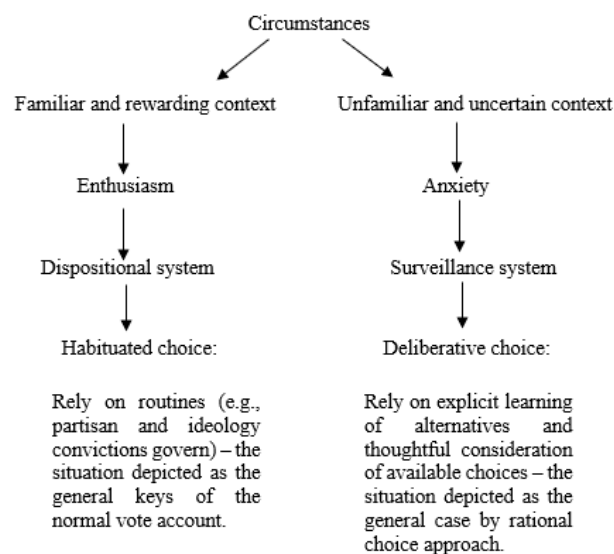


Figure 3: Responses of political circumstances.

Source: readjustment of table 6.1 in MacKuen, Marcus, Neuma, Keele (2007).

*"The Third Way: The Theory of Affective Intelligence and American Democracy".*

The dispositional system and the surveillance system are subsystems of the human brain's limbic system and each of them provoke different emotional responses (Marcus & MacKuen,

1993). The dispositional system produces emotions that fall in the class of excitement, elation, and enthusiasm; the surveillance system stimulates emotions that fall in the class of anxiety, stress, and fear (Marcus & MacKuen, 1993). According to the AIT, enthusiasm is triggered by stimuli indicating that positive objectives are being achieved; thus, enthusiasm motivates individuals to act in order to achieve their goals and, once individuals are enthusiastic, they may take other actions to continue their success. Enthusiasm reinforces usual behavior and attitudes activating the dispositional system (Valentino et al., 2008). Anxiety entails danger or negative outcomes which subsequently activate another cognitive system, the surveillance system. When the surveillance system is activated, individuals pay extra attention to the environment, are more interested in looking for new information, and are more likely to abandon their habitual patterns (Valentino et al., 2008).

In conclusion, according to Marcus, in the political realm enthusiasm confirms beliefs that voters hold in a candidate and/or in a party and arouses political involvement among citizens. Anxiety increases learning because anxious voters set aside their habits, focus their attention on the problem and look for new information (Marcus & MacKuen, 1993). Thus, anxiety can boost the willingness to participate in politics, and so individuals' involvement.

#### 3.2.1.2. Cognitive Appraisal Theory

Another useful theory to understand how emotions influence political behavior of citizens and boost their involvement is Cognitive Appraisal Theory. One of its major proponents is Richard Lazarus (Watson & Spence, 2007). Unlike Affective Intelligence Theory, Cognitive Appraisal Theory focuses on the subsequent cognitive appraisals of emotional reactions (Valentino et al., 2011). According to this theory, emotions are the results of the personal appraisal of an event; in turn, emotions influence behavioral responses (Watson & Spence, 2007). The main principle of the theory is that individuals experience different emotions because of an agent that is "who or what had control over the stimulus event" (Watson & Spence, 2007, p. 496); and, that the appraisal of the event is triggered by the relationship between the person and her environment (Watson & Spence, 2007).

In the AIT, there is no distinction between anxiety and anger: they are combined because they generate similar consequences on political judgment and learning (Valentino et al., 2011). Consequently, Marcus and his colleagues in their surveys measure anxiety with items touching both anger and fear (Valentino et al., 2008). Instead, in Cognitive Appraisal theory, anxiety and anger have different political implications. Indeed, as for other emotions, anger and anxiety derive from different relationships a person has with her environment; these different relationships cause dissimilar motivations and behaviors (Valentino et al., 2008). Anger and anxiety are both triggered by a threat (Searles & Ridout, 2017), but they differ in terms of the appraisals of attribution and control (Valentino et al., 2011). Anger is triggered when the individual attributes threats to a specific source and he feels to have control over the situation; anxiety, instead, arises when the cause of the threats is not clear, and the person does not feel to have control.

In the political context, according to the Cognitive Appraisal Theory, anxiety has mixed effects on political involvement: it may increase voters' engagement and participation under some specific circumstances. Anger generates actions of citizens and it is one of the main motivations that encourages individuals to participate in politics and, so, to be more involved (Valentino et al., 2011). As for the AIT, also for the Cognitive Appraisal Theory, enthusiasm motivates citizens to be more active in politics: enthusiasm has a positive effect on political involvement.

### **3.3. Communication**

Politicians have understood that if they want to approach more citizens and build with them long-term relationships, they have to communicate more with them (Henneberg & O'Shaughnessy, 2009). Moreover, politicians know the importance of having an informed electorate: in order for citizens to make the right political decisions, they need to be educated about political issues; in order to educate citizens, it is necessary to enable them to have the access and exposure to political information (Bode, 2015).

With the advent of the Internet and digital technologies, politicians have more means to reach voters, provide them information and persuade them. However, in the last years, it has been noticed that, as in the relationship between organizations and consumers, also between politicians and citizens, the latter are no longer passive recipient of political information, but they increasingly express their opinions and play a more visible role in the political context (Owen, 1999). Indeed, the Internet has brought a significant change in the political landscape, not only because it gives the opportunity to spread more information, but also because it has allowed to develop new means of information that avoid traditional media “gatekeepers” (Dizon, 2010, p. 38).

Digital technologies facilitate new ways of communication and of reaching a wider audience. The Internet is a medium that makes several modalities of communication and different types of contents available to its users; this encourages an increased communication among various parties (Dizon, 2010). According to Moy and his colleagues (2013, in Bode, 2015, p. 1), “with the advent of Web 2.0 technologies, citizens can increasingly provide political information and commentary to other citizens, loosening the monopoly on such communication previously enjoyed by a limited field of professional communicators”. Hence, Web 2.0 has simplified interactivity, that is “any form of communication that replicates face-to-face conversation” (Lilleker & Jackson, 2014, p. 170), among citizens, public officials and media organizations (Owen, 1999).

Nowadays, the Internet fosters greater sense of political involvement among individuals because it makes available several interactive communication tools, such as social media, chat rooms, forums and other formats, where people can express their opinions, ask for and obtain information rapidly (Owen, 1999), and be listened by politicians. Furthermore, in order to increase a sense of involvement among citizens and to foster their participation in the political processes, some governments use several platforms made available by the Internet to promote online consultations, e-voting and other forms of direct democracy (Dizon, 2010). In conclusion, citizens have the means to give voice to their thoughts that will be heard: not only politicians have the tools to connect with citizens, but also citizens nowadays can connect with politicians in a more direct way (Zaheer, 2016).



### **3.3.1. Social media**

One of the main tools used by politicians to increase interaction and exchange information with citizens is social media (Caplan, 2013). Social media is any application and tool that allow to share information among people; information can be shared through texts, videos, pictures and audio. Examples of social media are social networking sites (SNSs), such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, blogs, forums and other forms of interaction that allow people to engage in conversations (Businessdictionary.com).

Social media is a set of platforms that favors the expression of people's own ideas and it has obtained a leading role in people's life due to its easy accessibility. Social media is characterized by the fact that it provides various channels where individuals can get information, express opinions and take part in discussions of different topics. Social media brings elements that foster the freedom of individuals' expression (Zaheer, 2016). Another characteristic of social media, that differentiates it from other traditional media, is that information is shared by known people and, so, it is perceived as worthier of trust; moreover, information is often user generated, rather than generated only by official institutions (Bode, 2015). Finally, social media has become so important and so common that it is able to influence individual's behavior and ideas.

The development of social media has allowed the electorate to be more aware of key political and economic issues of political interest (Dutta & Bhat, 2016). Indeed, politicians are increasingly using several and social media to connect with their supporters and potential voters in order to spread their principles and political views, to provide information and develop discussion (Dutta & Bhat, 2016). Social media has the ability to reach citizens that are less politically involved, who has low political interest and low political media exposure (Bode, 2015). Thanks to social media, politicians can incidentally reach these citizens with political information, thus allowing them to get updated in terms of political awareness (Bode, 2015). Nowadays, most of the parties not only have their own official websites: almost all the parties and the most important politicians are on social network sites. Especially, the official pages of parties and the individual pages of candidates, where the main information and news are written in real time directly by parties and politicians can be found on Facebook and Twitter. The use

of social media, and especially of social networks, reaches its highest peak during campaigns and election times (Bode, 2015).

#### 3.3.1.1. Social media and political involvement

Social media has brought new means to spread political news and it plays a major role in informing citizens regarding politics (Bode, 2015). In the last few years, many politicians have done a massive use of different social media; good examples are Barack Obama and Donald Trump (Searles & Ridout, 2017). During the 2016 U.S. Presidential Campaign, Trump has made a great use of Twitter so that he now has a well-established presence on it. However, it has been noticed that thanks to social media, not only politicians can easily reach and connect with voters, but also voters can connect directly with politicians (Caplan, 2013). Indeed, social media is no longer used only to persuade citizens, but also to connect with them and give them the possibility to have tools that make a direct and two-ways communication with politicians easier.

Since social media enable citizens to express their opinions and ideas, by taking part in discussions and comment posts on politicians' social networks, they feel to be more involved in politics (Zaheer, 2016). According to Bode (2015), there is a relationship between the use of social media and different individuals' political behaviors, both online and offline. Social media increases the likelihood of the public to participate in politics. Several studies have demonstrated the positive relation between social media and political involvement.

According to Dutta and Bhat (2016, p. 4), "social media usage intensity is positively associated with social media political participation", and the usage of social media by citizens for political purposes generates a higher political participation. According to Holt et al. (2013), Tang and Lee (2013), due to the possibility that citizens can express their political opinions on social media, online and offline political engagement and participation increase (in Zaheer, 2016).

### **3.4. Theoretical framework**

After having analyzed the theories above, the next step is to develop a new framework that allows to illustrate important outcomes and help explain the different political dynamics that happen between citizens and politicians; in my case, it will concern understanding the dynamics between Italian citizens and the Movimento 5 Stelle. The new framework gathers together the theories that I have analyzed above having Political Relationship Marketing as the starting point and readjusting it to have a deeper knowledge and insight of how some parties are more able than others in obtaining greater consensus from citizens thanks to the application of Relationship Marketing strategy into politics. Beyond the fact that I have developed the framework and it may represent a new theoretical contribution, it is important to highlight that marketing theories and approaches are applied to the political context; hence, this shows the importance that marketing is acquiring in different fields and it is no longer used only in the sphere of exchange of goods and services.

The idea of developing a new framework derives from my interest in analyzing the current Italian political situation and the relations that occur between citizens and politicians; for this reason, I have decided to employ Political Relationship Marketing theory, but I have noticed some gaps: the theory omits some useful aspects used to understand what connects some citizens to some political parties, such as emotions. It is proved that emotions influence individual behavior and have an impact on political decision making.

Politicians have understood that they should build true relationships with citizens and these relationships cannot be built only on a short term prospective before elections, but they have to be maintained and fostered for the long term. Relationships are important to inform, influence and motivate citizens. Furthermore, some political parties, such as the M5s, give more importance to the citizens' role and they place citizens at the heart of their political strategies. As Political Relationship Marketing claims, citizens no longer have to be seen as passive recipients of political messages, but they have to be more frequently consulted and involved actively in politics.

### 3.4.1. Elaboration of the framework

To build the framework, I have used Political Relationship Marketing as the theory at the base of it. As mentioned in the literature review, politicians have an increased awareness of the importance of adopting marketing strategies and tools to achieve better political outcomes and in this perspective, they should consider voters as customers and themselves as organizations. According to Political Relationship Marketing, political parties should build and maintain long-term relationships and meaningful interactions with voters to retain their allegiance (Henneberg & O'Shaughnessy, 2009) and relationships should be built through the trust and commitment that political parties obtain when they meet citizens' needs and wants, and enforced by greater citizens' involvement in politics thanks to a two-way communication. In my framework, I have firstly established that by pursuing the principle of Political Relationship Marketing, that is by focusing on building and maintaining relationships with electors, a political party may obtain an increase in consensus from electors. Thus, I have interpreted the loyalty that political parties obtain thanks to stronger relationships with voters in terms of greater political consensus, i.e. more votes. The stronger the relationships are between political parties and voters, the greater the political consensus is.

In my framework, relationships are built and enforced only by greater sense of citizens' involvement in politics; hence, I have omitted the aspect of trust and commitment considered in Political Relationship Marketing theory. Political parties should build relationships that are essential to gain greater consensus through a greater level of citizens' involvement: when citizens feel to be more involved by politicians, the relationships with them are stronger and, hence, they intensify their consensus for these politicians. According to Political Relationship Marketing, involvement is generated only by a direct and two-way communication; in my framework, involvement derives from both emotional appeals and the use of social media, as forms of two-way communication.

1. To increase citizens' engagement and participation in politics, political parties should understand citizens' emotions and appeal to these emotions: as Affective Intelligence Theory and Cognitive Appraisal Theory have demonstrated, emotions can boost the willingness of citizens to participate in politics, that is their involvement. For both AIT and Cognitive Appraisal Theory, enthusiasm increases political involvement and

anxiety may have some effects on political involvement; according to Cognitive Appraisal Theory, anger is one of the main motivations that moves citizens to be involved in politics. In my framework, I have introduced the emotional aspect that is not acknowledged in Political Relationship Marketing Theory, but it is relevant because it can increase the involvement of citizens in politics as well as the use of two-way communication. Because citizens are also emotional beings, they may vote not only the candidate who has represented their interests better, but also the candidate or the party that has better understood and appealed to their emotions.

2. To involve citizens and obtain their consensus, it is important to build a direct dialogue and a two-way communication with them. In my framework, I have focused on the use of different social media, such as social networks, blogs and other platforms, as a form two-way communication. Social media is a form of communication that facilitates a continuous and direct exchange of ideas and opinions between citizens and politicians. Thanks to the Internet and in particular to social media, citizens not only have access to more information, but they can also express their thoughts, take part in political discussion and comment posts on politicians' social networks. Thus, they can communicate directly with politicians.

Finally, to complete my framework, I have considered the aspect of democracy, in particular of direct democracy. According to Henneberg & O'Shaughnessy (2009), Political Relationship Marketing may lead to a better democracy because the theory highlights the importance of engagement and participation of citizens in politics. In my framework, I have selected direct democracy because there might be a correlation between direct democracy and Political Relationship Marketing. Political Relationship Marketing may represent a way to foster direct democracy thanks to a greater involvement of citizens in politics, encouraged by emotional appeals and the use of the Internet and social media. At the same time, because direct democracy highlights the importance of the citizen in society, it may foster the relationship between citizens and political parties that pursue this form of democracy.

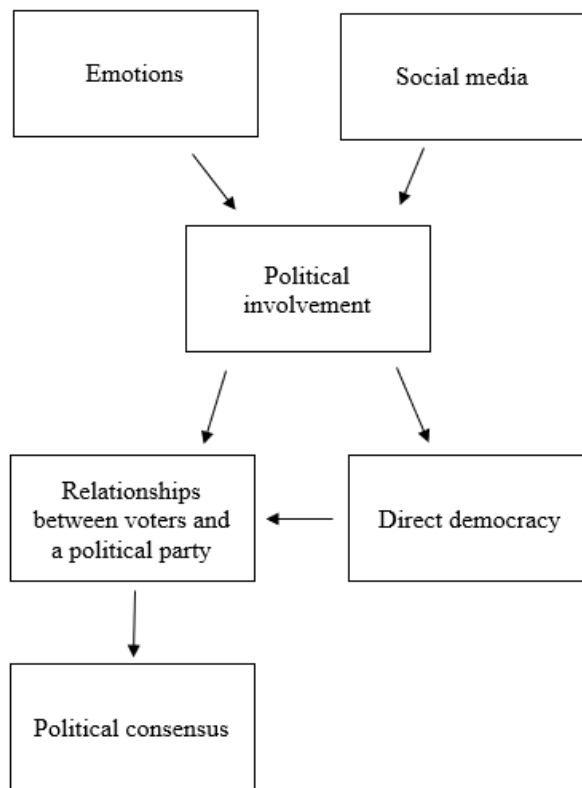


Figure 4: Representation of the theoretical framework.  
Source: own illustration.

## 4. HYPOTHESES FORMULATION

Three hypotheses have been formulated based on the above-described theoretical framework and on the presented theories to answer to the research question “*How can a political party gain an increase in consensus by building and maintaining enforced relationships with voters through greater involvement?*”.

Based on Affective Intelligence theory and Cognitive Appraisal Theory, we know that emotions, i.e. enthusiasm, anxiety and anger, boost the involvement of voters in politics; based on Political Relationship Marketing Theory, we learn that involvement enforces relationships between political parties and voters; in my framework, it is stated that relationships increase political consensus for political parties. Hence, the first hypothesis is formulated:

*H1: A political party that understands and appeals to voters' emotions gains an increase in consensus.*

Once I have collected and analyzed data, what I expect to demonstrate is that the Movimento 5 Stelle has been more able to understand and appeal to emotion than other Italian political parties and this has caused greater sense of voters' involvement, so that to enforce relationships that have empowered the M5s to gain more consensus at the last General Election.

According to Political Relationship Marketing, two-way communication increases the voters' political involvement, strengthening relationships that boost consensus for a political party. In my framework, social media is used as an example of two-way communication. Hence, the second hypothesis is formulated:

*H2: A political party that uses social media as a form of two-way communication gains an increase in consensus.*

By testing this hypothesis, I expect to find that the Movimento 5 Stelle have been able to increase political involvement thanks to a massive use of social media as a form of two-way communication and in this way, it has enforced the relationships and gained greater consensus.

According to Henneberg & O'Shaughnessy (2009), Political Relationship Marketing may lead to a better democracy because it increases citizens' political involvement that is a principle of democracy, especially of direct democracy. At the same time, direct democracy may foster relationships between political parties and voters allowing the former to gain an increase in consensus. Hence, the third hypothesis is formulated:

*H3: Direct democracy, encouraged by greater involvement, fosters the relationship between a political party and citizens and, so, favors the political party to gain an increase in consensus.*

What I expect to find is that the Movimento 5 Stelle has been able to enforce the relationships with voters also by pursuing direct democracy that has been fostered by greater involvement. In this way, the MoVimento has obtained greater consensus.



## 5. PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

This chapter is about defying the methods used to collect data and test my research question and hypotheses. In order to understand how my research has been developed and the suitability of the chosen methods, it is necessary to illustrate research philosophy, also known as philosophy of science.

The term philosophy of science refers to “development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge” (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 107); in other words, it refers to what the researcher does in his research for developing his knowledge in a particular field. According to Johnson and Clark (2006, in Saunders et al., 2009, p. 108), “as researchers we need to be aware of the philosophical commitments we make through our choice of research strategy since this has significant impact not only on what we do but we understand what it is we are investigating”. Hence, different assumptions regarding the way on which the researcher understands the world derive from the chosen research philosophy (Saunders et al., 2009).

Johnson and Clark (2006, in Saunders et al., 2009) affirm also that the researcher should reflect on his philosophical choices and be able to defend these choices in relation to the alternatives he could have adopted for his research. Thus, there is not a better philosophy of science than others, but the most appropriate philosophy of science depends on the research question to which the research intends to answer. Following this line of thought, to explain the philosophy of science for my research I have adopted the position of pragmatists. Pragmatism argues that “the most important determinant of the epistemology, ontology and methodology is the research question” (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 109); hence, it is important to consider the one’s research question to select the appropriate philosophy of science. Moreover, according to pragmatism the researcher can choose simultaneously more philosophical positions in his epistemology, ontology and methodology.

The key concepts of philosophy of science are ontology, epistemology and methodology, defined by Guba (1990, p. 18) as “the starting points or givens that determine what inquiry is and how it is to be practiced” and they stand for three different questions:

1. Ontology: What is the nature of the knowable? Or, what is the nature of reality?

2. Epistemology: What is the nature of the relationship between the knower (the inquirer) and the known (or knowable)?
3. Methodology: How should the inquirer go about finding out knowledge?

These concepts, that relate to each other, will be defined in detail and the philosophical positions adopted for each of them in my research will be explained. Indeed, ontology, epistemology and methodology can assume several philosophical positions, also called paradigms, epistemologies, research philosophies and research traditions. Guba and Lincoln (1994, in Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016, p. 17) define paradigm as “a world view or a belief system that guides a researcher in his work”. The main philosophical positions are positivism, post-positivism, critical theory and constructivism.

## **5.1. Ontology**

Ontology refers to the nature of reality and is concerned with “the ideas about the existence of and relationship between people, society and the world in general” (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016, p. 14). Ontology moves the researcher to give an answer to the assumptions he makes on how the world works and adopt a particular view to answer (Saunders et al., 2009). There are two aspects of ontology: objectivism and subjectivism. Objectivism holds that “the position that social entities exist in reality external to social actors concerned with their existence” (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 110); in other words, the objectivist view on ontology states that the world exists independently of people and their actions, and “social reality has independent existence outside the researcher” (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016, p. 15). Instead, subjectivism claims that “social phenomena are created from the perceptions and consequent actions of those social actors concerned with their existence” (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 110). In other words, in this view on ontology, reality is based on perceptions and experiences that change from one person to another and in time and context (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). Subjectivism is also associated to the social constructionism, according to which it is necessary to understand the subjective motivator of social actors’ actions for the researcher to be able to comprehend these actions (Saunders et al., 2009). Remenyi et al. (1998, in Saunders et al., 2009,

p. 111) highlight the importance of studying “the details of the situation to understand the reality or perhaps a reality working behind them”. Thus, according to the social constructionism on ontology, reality does not exist outside individuals and it is socially constructed (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016).

In the present research, the ontological position is that of constructivism because my intention is to understand how the Movimento 5 Stelle has been able to become one of the main Italian parties in a short period of time by studying and analyzing the subjective emotions of Italian voters and their use of social media for political purposes. The emotions of Italian citizens derive from the perceptions that Italians have about the current Italian political and social situation; they generate an increased involvement in politics and a greater consensus for the M5s. Similarly, to understand the use of social media for political purposes, it is necessary to examine how Italians perceive this use of social media in politics.

## **5.2. Epistemology**

Epistemology is concerned with “what constitutes acceptable knowledge in a field of study” (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 112). As for ontology, also for epistemology there are objectivist and subjectivist views. Objectivism claims that there exists a world that is external; subjectivism holds that observations and interpretations are required to understand the external world (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). As for ontology, I follow the subjectivist epistemological view in my research process.

Following the pragmatic view that allows me to work with variations in ontology, epistemology and methodology, I consider two philosophical positions to be the best appropriate for epistemology in my thesis: critical realism and constructionism. Critical realism “agrees with positivists that there is an observable world, independent of human consciousness” (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016, p. 20), but it also argues that the knowledge about the world is socially constructed. Critical realists believe that the social world constantly changes due to the natural dynamics of human actions and on how people in certain location and time interpret it; for these reasons, it is important to understand social situations (Saunders et al., 2009). Since I

want to investigate the mechanisms- emotions and social media- that influence citizens' involvement and relationships with politicians, critical realism is applied in this thesis because it argues that researchers "will be able to understand what is going on in the social world if they understand the social structures that have given rise to the phenomena that they are trying to understand" (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 155).

Along with critical realism, constructivism holds that reality is socially constructed and defined by ongoing actions. The constructivist paradigm will allow me to understand the social world, that being in my research the mechanisms behind political phenomena, through the interpretation of qualitative information (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016).

### **5.3. Methodology**

Methodology is concerned with how the researcher comes to know the world and it provides the guidelines for the research approach and research design (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). Methodology provides the ways, that are the methods, used in the research to understand and know better the world; for this reason, it is also called the philosophy of methods.

#### **5.3.1. Research approach**

There are two methods that allow the researcher to achieve scientific knowledge and they are called deduction and induction (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). These two research approaches differ because with the inductive approach the researcher starts from the observation of empirical world and from the collection of data from which he will develop a theory as the result of his analysis (Saunders et al., 2009). Hence, "the research process develops, starting from empirical materials, not from theoretical propositions" (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). With deductive approach the researcher develops a theory and hypotheses, then he designs a research strategy to test his hypotheses and to explain particular phenomena (Saunders et al.,

2009). Deduction is the most used approach in natural sciences and according to it, theory is the first source of knowledge. The process of deduction is linear, and it starts from theory to empirical world (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). Robson (2002) lists five steps that characterize the deduction approach: deducing hypotheses from the theory; expressing the hypotheses in operational terms, that is indicating how the concepts will be measured; testing these operational hypotheses; examining the specific outcome of the inquiry; and, if necessary, modifying the theory in the light of the findings (in Saunders et al., 2009, p. 124-125).

The research approach used in the present research is a combination of deduction and induction, called abduction (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). Abduction “refers to the progress of moving from the everyday descriptions and meanings given by people, to categories and concepts that create the basic of an understanding (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016, p. 24). In particular, in my research the deductive approach is represented by the fact that I have employed existing theory from which I have develop the theoretical framework, my main research question and three hypotheses to test. However, the collected data and the subsequent findings are not used for testing the existing theories, but they are the means for validating my theoretical framework developed from the existing theories. Hence, thanks to abduction, I could shift from deduction to induction and back again during my research process.

### **5.3.2. Research design**

The research design is the general plan of how the researcher will address his research question by specifying the sources employed to collect data (Saunders et al., 2009). I have decided to adopt the mixed methods approach that refers to when “both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques and analysis procedures are used in a research design” (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 152). The reason why I have embraced both quantitative and qualitative methods is because multiple methods have permitted me to have better possibilities to answer my research question, test my hypotheses and to “evaluate the extent to which findings may be trusted and inferences made” (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 160). In particular, the quantitative method has been applied so that I could compare the perceptions and behavior of

the voters of the main Italian political parties and I could identify important difference with respect to the voted political parties. Instead, by using qualitative data collection technique I could focus solely on the Movimento 5 Stelle and have a deeper knowledge and a better understanding of emotions and behaviors of the M5s' voters and activists.

In the present research, I have used primary data. Gathering new data ensures that the results and findings are more correct and accurate for the aim of the study because the data derives from the sample that has been selected. To collect primary data, I have employed online survey and semi-structured interviews as data collection methods.

#### 5.3.2.1. Online survey

Questionnaire is a general term that refers to all data collection techniques in which each individual is invited to answer to the same set of questions (Saunders et al., 2009). One type of questionnaire is online survey, also called Internet-mediated questionnaire. Online survey is in the category of self-administered questionnaires that permit respondents to take part in the questionnaire anonymously (Saunders et al., 2009).

The developed online survey is used in terms of descriptive research that undertakes attitude and opinions questions and enable to “identify and describe the variability in different phenomena” (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 362). Indeed, the aim of my online survey is to help me identify and understand the main emotions that Italians have regarding the Italian political situation; how they believe other citizens emotionally evaluate different political parties; personal emotions towards political parties; the use of the Internet to gain political information; and, how they use social media for political purposes.

According to Dillman (2007, in Saunders et al., 2009), there are three type of data that can be collected through questionnaires: opinion, behavior and attribute. “Opinion data evidence how respondents feel about something or what they think or believe is true or false. Behavioral data refer to what people did in the past, do now or will do in the future”. Attribute data are the characterizes of the respondents (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 368). The three mentioned types of data have been gathered.

The survey is divided into three parts.

1. After the front page in which I have briefly described the duration of the survey, that there are not right and wrong answers and that the questionnaire is anonymous, there is the first part that consists of 7 questions related to emotions. Questions are rating questions and they have been written so that I could collect opinion variables (Saunders et al., 2009). For the first, the second and the seventh questions I have used Linkert-style rating scale, ranged from 1 to 5. In the first questions, respondents have indicated the intensity for each emotion (sadness, disgust, anger, fear, concern, happiness, pride, hope) felt in relation to the Italian political situation; in the second question, respondents have ranked how much each political party (M5s, Lega, Forza Italia, Fratelli d'Italia, Partito Democratico, Liberi e Uguali, +Europa) has understood the emotions of Italian citizens; and, in the seventh question respondents have ranked how much their own emotions have influenced their choice of vote. From the third to the fifth question, respondents have indicated which emotion each political party has appealed to and raised in Italians. Finally, in the sixth questions respondents have indicated which emotion they feel for each party.
2. The second part of the survey is made of 19 questions that have allowed me to gather both behavioral and opinion variables. Through the first 13 questions I have examined if and how respondents use the Internet and social media for political purposes; the last 6 questions have aimed to understand the relation between political involvement and social media.
3. The third part of the survey consists of 6 questions for collecting attribute variables. Respondents have indicated their gender, age, education, occupation and which party they voted in 2013 and 2018 General Election.

No question could be skipped, and they have been written in Italian because the sample is made of Italian citizens; they have been translated and attached in the appendix. A few questions are adapted from the questions used in other studies, i.e. Valentino et al. (2011), Brader (2014) ad Zaheer (2016), but the majority are of my devise. In order to design my survey, to collect and analyze data, I have used “Qualtrics Insight”. The online survey was launched on May 26, 2018 and it was closed on June 18, 2018. The link to the survey was spread through Facebook and WhatsApp. See Appendix A to have an overview of the online survey.

#### 5.3.2.1.1. Validity and reliability

According to Saunders et al. (2009), a questionnaire has to be valid to have accurate collected data and reliable to gather consistent data. My online survey has been found to be valid in terms of content validity that refers to “the extent to which the measurement questions provide adequate coverage of the investigative questions” (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 373). With the online survey I have asked questions that permitted to have enough insights to test my hypotheses. Through the survey I could deduce findings considered as relevant and with adequate coverage to answer my research question.

Mitchell (1996, in Saunders et al., 2009) argues that there are three ways to assess reliability that is concerned with the ability of the questionnaire to deliver consistent findings at different times and under different conditions. The three ways are test re-test, internal consistency and alternative form. In order to evaluate if the online survey is reliable I have undertaken the approach of internal consistency that involves comparing answers in the same questionnaire. Moreover, the online survey is considered reliable also because some questions are adapted from the questions of other questionnaires (Saunders et al., 2009).

#### 5.3.2.1.2. Sample

The target group of my research is all the Italian citizens who voted the Movimento 5 Stelle in the last General Election in March 2018. However, the online survey has been open to everyone and any voter of all the Italian political parties could take part in the survey. This has allowed me to collect more useful and detailed data of the Italian electorate.

Since I have collected data on different political parties' voters I have decided to divide the total sample into two groups: one group is made up of voters of the Movimento 5 Stelle; the other comprises the voters of all the other Italian political parties. The reference sample is the one with voters of the M5s that has been compared to the group of other voters in order to gather possible significant differences related to emotions in politics and the use of the Internet and social media between the two groups and derive evidences to support my hypotheses.



In total I have received 93 responses. The respondents who voted the M5s in the last General Election are 27; the respondents who voted other political parties are 66. Of the 66 respondents, the composition in relation to the voted political party in the last election is the following: Lega 12.12%, Forza Italia 3.03%, Fratelli d'Italia 4.55%, Partito Democratico 27.27%, Liberi e Uguali 10.61%, +Europa 15.15%, Abstain 15.15%, other 12.12%. In order to divide the total of responses into the two groups of voters I have used the last question of the survey “Which political party did you vote in the General Election in March 2018?” as filter. To have an overview of the respondents’ characteristics, below I describe the attributes of the two groups of voters, that is the group of Movimento 5 Stelle voters and the group of other voters.

		Respondents who voted M5s	Respondents who voted other political parties
<b>Number of respondents</b>		27	66
<b>Gender</b>	Male	48.15%	45.45%
	Female	51.85%	54.55%
<b>Age</b>	18-30 years	33.33%	56.06%
	31-45 years	18.52%	33.33%
	46-50 years	22.22%	7.03%
	over 50	25.93%	7.58%
<b>Education</b>	Middle School Diploma	7.41%	0
	High School Diploma	59.26%	34.85%
	Bachelor's Degree	22.22%	34.85%
	Master Degree	11.11%	27.27%
	Doctorate (Ph.D)	0	3.03%
<b>Occupation</b>	Student	11.11%	46.97%
	Employee	51.85%	30.30%
	Freelance	7.41%	13.64%
	Entrepreneur	0	4.55%
	Unemployed	22.22%	4.55%
	Retired	7.41%	0
<b>Political party voted in the General Election of February 2013</b>	Movimento 5 Stelle	74.07%	7.58%
	Lega Nord	0	4.55%
	Popolo della Libertà	0	4.55%
	Fratelli d'Italia	3.70%	4.55%
	Partito Democratico	11.11%	40.91%
	Con Monti per l'Italia	0	3.03%
	Abstain	0	7.58%
	Underage	7.70%	7.58%
	Other	7.41%	21.21%

*Table 4: Survey respondents' attributes.  
The respondents are divided in who voted the M5s and who voted other parties.  
Source: own illustration.*

### 5.3.2.2. Semi-structured interviews

Interview is a general term for several types of interviews (Saunders et al., 2009). The chosen type of interview is semi-structured interviews that is defined as non-standardized interviews and refers to as qualitative research interviews (Saunders et al., 2009). When adopting semi-structured interviews, a researcher prepares a list of questions to be covered, but it can be adapted from participant to participant and the order of questions may be varied based on the conversation. However, during the interview, the main themes must be touched so that the researcher can have accurate answers regarding the topics and issues of his investigation (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Semi-structured interviews are “flexible, accessible, intelligible, and capable of disclosing important and often hidden facets of human and behavior” (Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 246). The interviews can be conducted face-to-face with the interviewees, by telephone or electronically. Both the interviewer and interviewee participate in the interview generating an interpersonal talk characterized by questions and answers (Qu & Dumay, 2011).

There are several reasons for which I have chosen interviews, in particular semi-structured interviews, rather than other qualitative data collection methods, such as focus group. First, semi-structured interviews help the researcher to examine and understand the reasons behind the decisions, attitudes and opinions of participants (Saunders et al., 2009). In other words, this method of data collection allows to interpret how respondent comprehend the social world under investigation (Qu & Dumay, 2001). By conducting semi-structured interviews individually with each respondent, I could establish a personal contact, get to know each interviewee and focus solely on the opinions and attitudes of the participant. Moreover, being alone with me, the interviewees have felt freer and more open to talk and express their thoughts without fear of being judged by other respondents. These elements cannot be achieved with focus group because respondents may be afraid to talk openly because they are with unknown people and some respondents may dominate the discussion of the focus group without permitting other participants to give their contribution (Saunders et al., 2009).

Differently from the online survey, through semi-structured interview I could ask questions in great quantity and, since I have decided to interview only the M5s voters, I could gather a greater and more detailed set of data related to their opinions compared to the data I have collected with the survey that was open to everyone regardless of the political party they

voted. Indeed, the aim of interviews has been to have a deeper explanation of the emotions felt by the M5s voters before they have approached the MoVimento, which emotions they feel now, their use of social media for political purposes, if social media have increased their involvement in politics and what they think about direct democracy.

The last reason for having adopted semi-structured interview is that this type of interviews is similar to an ordinary conversation: I have allowed the interviewees to talk freely following their stream of thoughts and I have interrupted with questions only when some topics of my investigation were missing. This has enabled me to lead the discussions into areas that were not previously considered, but significant for my understanding and helped me to formulate other of the prepared questions (Saunders et al., 2009).

For the interviews to have high performance, a carrefour preparation is essential. Following the steps explained by Saunders et al. (2009, pp. 318-335), I have developed the questions for the interviews referring to the previously written literature review and hypotheses I want to verify. The questions are divided in 3 main topics: emotions, social media, and direct democracy. See Appendix B to have an overview of the questions; the questions have been translated into English to be attached in the present research.

Once I have written down the questions, I have contacted the participants and explained them the general topic of the interview without providing them the questions and without describing in detail what I want to prove in order not to influence their answers. The participants could decide the location so that they could choose a place where they would feel more comfortable. The unique request I have made is that the place should be quiet. Only one interview has been conducted via Skype due to the limited availability of the participant; the remaining interviews have been conducted face-to-face.

All the interviews have been conducted in Italian. To establish my credibility and gain the interviewees' confidence, before starting the interviews, I have begun a normal conversation regarding topics outside the objectives of the interviews; then I have broadly explained my research and asked some general questions. During the interviews, I have asked the questions, but often the interviewees have touched topics without my questions because they have been let free to talk. When the interviewees have gone off topic, I have led them back on the right path. Sometimes the same questions have been asked more times to have more accurate

answers. The interviews have been recorded, after having asked the approval from the interviewees. Furthermore, during the interviews I have taken notes of the key parts.

#### 5.3.2.2.1. Validity and reliability

Qualitative methods of data collection, in my case semi-structured interviews, ensure a high level of validity that is the “extent to which the researcher gains access to their participants’ knowledge and experience, and is able to infer a meaning that participant intended” (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 327). The semi-structured interviews conducted are considered to be valid because they have been conducted carefully and the questions have been clear and cover all the hypotheses. Moreover, the topics have been deeply discussed and from a variety of angles (Saunders et al., 2009). Finally, the interviews are also valid because I have never revealed my political orientation and my thoughts about the Movimento 5 Stelle, so as not to influence the answers of the respondents.

Reliability represents an issue when using qualitative methods. Marshall and Rossman (1999, in Saunders et al., 2009, p. 327) believe that “the finding derived from using non-standardized research methods, in this case semi-structured interviews, are not necessarily intended to be repeatable since they reflect reality at the time they were collected”. Hence, if other researchers would like to replicate the interviews it would not be realistic (Saunders et al., 2009).

#### 5.3.2.2.2. Sample

The sample of interviewees is constituted of 7 people, all voters of the Movimento 5 Stelle. The reason behind this choice is to have the opportunity to collect more specific and in-depth information and better understand the emotions of those who vote the M5s, how they use the Internet and social media, their relationships with the MoVimento and their thoughts about direct democracy. Furthermore, interviewing voters of the M5s has supported the data collected with the online survey.

I have selected a heterogeneous sample of interviewees with regards to age, occupation, level of education and political orientation before being an elector of the M5s in order to have a more complete overview. In addition, within the 7 interviewees, 1 is a councilor of the M5s, 2 are simply voters and 4 are M5s activists. This aspect has allowed me to gather the point of views of people who have different relations with the M5s and to examine their emotions and their use of the Internet in relation to their roles. In table 5, you can see the attributes of the 7 interviewees.

Interviewee	Age	Education	Occupation	Political party voted in February 2013	Political orientation before M5s	Relation with M5s
Elena	47	Middle School Diploma	Employee	Movimento 5 Stelle	No political orientation	Activist
Carlo	58	High School Diploma	Freelance	Movimento 5 Stelle	Center right	Activist
Jonathan	28	Bachelor's Degree	Student and employee	Partito Democratico	Center left	Voter
Nicola	49	High School Diploma	Employee	Movimento 5 Stelle	Extreme left	Activist
Gaia	28	High School Diploma	Employee	Movimento 5 Stelle	Left	Activist
Fabiana	56	High School Diploma	Unemployed	Movimento 5 Stelle	Left	Councilor
Giancarlo	64	Middle School Diploma	Retired	Popolo della Libertà	Extreme right	Voter

*Table 5: Interviewees' attributes.  
Source: own illustration.*

## 6. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter I am going to present and discuss the data and information collected with the online survey and interviews. For simplicity and clarity, findings will be analyzed and discussed in three different paragraphs following the three formulated hypotheses. Before moving forward to the data analysis and discussion, it is important to give some explanations on the methods employed to analyze the collected data.

1. As mentioned in paragraph 5.3.2.1.2., the whole sample of the online survey has been divided into two groups: the group of respondents who voted the M5s in the last General Election, from now on called group A; and the group of who voted other Italian political parties, called group B. This choice has permitted me to have a deeper and specific overview of the answers of the M5s voters and to compare them with the data of other voters, thus being able to identify significant differences between these two groups of voters to support what I want to demonstrate.
2. In the online survey, to analyze the questions related to the emotions, I have followed the example of Valentino et al. (2008 and 2011): in the questions I have listed a wider array of emotions, 8 items in total: sadness, disgust, anger, fear, concern, happiness, pride and hope. Then, in the analysis I have grouped the 8 items in the three main emotions, enthusiasm, anxiety and anger, that according to the AIT and Cognitive Appraisal theory boost individuals' involvement in politics. This choice amounts to "building composite indexes of emotions rather than relying on single measures" (Valentino et al, 2011, p. 163). Fear and concern are combined to produce a measure of anxiety; hope, pride and happiness to measure enthusiasm; and, anger, disgust and sadness to measure anger.
3. When I have analyzed the first, second and seventh questions of the survey in which I have used Linkert-style rating scale, ranged from 1 to 5, for greater clarity and understanding I have combined grade 1 and 2 as measure of "not at all"; I have interpreted grade 3 as "moderately"; and, grade 4 and 5 are aggregated as measure of "very".
4. Since 3 respondents who voted the Movimento 5 Stelle and 2 who voted other political parties do not have an account on any social networks, their answers in

questions 10, 11, 12, 16, 18, 21, 24 of the online survey have not been considered because they cannot express their opinions related to their use of social networks as they do not have access to any

5. In this chapter I will present the elaboration of the data collected with the survey. To have an overview of raw data of the survey, see Appendix C.
6. All the interviews have been recorded and then transcribed. The interviews have been conducted in Italian, so I have translated them trying to keep more as possible the original meanings. However, some sentences have been corrected in terms of grammar and others have been adapted as some idioms are typical of the Italian language.
7. To deduce the key information from the interviews to use in the analysis and discussion, I have underlined the most significant sentences with different colors depending on the themes the sentences refer to. The themes have been generated deductively from the theory and the propositions, inductively from the data. See appendix D to have an overview of the transcribed interviews.

## **6.1. A political party that understands and appeals to voters' emotions gains an increase in consensus**

The first step in the analysis begins with the study of data and information related to emotions in order to test the first hypothesis.

In the last years, Italian citizens have felt stronger negative emotions, such as anger, disgust, fear and concern towards the Italian political situation. From the results of the online survey, it is possible to notice that in the last 5 years anger and anxiety have been felt very often by the participants who voted the M5s (group A): respectively 59% and 48% has experienced these emotions very much compared to 25% and 33% who have not felt them. Anger and anxiety have been felt very often also by participants who voted other political parties (group B); respectively by 56% and 68%. Regarding enthusiasm, the majority of all the survey

respondents have declared not to have experienced it: 66% of group A and 80% of group B have never felt enthusiastic towards Italian politics.

	Not at all	No. of answers	Moderately	No. of answers	Very much	No. of answers	Total
Anger	25.93%	7	14.81%	4	59.26%	16	27
Anxiety	33.33%	9	18.52%	5	48.15%	13	27
Enthusiasm	66.67%	18	11.11%	3	22.22%	6	27

	Not at all	No. of answers	Moderately	No. of answers	Very much	No. of answers	Total
Anger	22.73%	15	21.21%	14	56.06%	37	66
Anxiety	18.18%	12	15.15%	10	68.18%	45	66
Enthusiasm	80.30%	53	10.61%	7	10.61%	7	66

Table 6: Emotions felt by Italians in the last 5 years. The first table is related to group A, the second to group B.  
Source: own elaboration of data.

The survey participants have also indicated which emotion they feel regarding each of the listed political party. From data observation, it results that 81% of group A is enthusiastic about the M5s; instead, regarding the Lega, 40% of them harbors anxiety. The majority of group A feels angry towards Forza Italia (81.47%), Fratelli d'Italia (37.03%) and Partito Democratico (85.19%) and any emotions towards Liberi e Uguali and +Europa. By analyzing the answers of group B, the main emotion felt towards the M5s is anxiety (50%). Regarding the Lega, in equal way 39% of the respondents of group B harbors anger and anxiety. Anger is the major emotion towards Forza Italia, Fratelli d'Italia and Partito Democratico. As for group A, most the respondents of group B does not feel emotions towards Liberi e Uguali (54.55%) and +Europa (43.94%).

	Anger	No. of answers	Anxiety	No. of answers	Enthusiasm	No. of answers	Any emotion	No. of answers	Total
Di Maio (Movimento 5 Stelle)	0.00%	0	11.11%	3	81.48%	22	7.41%	2	27
Salvini (Lega)	11.11%	3	40.74%	11	37.04%	10	11.11%	3	27
Berlusconi (Forza Italia)	81.47%	22	7.41%	2	3.70%	1	7.41%	2	27
Meloni (Fratelli d'Italia)	37.03%	10	18.52%	5	14.82%	4	29.63%	8	27
Renzi (Partito DEMocratico)	85.19%	23	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	14.81%	4	27
Grasso (Liberi e Uguali)	33.33%	9	3.70%	1	18.51%	5	44.44%	12	27
Bonino (+Europa)	25.92%	7	0.00%	0	11.11%	3	62.96%	17	27



	Anger	No. of answers	Anxiety	No. of answers	Enthusiasm	No. of answers	Any emotion	No. of answers	Total
Di Maio (Movimento 5 Stelle)	27.27%	18	50.00%	33	15.16%	10	7.58%	5	66
Salvini (Lega)	39.39%	26	39.40%	26	18.19%	12	3.03%	2	66
Berlusconi (Forza Italia)	57.58%	38	19.70%	13	7.59%	5	15.15%	10	66
Meloni (Fratelli d'Italia)	37.89%	25	30.30%	20	10.61%	7	21.21%	14	66
Renzi (Partito DEMocratico)	51.52%	34	13.64%	9	18.18%	12	16.67%	11	66
Grasso (Liberi e Uguali)	25.76%	17	4.55%	3	15.16%	10	54.55%	36	66
Bonino (+Europa)	15.16%	10	4.55%	3	36.37%	24	43.94%	29	66

Table 7: Emotions felt towards each party. The first table is related to group A, the second to group B.  
Source: own elaboration of data.

Even during the interviews, I have asked to the interviewees which emotions they feel towards Italian politics, traditional political parties and the M5s. What has come to light is that, as for the survey participants, the interviewees are very angry at traditional parties. For example, Carlo has claimed “I’m very angry and I feel to be fooled because I think that in Italy there is a right and a left wing that are part of the same side of the coin. They fight each other, they make-believe to fight each other, but each of them lives on because there is the other”. However, all the interviewees harbor enthusiasm towards the M5s; as Fabiana has argued, she is enthusiastic towards the message that the M5s is carrying.

From the collected answers in the survey, I have noticed that all the participants, irrespective of the political party they voted, agree that two parties, the M5s and the Lega, have especially appealed to Italian citizens’ emotions, and the other parties, such as Forza Italia, Fratelli d’Italia, Partito Democratico, Liberi e Uguali, and +Europa, have almost failed to do so. 37.93% of group A believes that both the M5s and Lega have equally appealed to emotions of Italian citizens; 38% and 38.67% of group B think that respectively the M5s and the Lega have appealed to emotions.

	%	No. of answers
Di Maio (Movimento 5 Stelle)	37.93%	22
Salvini (Lega)	37.93%	22
Berlusconi (Forza Italia)	3.45%	2
Meloni (Fratelli d'Italia)	8.62%	5
Renzi (Partito Democratico)	12.07%	7
Grasso (Liberi e Uguali)	0.00%	0
Bonino (+Europa)	0.00%	0
Other	0.00%	0
Total	100%	58

	%	No. of answers
Di Maio (Movimento 5 Stelle)	38.00%	57
Salvini (Lega)	38.67%	58
Berlusconi (Forza Italia)	6.00%	9
Meloni (Fratelli d'Italia)	10.67%	16
Renzi (Partito Democratico)	4.67%	7
Grasso (Liberi e Uguali)	0.67%	1
Bonino (+Europa)	0.67%	1
Other	0.67%	1
Total	100%	150

Table 8: Respondents' opinion about which political party has appealed more to emotions.  
The first table is related to group A, the second to group B.  
Source: own elaboration of data.

Moreover, the survey respondents are convinced that the M5s and the Lega are the only two political parties that have largest understood the emotions of Italians: in particular, 92% of group A and 56% of group B think that the M5s has understood emotions very much. Instead, the other political parties are evaluated by most of the respondents not to have been able to comprehend Italian citizens' emotions.

	Not at all	No. of answers	Moderately	No. of answers	Very much	No. of answers	Total
Di Maio (Movimento 5 Stelle)	3.70%	1	3.70%	1	92.59%	25	27
Salvini (Lega)	25.92%	7	18.52%	5	55.56%	15	27
Berlusconi (Forza Italia)	92.59%	25	3.70%	1	3.70%	1	27
Meloni (Fratelli d'Italia)	77.77%	21	14.81%	4	7.40%	2	27
Renzi (Partito Democratico)	96.30%	26	0.00%	0	3.70%	1	27
Grasso (Liberi e Uguali)	88.89%	24	11.11%	3	0.00%	0	27
Bonino (+Europa)	96.30%	26	0.00%	0	3.70%	1	27

	Not at all	No. of answers	Moderately	No. of answers	Very much	No. of answers	Total
Di Maio (Movimento 5 Stelle)	22.73%	15	21.21%	14	56.06%	37	66
Salvini (Lega)	21.21%	14	21.21%	14	57.57%	38	66
Berlusconi (Forza Italia)	66.66%	44	22.73%	15	10.61%	7	66
Meloni (Fratelli d'Italia)	50.00%	33	33.33%	22	16.67%	11	66
Renzi (Partito Democratico)	66.66%	44	28.79%	19	4.55%	3	66
Grasso (Liberi e Uguali)	75.75%	50	15.15%	10	9.09%	6	66
Bonino (+Europa)	65.15%	43	18.18%	12	16.67%	11	66

Table 9: Respondents' opinion related to how much each party has understood emotions.

The first table is related to group A, the second to group B.

Source: own elaboration of data.

Concerning the emotions of Italian citizens that each political party has appealed to, the M5s is considered to have mainly appealed to anger, as 48% of group A believes it, but for 44% of them it has also appealed to enthusiasm. Even 65% of group B has claimed that the M5s has appealed to anger. Regarding the Lega, 55% of group A and 60% of group B hold that it has appealed to anger. Towards the other parties it is thought by the majority of both the groups that they have not mainly appealed to any emotion.

	Anger	No. of answers	Anxiety	No. of answers	Enthusiasm	No. of answers	Any emotion	No. of answers	Total
Di Maio (Movimento 5 Stelle)	48.15%	13	7.41%	2	44.44%	12	0.00%	0	27
Salvini (Lega)	55.55%	15	33.33%	9	11.11%	3	0.00%	0	27
Berlusconi (Forza Italia)	14.81%	4	33.33%	9	18.51%	5	33.33%	9	27
Meloni (Fratelli d'Italia)	22.22%	6	29.63%	8	25.93%	7	22.22%	6	27
Renzi (Partito Democratico)	22.22%	6	14.81%	4	29.63%	8	33.33%	9	27
Grasso (Liberi e uguali)	18.51%	5	11.11%	3	25.92%	7	44.44%	12	27
Bonino (+Europa)	3.70%	1	7.40%	2	25.92%	7	62.96%	17	27

	Anger	No. of answers	Anxiety	No. of answers	Enthusiasm	No. of answers	Any emotion	No. of answers	Total
Di Maio (Movimento 5 Stelle)	65.15%	43	18.18%	12	16.67%	11	0.00%	0	66
Salvini (Lega)	60.60%	40	34.85%	23	4.55%	3	0.00%	0	66
Berlusconi (Forza Italia)	12.13%	8	36.37%	24	27.28%	18	24.24%	16	66
Meloni (Fratelli d'Italia)	34.85%	23	33.33%	22	15.16%	10	16.67%	11	66
Renzi (Partito Democratico)	12.12%	8	19.70%	13	30.31%	20	37.88%	25	66
Grasso (Liberi e uguali)	12.12%	8	16.67%	11	27.28%	18	43.94%	29	66
Bonino (+Europa)	7.59%	5	16.67%	11	31.83%	21	43.94%	29	66

*Table 10: Respondents' opinion related to which emotions each party has more appealed to. The first table is related to group A, the second to group B.  
Source: own elaboration of data.*

The M5s is considered by all the survey respondents the political party that has raised enthusiasm in the Italian citizens: it is thought so by 88% of group A and 80% of group B. According to the respondents, the only party that is closer to the M5s in raising enthusiasm is the Lega; the other parties, as Forza Italia and Partito Democratico, have raised mainly anger in Italians, or, as Liberi e Uguali and +Europa, do not have raised any emotion.

	Anger	No. of answers	Anxiety	No. of answers	Enthusiasm	No. of answers	Any emotion	No. of answers	Total
Di Maio (Movimento 5 Stelle)	11.11%	3	0.00%	0	88.88%	24	0.00%	0	27
Salvini (Lega)	25.93%	7	18.52%	5	55.55%	15	0.00%	0	27
Berlusconi (Forza Italia)	48.14%	13	7.41%	2	14.81%	4	29.63%	8	27
Meloni (Fratelli d'Italia)	22.22%	6	18.52%	5	29.63%	8	29.63%	8	27
Renzi (Partito Democratico)	59.26%	16	3.70%	1	18.51%	5	18.52%	5	27
Grasso (Liberi e Uguali)	18.52%	5	0.00%	0	22.21%	6	59.26%	16	27
Bonino (+Europa)	14.82%	4	0.00%	0	18.51%	5	66.67%	18	27

	Anger	No. of answers	Anxiety	No. of answers	Enthusiasm	No. of answers	Any emotion	No. of answers	Total
Di Maio (Movimento 5 Stelle)	15.16%	10	3.04%	2	80.31%	53	1.52%	1	66
Salvini (Lega)	22.73%	15	13.64%	9	62.12%	41	1.52%	1	66
Berlusconi (Forza Italia)	30.31%	20	28.79%	19	19.70%	13	21.21%	14	66
Meloni (Fratelli d'Italia)	24.25%	16	16.67%	11	28.79%	19	30.30%	20	66
Renzi (Partito Democratico)	46.97%	31	18.18%	12	13.64%	9	21.21%	14	66
Grasso (Liberi e Uguali)	19.70%	13	9.09%	6	10.61%	7	60.61%	40	66
Bonino (+Europa)	13.64%	9	9.10%	6	19.70%	13	57.58%	38	66

*Table 11: Respondents' opinion related to which emotions each party has raised. The first table is related to group A, the second to group B.  
Source: own elaboration of data.*

All the mentioned findings have been verified also during the interviews. All the interviewees have declared that according to them, the M5s have above all appealed to the Italians' anger and it has raised enthusiasm in many citizens. Jonathan believes that "many people have been attracted by the anger of the M5s politicians because it represents their anger. Many people were captured by this anger because it expressed theirs". Giancarlo has admitted

having voted the M5s because it had understood his anger towards traditional politicians who make proactive speeches, but do not keep promises. According to Nicola, “in 2012, when in Italy we almost had bankruptcy, the M5s has channeled anger into something good and purposeful: we proposed laws, proposed municipal motions, and encouraged political commitment (...). The movement has intercepted the bellies of Italians”.

Gaia thinks that the M5s has been more able than other political parties to appeal to anger and use this anger in a positive way: “the M5s gathers people who were tired of voting politicians who have never done anything for the Italians, who have never achieved what was promised during the political campaigns. Maybe many Italians were fed up with old politicians and were angry at them; the M5s gave hope to these people that were angry with other politicians because the movement has given a beginning to the change by involving young people, graduate people and those who have the skills to do, who are not colluded, as old politicians. The M5s is open to anyone and people are there because they are voted. There isn’t political nepotism in the movement”. “The M5s has been capable to transform anger in enthusiasm of doing, in something positive and proactive”, Fabiana has argued. Thus, all the interviewees have confirmed that the M5s has understood the emotions of Italians better than other political parties, as Nicola said “I do not say that the M5s has been more able to understand the emotions than other parties; the election result says so. It seems obvious to me”. Moreover, the interviewees do believe that the M5s has given hope and, hence, it has raised enthusiasm, and this enthusiasm has encouraged Italians to vote for the movement. Jonathan has stated “I know they (M5s politicians) do not have the magic wand, but they gave me hope that things can be changed in a slow but effective way. Maybe they will not solve everything, but I think something will work out. Thanks to them, I have a little more hope”.

Concluding the survey analysis by comparing the answers of the respondents who voted the M5s with the answers of those who voted other Italian political parties, it results that the former has been more influenced by their emotions in the choice of the voted political party in the 2018 General Election than the latter: 62.96% of group A believes that their emotions have played a key role when they voted.

	Respondents who voted the M5s	No. of answers	Respondents who voted other parties	No. of answers
Not at all	22.22%	6	33.34%	22
Neutral	14.81%	4	21.21%	14
Very much	62.96%	17	45.45%	30
		27		66

*Table 12: Emotions' influence on the vote.  
Source: own elaboration of data.*

### 6.1.1. Discussion

By gathering the results of the survey and the points of views of the interviewees, it is possible to discern that the M5s has been able to understand the emotions of Italian citizens, that have been mainly negative towards politics and traditional political parties. Italian citizens harbor especially anger and anxiety, and they rarely are enthusiastic with Italian politics. The Movimento 5 Stelle is one of the few political parties that has comprehended Italians' emotions and their social discomfort: Italian voters has found in the M5s a party that has grasped their anger and anxiety.

At the same time, the MoVimento is viewed as a party that has highly appealed to emotions. It is believed that the M5s has appealed to the anger that Italian citizens harbor towards the elite of politicians. Based on the Cognitive Appraisal Theory, we know that anger encourages citizens to take actions and, thus, arouses their involvement. As Carlo has affirmed, "anger has been channeled in a right way. For many the movement is a social revenge and it gave back the opportunity to feel important. People feel considered again. It is the movement of the excluded". The M5s, by appealing to anger, has been able to increase the political involvement of many Italians and this has permitted the M5s to establish stronger relationships with them and to be closer to voters. As Elena has said: "M5s politicians are close to the people, they are present in the territory, they stay in touch with people. They are like a magnet because you feel them near and real, so it makes you feel part of a great project, of a big family".

Furthermore, the MoVimento is seen as the political party that has above all appealed to and raised more enthusiasm. For both the AIT and Cognitive Appraisal Theory, enthusiasm has

positive effects on political involvement: when a person is enthusiastic, her enthusiasm pushes her to continue acting to achieve her goals. Fabiana has claimed that when her M5s peers and she achieve a goal, they feel enthusiastic and they are more encouraged to act. Thus, the M5s, by raising and appealing to enthusiasm, has fostered greater voters' involvement that has enabled it to build and maintain stronger relationships with voters. In this regard, Elena has mentioned that "the M5s gave me so much hope, a great desire to do something. It has been so engaging. I felt the M5s was something that came into me".

In conclusion, from its origins the Movimento 5 Stelle has been able to understand the Italian voters' emotions and to appeal to them, so that the M5s voters are highly influenced by their emotions when they vote. In this way, the Movimento has generated greater sense of involvement among Italian citizens, that has encouraged strong relationships with voters. These relationships have enabled the M5s to gain during the years, especially from 2012, more consensus, so that to gain 32.7% in the 2018 General Election and become the first Italian political party.

## **6.2. A political party that uses social media as a form of two-way communication gains an increase in consensus**

To verify the second hypothesis, it is necessary to start from the analysis of how the survey participants and interviewees use the Internet and social media, i.e. social networks, blogs and other platforms. As we can see from the survey results, Facebook is the social network with more registered users for both group A (37%) and group B (38%), followed by Instagram with 25% of group A and 29% of group B, and YouTube with 16% of group A and 14% of group B. All the interviewees have their own page on Facebook; Nicola and Fabiana also have Twitter.

	%	No. of answers
Facebook	37.10%	23
Twitter	14.52%	9
Instagram	25.81%	16
YouTube	16.13%	10
Any	4.84%	3
Other	1.61%	1
Total	100%	62

	%	No. of answers
Facebook	38.99%	62
Twitter	11.95%	19
Instagram	29.56%	47
YouTube	14.47%	23
Any	1.26%	2
Other	3.77%	6
Total	100%	159

*Table 13: The main social networks where the respondents have an account. The first table is related to group A, the second to group B. Source: own elaboration of data.*

Although most of all the respondents spend less than 3 hours per week on the Internet and social media for political purposes, it is possible to notice that the respondents of group A spent more time since 14% of them spend more than 7 hours per week on the Internet and social media for political purposes compared to 7% of respondents of group B.

	%	No. of answers
Less than 3 hours per week	70.37%	19
Between 3-7 hours per week	14.81%	4
More than 7 hours per week	14.81%	4
Total	100%	27

	%	No. of answers
Less than 3 hours per week	74.24%	49
Between 3-7 hours per week	18.18%	12
More than 7 hours per week	7.58%	5
Total	100%	66

*Table 14: Percentage of respondents related to hours per week spent for political purposes on the Internet and social media. The first table is related to group A, the second to group B. Source: own elaboration of data.*

The majority of both the groups read political news on the Internet, even if the respondents of group A (96%) consult the Internet for this purpose more than the respondents of group B (89%). The same is for the use of social networks to read political news: even if most of both groups use social networks to get political information, this behavior is higher for group A (79%) than group B (62%). Even the interviewees make a great use of the Internet and social media to read the news: “I don’t read newspaper, I can’t read them. I read news on the Internet”, Fabiana has declared. Jonathan has confessed to search for news on social networks, such as Facebook and YouTube.

	%	No. of answers
Yes	96.30%	26
No	3.70%	1
Total	100%	27

	%	No. of answers
Yes	89.39%	59
No	10.61%	7
Total	100%	66

Table 15: Percentage of respondents who use the Internet to read political news.  
The first table is related to group A, the second to group B.  
Source: own elaboration of data.

	%	No. of answers
Yes	79.17%	19
No	20.83%	5
Total	100%	24

	%	No. of answers
Yes	62.50%	40
No	37.50%	24
Total	100%	64

Table 16: Percentage of respondents who use of social networks to read political news.  
The first table is related to group A, the second to group B.  
Source: own elaboration of data.

75% of group A has stated, compared to 56% of group B, to have consulted on social networks the official page of the politician and/or the political party that they voted in the 2018 General Election. Furthermore, 51% of group A has visited the official website of some political party compared to 43% of group B. The most consulted website by the respondents of group A is the one of the M5s; the M5s and Lega websites are the most consulted websites by group B.

	%	No. of answers
Yes	75.00%	18
No	25.00%	6
Total	100%	24

	%	No. of answers
Yes	56.25%	36
No	43.75%	28
Total	100%	64

Table 17: Percentage of respondents who have consulted the official page of the voted politician/political party. The first table is related to group A, the second to group B.  
Source: own elaboration of data.

	%	No. of answers
Yes	51.85%	14
No	48.15%	13
Total	100%	27

	%	No. of answers
Yes	43.94%	29
No	56.06%	37
Totale	100%	66

Table 18: percentage of respondents who have visited the official website of a political party. The first table is related to group A, the second to group B.  
Source: own elaboration of data.



A significant difference between the two groups regards the visualization of political blogs and platforms: 74% of the respondents who voted the M5s has navigated on blogs and platforms compared to 33% of the respondents who voted other political parties. The most consulted blog is the M5s blog. Grillo's blog and Rousseau platform have been consulted by group A. 5 of the interviewees, Elena, Carlo, Nicola, Gaia and Fabiana, have signed up on Rousseau, where they usually vote for new laws and the M5s candidates. Jonathan has declared to have consulted the M5s blog to look at their electoral program.

	%	No. of answers
Yes	74.07%	20
No	25.93%	7
Total	100%	27

	%	No. of answers
Yes	33.33%	22
No	66.67%	44
Total	100%	66

*Table 19: Percentage of respondents who have visited political blogs and other platforms. The first table is related to group A, the second to group B. Source: own elaboration of data.*

The respondents of group A (54%) result to be those who follow politicians and/or political parties on social networks more than the respondents of group B (43%), and for this reason the most followed party is the M5s. All the interviewees have told to follow the official M5s page and the M5s politicians' page on Facebook.

	%	No. of answers
Yes	54.17%	13
No	45.83%	11
Total	100%	24

	%	No. of answers
Yes	43.75%	28
No	56.25%	36
Total	100%	64

*Table 20: Percentage of respondents who follow politicians/political parties on social networks. The first table is related to group A, the second to group B. Source: own elaboration of data.*

Most of all the survey participants is not part of political groups on Facebook, though 29% of group A has signed up in political groups compared to 4% of group B. The groups to which respondents of group A have signed up are all related to the M5s. Elena has claimed "I am on many groups related to the M5s. I have created the Facebook page of Signa and Lastra a Signa M5s group with other activists".

	%	No. of answers
Yes	29.17%	7
No	70.83%	17
Total	100%	24

	%	No. of answers
Yes	4.69%	3
No	95.31%	61
Total	100%	64

Table 21: Percentage of respondents who have signed up in political groups on Facebook.  
The first table is related to group A, the second to group B.  
Source: own elaboration of data.

Concerning the activities linked to politics that the survey respondents carry out on social networks, the respondents who voted the M5s are more active than the others. Indeed, more of half of group A has commented posts of politicians and/or political parties (50%), has shared them (58%) and commented political posts written by a friend (70%). Although it is the minority, the respondents of group A that have taken part in political discussion in posts (45%) are more than those of group B (28%). There is not a high difference between the two groups regarding writing political posts on the own page, as 37% of group A and 34% of group B do it.

	Yes	No. of answers	No	No. of answers	Total
Comment a post of a politician/political party	50.00%	12	50.00%	12	24
Share a post of a politician/political party	58.33%	14	41.67%	10	24
Comment a political post written by a friend	70.83%	17	29.17%	7	24
Write political posts on your page	37.50%	9	62.50%	15	24
Take part in political discussion in posts	45.83%	11	54.17%	13	24

	Yes	No. of answers	No	No. of answers	Total
Comment a post of a politician/political party	29.69%	19	70.31%	45	64
Share a post of a politician/political party	35.94%	23	64.06%	41	64
Comment a political post written by a friend	54.69%	35	45.31%	29	64
Write political posts on your page	34.38%	22	65.63%	42	64
Take part in political discussion in posts	28.13%	18	71.88%	46	64

Table 22: Percentage of respondents who have carried out the listed activities on social networks.  
The first table is related to group A, the second to group B.  
Source: own elaboration of data.

The main reason that moves the respondents who voted the M5s to comment political posts is the possibility to express their own opinions (40%), followed by the desire to support politicians and/or a political party, in this case the M5s, (22%) and express the resentments

against a politician and/or a political party (20%). In relation to this, Elena, Carlo, Nicola, Gaia and Fabiana use Facebook only for a unique aim that is the M5s: they comment, write and share posts to spread news on the M5s. Elena has added: “I like when someone participate in discussion on my Facebook page. I would like to involve people of any political ideology when I post on Facebook”.

	%	No. of answers
Express your opinion	40.00%	16
Create a constructive debate	15.00%	6
Express you resentments against a politician/political party	20.00%	8
Express your support for a politicians/political party	22.50%	9
Other	2.50%	1
Total	100%	40

*Table 23: Percentage of respondents related to the reasons that have pushed them to comment political post. The table is referred to group A.*

*Source: own elaboration of data.*

To conclude the analysis and verify the second hypothesis, it is important to understand what the survey participants and the interviewees think about the use of social media, i.e. social networks, blogs and political platforms, by politicians. In general, the respondents who voted the M5s see in a more positive way the use of social media by politicians and its effect on political involvement than the other respondents. Indeed, 41% of group A has confirmed that the use of social networks by politicians and political parties has moved them closer to politics, compared to 9% of group B.

	%	No. of answers
Yes	41.67%	10
Maybe	37.50%	9
No	20.83%	5
Total	100%	24

	%	No. of answers
Yes	9.38%	6
Maybe	34.38%	22
No	56.25%	36
Total	100%	64

*Table 24: Percentage of respondents related to if the use of social networks by politicians have moved them closer to politics. The first table is related to group A, the second to group B.*

*Source: own elaboration of data.*

37% of group A believes that the use of social media by politicians has increased their sense of political involvement; only 15% of group B thinks that this has happened to them. Thanks to the use of social media, such as social networks and blogs, 45% of respondents who

voted the M5s feels closer to the movement, compared to only 10% of respondents of group B who feels closer to the parties they voted.

	%	No. of answers
Yes	37.04%	10
Maybe	44.44%	12
No	18.52%	5
Total	100%	27

	%	No. of answers
Yes	15.15%	10
Maybe	27.27%	18
No	57.58%	38
Total	100%	66

Table 25: Percentage of responses related to if the use of social media by politicians has increased their involvement. The first table is related to group A, the second to group B.  
Source: own elaboration of data.

	%	No. of answers
Yes	45.83%	11
Maybe	29.17%	7
No	25.00%	6
Total	100%	24

	%	No. of answers
Yes	10.94%	7
Maybe	31.25%	20
No	57.81%	37
Total	100%	64

Table 26: Percentage of respondents related to if the use of social networks makes them feel closer to the voted political party. The first table is related to group A, the second to group B.  
Source: own elaboration of data.

Finally, the majority of group A (59%) think they have more opportunities to express their own opinions about politics than in the past thanks to social networks and blogs; this fact is considered true only by 31% of group B.

	%	No. of answers
Yes	59.26%	16
Maybe	25.93%	7
No	14.81%	4
Total	100%	27

	%	No. of answers
Yes	31.82%	21
Maybe	28.79%	19
No	39.39%	26
Total	100%	66

Table 27: Percentages of respondents related to if they think to have more opportunities than in the past to express their opinions. The first table is related to group A, the second to group B.  
Source: own elaboration of data.

During the interview, the importance of the social media used by the M5s politicians has often been highlighted by the interviewees. Besides the fact that the interviewees have approached the M5s thanks to Grillo's blog or the M5s blog, Giancarlo has claimed that "social media were obviously fundamental. I read a lot on Facebook". Jonathan has said that using social media as the M5s is doing is a good idea because "young people use social media. It has

happened even with me: it is from social media that I have started to engage more with politics because looking at the politicians of the M5s who say various things it is impossible not to be interested". According to Elena, the M5s has been able to increase political involvement of voters with social media because "you're always up to date, even when you're not physically at the meeting, at the event or at the informative gazebo, you're connected; there is an immediate exchange of information. We are all in contact". Jonathan agrees that since the M5s politicians use social media, they increase the sense of involvement: "(their use of social media) makes me feel more involved and part of something, of this movement". Fabiana has lingered over on the M5s blog and Rousseau explaining that these participation tools increase involvement, but "Rousseau maybe increases less involvement because you must sign up and you must give your details and people are not willing to register. The blog increases more involvement because it is more immediate, everyone can access". Finally, Carlo believes that the use of social networks makes him feel closer to the M5s because "it makes me feel more involved. I can express my ideas, even criticisms towards the movement".

### **6.2.1. Discussion**

Since its constitution, the M5s has the Internet at the heart of its communication strategy, first spreading information on Grillo's blog and then on the M5s blog. Besides the blogs, the MoVimento uses different social networks and Rousseau as communication means. All these tools are fundamental for the M5s; as Gaia has said "the movement grew up just thanks to this. If it was just for word of mouth or Grillo's shows it would not have been so successful. If the movement had not used the Internet, it would have disappeared".

However, as it is possible to infer from the analysis of results, the M5s has not only used social media to spread information, but also as a form of two-way communication, i.e. a way to allow everyone to express their own opinions, be connected with politicians and participate more in politics. Indeed, from the survey and interviews it results that the M5s voters do not only spend more time on the Internet to gather political information, but they are also more active on social network than other voters. The M5s voters consult more often the M5s blog

and its website, follow much more the politicians of the movement and have signed up on M5s groups on social networks more than other voters. Furthermore, the M5s voters comment and take part in political discussion on the posts of politicians, in particular of the M5s politicians, more than the voters of other parties.

Thanks to the use that the MoVimento makes of social media as a form of two-way communication, encouraging voters to express their ideas on social networks and make suggestions on the blog and Rousseau, the movement has been able to give its voters the feeling they have more opportunities than in the past to express their thoughts and to increase their sense of political involvement. In turn, the involvement has strengthened the relationships with voters who now feel to be closer to the M5s. As Carlo has stated, “in 2012 the M5s was at 5%, now 32%. They know how to communicate with people. The M5s has gone directly in people's homes and it is close to citizens”.

In conclusion, by using social media as a form of two-way communication, the MoVimento 5 Stelle has been able to generate greater sense of political involvement among Italians, that has encouraged strong relationships with voters. The relationships have enabled the M5s to continue growing in the last years until reaching 32.7% in the 2018 General Election.

### **6.3. Direct democracy, encouraged by greater involvement, fosters the relationship between a political party and citizens and, so, favors the political party to gain an increase in consensus.**

To verify the third hypothesis, only the interviews are going to be analyzed because this hypothesis concerns direct democracy that in Italy is pursued only by the M5s. Thus, it is believed that the M5s voters, and especially the M5s activists, have deeper knowledge of the topic.

One of the aims of the M5s is to take the power away from the elite of politicians and return it to citizens. This was confirmed by Elena who has said “the M5s promotes a society made up of normal people who take care of their territory, who participate actively in politics

but not as a job, but for the real welfare of the community”. The movement firmly believes in greater involvement of ordinary people in politics and in their active participation. As Gaia has affirmed, “the M5s is made up of ordinary people who become involved in public affairs, who make proposal and do not have a political past. Everyone should take care of public affairs. The movement gives anyone the chance to be the Minister of Health. The M5s is not a closed party and anyone with an idea can take it forward”, adding “what I liked about the movement is that everyone can say what he thinks, everyone is important. Your decision really counts within the M5s”.

The MoVimento uses its blog, the Meetup platform and Rousseau as participatory tools, that is tools through which it fosters direct democracy thanks to greater political involvement of voters. As Carlo has claimed, “they are used to gather citizens' ideas, suggestions and complaints. This is a huge step ahead of other political parties that look for voters only before elections. Individuals can now give voice to their thoughts in a more direct way, not only when we vote”. Rousseau, with its functionalities that allow the M5s supporters to vote laws and electoral lists, suggest laws, and discuss them, is the most significant example of participatory tool used by the movement to promote direct democracy. Nicola has said that “a law voted on Rousseau becomes law, a government contract voted there becomes a government contract. You understand that your vote counts; your click assumes greater importance”. Even Gaia during her interviews has highlighted the importance of these participatory tools employed to foster direct democracy, saying that “without doubts the participatory tools have increased my participation and involvement. The M5s had an amazing idea”.

During the interviews it has also been asked how much direct democracy had an impact on bringing the interviewees closer to the M5s and to strengthen their relationship with it. Fabiana has said to have approached the M5s also thanks to direct democracy, “for the prospects it gave me. I like to express myself and I do what I can. I need to express myself with someone. I believe in what I can do, in what my colleagues and some of the politicians, whom personally I know, can do”, adding that “direct democracy could be a strength, a great collaboration with citizens”. Even Elena has approached the M5s for direct democracy; she has affirmed “I believe in direct democracy and I work for it. I work so that many people will participate more. As Grillo said, be the mayors of your square meter. If you are interested in the welfare of your country you must do something”. Gaia sees direct democracy as a strength of the M5s because ordinary citizens can express what they think, and they are listened by the M5s politicians.

Since she can participate actively, Gaia feels closer to the movement: “I have a sense of pride because if they have arrived where they are now it is also thanks to me, thanks to those who have made propaganda with them. It's all thanks to us, ordinary people who have actively participated if they are where they are. I feel proud. I have a sense of importance because I can make the difference”.

In conclusion, the M5s, that pursues direct democracy, has been able to foster it by employing online participatory tools, such as the M5s blog, the Meetup and Rousseau, that has increased the involvement of voters. Furthermore, since the M5s pursues direct democracy, an ideology shared by many of its supporters, it has managed to build and maintain relationships with voters that has allowed it to get increasingly strong consensus until becoming the most voted party in the 2018 General Election gaining 32.7%.



## 7. CONCLUSION

Nowadays, we are experiencing a complex and difficult historical period caused by economic crises, attacks of the ISIS and massive waves of immigrants. In this scenario, we can see the phenomenon of populism that is increasingly obtaining success and consensus both in Europe and in other countries, such as in the U.S. with the victory of Donald Trump (Pinker, 2018). Populist parties are achieving greater acceptance in many countries, more than traditional parties that are considered the cause of the current situation (Hoogle & Oser, 2016). The same trends have affected Italy where the Movimento 5 Stelle, a populist movement, has managed to establish itself and become one of the main Italian political parties in few years.

The aim of this research has been to investigate how this populist movement, the M5s, has been able to gain an increasingly strong consensus by building and maintaining relationships with voters by strengthening their political involvement. These mechanisms have been studied and analyzed from a marketing perspective, i.e. by applying marketing theories and approaches to politics. In particular, a theoretical framework, in which Political Relationship Marketing, theories on emotions and theories on communication have been blended together, has been developed. Guided by the framework and the hypotheses developed to verify its accuracy, I have come to the following conclusions. Firstly, the M5s has managed to arise a greater sense of political involvement among Italian citizens due to the fact it has understood and appealed to emotions more than other political parties, and due to the fact it has used social media in a more effective way as a form of two-way communication. Secondly, by strengthening political involvement of Italian citizens, the M5s has managed to build and maintain relationships, thus gaining more consensus. Thirdly, by increasing voters' involvement, the M5s has managed to foster direct democracy, that, in turn, has contributed to enforce relationships between voters and the M5s.

The results seem to suggest that nowadays, at a time characterized by no confidence towards politics and politicians, political parties, and not only populist parties, should pursue political marketing strategies to build long-lasting relationships with voters. Political parties should see themselves as organizations and voters as consumers with whom to develop relationships not only before elections, but relationships that endure over time to reduce voter volatility and build a strong electorate attached to the political party. Furthermore, the results

reveal that political parties should give more importance to citizens' emotions; these should be understood and appealed. In this way, political parties may arouse greater political involvement in citizens and reduce their disinterest towards politics. In addition, the results confirm that, as it happens for organizations, social media is essential also for political parties. Political parties should use social media as one of their main communication strategies: by now, not only young people use social media, but also adults. Thanks to social media, political parties can reach a greater audience, spread more information and above all increase the political involvement of voters. Finally, the results indicate that direct democracy may represent an advantage for political parties because citizens feel taken into consideration by politicians and feel important, so as to establish stronger relationships with them and give them their consensus. Indeed, direct democracy is achieved by a greater and active involvement of citizens in politics.

### **7.1. Limitations and further research**

This research has investigated the mechanisms that allow a political party to achieve greater success from the marketing perspective, i.e. theories and approaches of marketing, neuroscience and communication have been applied in politics, without taking into consideration other fields, such as the economic, financial and social fields. Indeed, in applying Political Relationship Marketing the aspect of trust, that politicians obtain from citizens once they have satisfied citizens' needs and wants, has not been evaluated. The reason is that it is believed that other factors, such as economic and financial regulations of a country, may have to be considered to analyze the aspect of trust and it could not be achievable due to my poor knowledge of these topics. However, this limit of the research may represent the starting point of future researches in which the researcher gathers the theories used in the present research together with economic, financial and social theories to have a wider view and understanding of how politicians obtain success by building and maintaining relationships with voters.

Another limit of the research is the sample. Due to time and money restrictions, the sample size is not of large-scale. Furthermore, although both the online survey and the interviews have been evaluated valid and reliable because the received responses have been

enough and have allowed to answer the research question, the result cannot be generalized. In particular, the results may not be generalized to voters of other countries because the political, economic and social situation may differ from the Italian situation and voters may behave differently. Thus, the obtained results may have been influenced by the culture of the sample that is the Italian population. However, the limit may represent an opportunity to extend the research and verify if the framework developed here is valid with different populations and it can explain the success of populist parties in other countries.

Finally, the last limit is concerned with direct democracy. From the theory, it results that Political Relationship Marketing may represent a way to achieve a better democracy (Henneberg & O'Shaughnessy, 2009), but several forms of democracy exist and in the developed framework direct democracy has been applied because it is pursued by the M5s. If the framework is used to analyze the success of another political party, the aspect of direct democracy cannot be considered, if not pursued by the political party.

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# APPENDIX

## Appendix A- Online survey

*Dear Participant,*

*I kindly ask for your participation by completing the following questionnaire which is part of my master thesis in "Brand and Communications Management" at Copenhagen Business School.*

*In the questionnaire, which will last about 6 minutes, you will be asked questions for which you will have to give your personal answer. There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer all the questions spontaneously and sincerely.*

*All answers will be treated confidentially, and it will not be possible to identify you.*

*Even if it is possible to use Smartphones and Tablets for the survey, it is suggested to use computers for a better layout.*

*If you have any questions, please contact me by sending an e-mail to: [chpr16ad@student.cbs.dk](mailto:chpr16ad@student.cbs.dk)*

*Thanks for your help,*

*Chiara Pratelli*

Q1 Which emotions do you feel regarding what is happening in Italy in the last five years in relation to the political situation? Please indicate how much each of the following emotions you feel.

Using a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 = "I have never felt such emotion"; and 5 = "I have felt such emotion very much", indicate how much you have felt the following emotions.

	1	2	3	4	5
Sadness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Disgust	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Anger	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fear	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Concern	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Happiness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pride	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hope	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q2 How much do you think the following politicians / political parties were better able to understand the general emotions of Italian citizens regarding the Italian social situation?

	Using a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 = "Not at all" and 5 = "Very", indicate how much the following politicians/political parties have understood the emotions of Italian citizens.				
	1	2	3	4	5
Di Maio (Movimento 5 Stelle)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Salvini (Lega)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Berlusconi (Forza Italia)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meloni (Fratelli d'Italia)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Renzi (Partito Democratico)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grasso (Liberi e Uguali)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bonino (+Europa)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q3 In your opinion, which politician/political party has appealed more to the emotions of Italian citizens?

- ☐ Di Maio (Movimento 5 Stelle)
- ☐ Salvini (Lega)
- ☐ Berlusconi (Forza Italia)
- ☐ Meloni (Fratelli d'Italia)
- ☐ Renzi (Partito Democratico)
- ☐ Grasso (Liberi e Uguali)
- ☐ Bonino (+Europa)
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Q4 In your opinion, which emotion have the following politicians/political parties mainly appealed to?  
(Please, give an answer considering the general emotions of Italian citizens)

	Sadness	Disgust	Anger	Fear	Concern	Happiness	Pride	Hope	Any emotion
Di Maio (Movimento 5 Stelle)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Salvini (Lega)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Berlusconi (Forza Italia)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meloni (Fratelli d'Italia)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Renzi (Partito Democratico)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grasso (Liberi e Uguali)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bonino (+Europa)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q5 In your opinion, which emotion have the following politicians/political parties generated in Italian citizens? (Please give an answer considering the emotions generated in Italian citizens and not in you)

	Sadness	Disgust	Anger	Fear	Concern	Happiness	Pride	Hope	Any emotion
Di Maio (Movimento 5 Stelle)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Salvini (Lega)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Berlusconi (Forza Italia)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meloni (Fratelli d'Italia)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Renzi (Partito Democratico)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grasso (Liberi e Uguali)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bonino (+Europa)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q6 Which emotions do you feel about the following political parties?

	Sadness	Disgust	Anger	Fear	Concern	Happiness	Pride	Hope	Any emotion
Di Maio (Movimento 5 Stelle)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Salvini (Lega)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Berlusconi (Forza Italia)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meloni (Fratelli d'Italia)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Renzi (Partito Democratico)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grasso (Liberi e Uguali)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bonino (+Europa)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q7 How much do you think emotions influenced your choice of vote in the General Election in March 2018?

	Using a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 = "Not at all" and 5 = "Very", indicate how much the emotions influenced your choice of vote.				
	1	2	3	4	5
The emotions influenced my vote ...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q8 In which social networks do you currently have a personal account?

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ YouTube
- ☐ Any
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Q9 Do you use the Internet to read political news?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q10 Do you use any social networks (e.g. Facebook, Twitter etc.) to read political news?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q11 Have you ever visited the official page on some social networks (Facebook, Twitter etc.) of the political/political party that you voted in the last General Election of March 2018?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q12 Have you ever visited the official website of any political party?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q13 Which one?

\_\_\_\_\_

Q14 Have you ever consulted any blogs or other online platforms of some political party to have more political information?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q15 Which one?

\_\_\_\_\_

Q16 Do you follow any political/political party on social networks?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q17 Which one?

\_\_\_\_\_

Q18 Are you subscribed to any political group on Facebook?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q19 Which one?

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Q20 How much time do you spend on the Internet and on social media for political purposes?

- ☐ Less than 3 hours per week
- ☐ Between 3-7 hours per week
- ☐ More than 7 hours per week

Q21 The increased use of social networks by politicians and political parties has moved you closer to politics?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ No

Q22 Thanks to the increased use of social networks and the Internet by politicians and political parties, do you feel more involved in politics?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ No

Q23 Thanks to social networks and blogs that allow everyone to comment posts of politicians and political parties, do you think you have more opportunities than before to express your thoughts?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ No

Q24 Since you can follow any politicians and political parties on the social networks, do you feel to be closer to the party you voted for?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ No

Q25 Please indicate if you have ever done the following activities on social networks

	Yes	No
Comment a post of a politician/political party	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Share a post written by a politician/political party	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Comment a political post written by a friend	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Write political posts on your page	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Take part in political discussions in some posts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q26 Why have you commented political post?

- ☐ Express your personal opinions
- ☐ Create a constructive debate
- ☐ Express your resentments against a politician/political party
- ☐ Express your support for a politician/political party
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Q27 Gender

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

Q28 Age

\_\_\_\_\_

Q29 Education:

- ☐ Middle school diploma
- ☐ High school diploma
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Doctorate (Ph. D)

Q30 Occupation

- ☐ Student
- ☐ Employee
- ☐ Freelance
- ☐ Entrepreneur
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Retired

Q31 Which party did you vote in the General Election in February 2013?

- ☐ Movimento 5 Stelle
- ☐ Lega Nord
- ☐ Popolo della Libertà
- ☐ Fratelli d'Italia
- ☐ Partito Democratico
- ☐ Con Monti per l'Italia
- ☐ Abstain
- ☐ Underage
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Q32 Which political party did you vote in the General Election in March 2018?

- ☐ Movimento 5 Stelle
- ☐ Lega
- ☐ Forza Italia
- ☐ Fratelli d'Italia
- ☐ Partito Democratico
- ☐ Liberi e Uguali
- ☐ + Europa
- ☐ Abstain
- ☐ Underage
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B- Questions used as guidelines during the interviews**

- 1) Name
- 2) Age
- 3) Occupation
- 4) Education
- 5) Political orientation before the M5s?
- 6) Which political parties did you voted in 2013 General Election?
- 7) In the last few years, how do you feel about what is happening in Italy?
- 8) Do you think the Movement has managed better than the other parties to understand the emotions of Italians?
- 9) When did you start to get closer to the Movement as a voter? Because?
- 10) What were your emotions when you get closer to the Movement?
- 11) What motivates you to continue supporting the Movement?
- 12) Are you a M5s activist? If yes, what motivated you to become an activist of the Movement?
- 13) Do you think that the movement involves voters more than other parties and is closer to them?
- 14) Do you use social media? Which one?
- 15) Have you joined any Facebook group of the M5s? Do you follow any official page of the movement?
- 16) Do you publish posts and write political comments?
- 17) Why do you use social networks for political purposes?
- 18) The M5s is the most active party on social networks. On the social media of the movement and on the official pages of the various politicians of the movement videos are continuously published, direct videos are made and posts that are shared and commented by many users written. Do you think that this active use of the social networks involves voters more and brings them closer to politics? Has it involved you?

19) Are you registered on Rousseau? If yes, have you ever voted or proposed laws?

20) Do you think that the use of Rousseau, Meetup platform and other tools increase the participation of citizens in politics?

21) One of the ideologies of the movement is direct democracy which stands for greater and active involvement of citizens in politics. What do you think about it?

22) Do you think that direct democracy is a point of strength and differentiation of the M5s compared to the other parties?

23) The M5s believes that information often goes only in one direction, for example from municipalities to citizens. Do you think that the M5s is trying to create contact points with citizens in order not only to give information but also as ways to collect suggestions from citizens?

## Appendix C- Data results from the survey

Q1- Using a scale from 1 to 5, with 1= "I have never felt such emotion", and 5= "I have felt such emotion very much", indicate how much have you felt the following emotions.										
	1		2		3		4		5	Total
Sadness	9.68%	9	13.98%	13	20.43%	19	22.58%	21	33.33%	31
Disgust	10.75%	10	11.83%	11	20.43%	19	19.35%	18	37.63%	35
Anger	9.68%	9	15.05%	14	18.28%	17	20.43%	19	36.56%	34
Fear	5.38%	5	19.35%	18	18.28%	17	29.03%	27	27.96%	26
Concern	6.45%	6	11.83%	11	12.90%	12	29.03%	27	39.78%	37
Happiness	67.74%	63	18.28%	17	7.53%	7	3.23%	3	3.23%	3
Pride	68.82%	64	11.83%	11	8.60%	8	5.38%	5	5.38%	5
Hope	44.09%	41	15.05%	14	16.13%	15	16.13%	15	8.60%	8

Q2- Using a scale from 1 to 5, with 1="Not at all", and 5="Very much", indicate how much the following politicians/political parties have understood the emotions of Italian citizens.										
	1		2		3		4		5	Total
Di Maio (Movimento 5 Stelle)	9.68%	9	7.53%	7	16.13%	15	34.41%	32	32.26%	30
Salvini (Lega)	13.98%	13	8.60%	8	20.43%	19	36.56%	34	20.43%	19
Berlusconi (Forza Italia)	47.31%	44	26.88%	25	17.20%	16	6.45%	6	2.15%	2
Meloni (Fratelli d'Italia)	30.11%	28	27.96%	26	27.96%	26	10.75%	10	3.23%	3
Renzi (Partito Democratico)	48.39%	45	26.88%	25	20.43%	19	2.15%	2	2.15%	2
Grasso (Liberi e Uguali)	49.46%	46	30.11%	28	13.98%	13	6.45%	6	0.00%	0
Bonino (+Europa)	47.31%	44	26.88%	25	12.90%	12	10.75%	10	2.15%	2

Q3- In your opinion, which politician/political party has appealed more to the emotions of Italian citizens?		
	%	
Di Maio (Movimento 5 Stelle)	37.98%	79
Salvini (Lega)	38.46%	80
Berlusconi (Forza Italia)	5.29%	11
Meloni (Fratelli d'Italia)	10.10%	21
Renzi (Partito Democratico)	6.73%	14
Grasso (Liberi e Uguali)	0.48%	1
Bonino (+Europa)	0.48%	1
Other	0.48%	1
Total	100%	208



Q4- In your opinion, which emotion have the following politicians/political parties mainly appealed to? (Please, give an answer considering the general emotions of Italian citizens)

	Sadness		Disgust		Anger		Fear		Concern		Happiness		Pride		Hope		Any emotion		Total
Di Maio (Movimento 5 Stelle)	2.15%	2	6.45%	6	51.61%	48	2.15%	2	12.90%	12	0.00%	0	1.08%	1	23.66%	22	0.00%	0	93
Salvini (Lega)	0.00%	0	12.90%	12	46.24%	43	18.28%	17	16.13%	15	0.00%	0	3.23%	3	3.23%	3	0.00%	0	93
Berlusconi (Forza Italia)	2.15%	2	4.30%	4	6.45%	6	10.75%	10	24.73%	23	3.23%	3	12.90%	12	8.60%	8	26.88%	25	93
Meloni (Fratelli d'Italia)	2.15%	2	15.05%	14	13.98%	13	12.90%	12	19.35%	18	1.08%	1	13.98%	13	3.23%	3	18.28%	17	93
Renzi (Partito Democratico)	8.60%	8	6.45%	6	0.00%	0	4.30%	4	13.98%	13	2.15%	2	8.60%	8	19.35%	18	36.56%	34	93
Grasso (Liberi e uguali)	7.53%	7	5.38%	5	1.08%	1	7.53%	7	7.53%	7	1.08%	1	7.53%	7	18.28%	17	44.09%	41	93
Bonino (+Europa)	3.23%	3	2.15%	2	1.08%	1	4.30%	4	9.68%	9	1.08%	1	9.68%	9	19.35%	18	49.46%	46	93

Q5- In your opinion, which emotion have the following politicians/political parties generated in Italian citizens? (Please give an answer considering the emotions generated in Italian citizens and not in you)

	Sadness		Disgust		Anger		Fear		Concern		Happiness		Pride		Hope		Any emotion		Total
Di Maio (Movimento 5 Stelle)	1.08%	1	2.15%	2	10.75%	10	1.08%	1	1.08%	1	2.15%	2	4.30%	4	76.34%	71	1.08%	1	93
Salvini (Lega)	2.15%	2	4.30%	4	17.20%	16	7.53%	7	7.53%	7	1.08%	1	22.58%	21	36.56%	34	1.08%	1	93
Berlusconi (Forza Italia)	11.83%	11	17.20%	16	6.45%	6	6.45%	6	16.13%	15	5.38%	5	9.68%	9	3.23%	3	23.66%	22	93
Meloni (Fratelli d'Italia)	7.53%	7	8.60%	8	7.53%	7	5.38%	5	11.83%	11	1.08%	1	17.20%	16	10.75%	10	30.11%	28	93
Renzi (Partito Democratico)	12.90%	12	17.20%	16	20.43%	19	2.15%	2	11.83%	11	3.23%	3	2.15%	2	9.68%	9	20.43%	19	93
Grasso (Liberi e Uguali)	9.68%	9	8.60%	8	1.08%	1	2.15%	2	4.30%	4	2.15%	2	1.08%	1	10.75%	10	60.22%	56	93
Bonino (+Europa)	6.45%	6	7.53%	7	0.00%	0	3.23%	3	3.23%	3	2.15%	2	3.23%	3	13.98%	13	60.22%	56	93

Q6- Which emotions do you feel about the following political parties?

	Sadness		Disgust		Anger		Fear		Concern		Happiness		Pride		Hope		Any emotion		Total
Di Maio (Movimento 5 Stelle)	8.60%	8	8.60%	8	2.15%	2	13.98%	13	24.73%	23	3.23%	3	6.45%	6	24.73%	23	7.53%	7	93
Salvini (Lega)	3.23%	3	25.81%	24	2.15%	2	13.98%	13	25.81%	24	1.08%	1	1.08%	1	21.51%	20	5.38%	5	93
Berlusconi (Forza Italia)	17.20%	16	43.01%	40	4.30%	4	3.23%	3	12.90%	12	1.08%	1	1.08%	1	4.30%	4	12.90%	12	93
Meloni (Fratelli d'Italia)	11.83%	11	22.58%	21	3.23%	3	8.60%	8	18.28%	17	1.08%	1	2.15%	2	8.60%	8	23.66%	22	93
Renzi (Partito Democratico)	15.05%	14	27.96%	26	18.28%	17	1.08%	1	8.60%	8	0.00%	0	2.15%	2	10.75%	10	16.13%	15	93
Grasso (Liberi e Uguali)	18.28%	17	5.38%	5	4.30%	4	3.23%	3	1.08%	1	1.08%	1	1.08%	1	13.98%	13	51.61%	48	93
Bonino (+Europa)	10.75%	10	5.38%	5	2.15%	2	1.08%	1	2.15%	2	1.08%	1	3.23%	3	24.73%	23	49.46%	46	93

Q7- How much do you think emotions influenced your choice of vote in the General Election in March 2018?

	%	
1	16.13%	15
2	13.98%	13
3	19.35%	18
4	23.66%	22
5	26.88%	25
Total	100%	93

Q8- In which social networks do you currently have a personal account?

	%	
Facebook	38.46%	85
Twitter	12.67%	28
Instagram	28.51%	63
YouTube	14.93%	33
Any	2.26%	5
Other	3.17%	7
Total	100%	221

Q9- Do you use the Internet to read political news?

	%	
Yes	91.40%	85
No	8.60%	8
Total	100%	93

Q10- Do you use any social networks (e.g. Facebook, Twitter etc.) to read political news?

	%	
Yes	63.44%	59
No	36.56%	34
Total	100%	93

Q11- Have you ever visited the official page on some social networks (Facebook, Twitter etc.) of the political/political party that you voted in the last General Election of March 2018?		
	%	
Yes	58.06%	54
No	41.94%	39
Total	100%	93

Q12- Have you ever visited the official website of any political party?		
	%	
Yes	46.24%	43
No	53.76%	50
Total	100%	93

Q13- Which?										
M5s	Lega	PD	Più Europa	Liberi e	Fratelli d'Italia	Casapound	Potere al popolo	Bepp e	Forza Nuova	Partito Animalista
25	9	16	6	5	2	2	2	1	1	1

Q14- Have you ever consulted any blogs or other online platforms of some political party to have more political information?		
	%	
Yes	45.16%	42
No	54.84%	51
Total	100%	93

Q15- Which?						
M5s	Grillo	Rousseau	Travaglio	PD	Noi con Salvini	Liberi e Uguali
17	6	4	1	8	2	2

Q16- Do you follow any political/political party on social networks?		
	%	
Yes	44.09%	41
No	55.91%	52
Total	100%	93

Q17- Which?																
M5s	Lega	Salvini	Di Maio	Europa 5 Stelle	PD	Fratelli d'Italia	Forza Italia	Claudio Scarlino	Liberi e Uguali	Berlusconi	Gentiloni	Calenda	Pietro Grasso	Radicali	Sinistra Italiana	Meloni
15	5	4	2	1	5	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1

Q18- Are you subscribed to any political group on Facebook?		
	%	
Yes	10.75%	10
No	89.25%	83
Total	100%	93

Q19- Which?						
M5s	Consiglieri regionali	Consiglieri italiani	Consiglieri 5 stelle	Pd	Lega Nord	Rifondazione Comunista
5	1	1	1	1	1	1

Q20- How much time do you spend on the Internet and on social media for political purposes?		
	%	
Less than 1-3 hours per week	73.12%	68
Between 3-7 hours per week	17.20%	16
More than 7 hours per week	9.68%	9
Total	100%	93

Q21- The increased use of social networks by politicians and political parties has moved you closer to politics?		
	%	
Yes	17.20%	16
Maybe	34.41%	32
No	48.39%	45
Total	100%	93

Q22- Thanks to the increased use of social networks and the Internet by politicians and political parties, do you feel more involved in politics?		
	%	
Yes	20.43%	19
Maybe	32.26%	30
No	47.31%	44
Total	100%	93

Q23- Thanks to social networks and blogs that allow everyone to comment posts of politicians and political parties, do you think you have more opportunities than before to express your thoughts?		
	%	
Yes	39.78%	37
Maybe	27.96%	26
No	32.26%	30
Total	100%	93

Q24- Since you can follow any politicians and political parties on the social networks, do you feel to be closer to the party you voted for?		
	%	
Yes	19.35%	18
Maybe	30.11%	28
No	50.54%	47
Total	100%	93

Q25- Please indicate if you have ever done the following activities on social networks					
	Yes		No		Total
Comment a post of a politician / political party	33.33%	31	66.67%	62	93
Share a post written by a politician/ political party	39.78%	37	60.22%	56	93
Comment a political post written by a friend	55.91%	52	44.09%	41	93
Write political posts on your page	33.33%	31	66.67%	62	93
Take part in political discussions in some posts	31.18%	29	68.82%	64	93

Q26- Why have you commented political post?		
	%	
Express your personal opinion	46.39%	45
Create a constructive debate	17.53%	17
Express your resentments against a politicians/polit	16.49%	16
Express your support for a politicians/political part	16.49%	16
Other	3.09%	3
Total	100%	97

Q29- Gender		
	%	
Male	46.24%	43
Female	53.76%	50
Total	100%	93

Q30- Age		
	%	
18-30	49.46%	46
31-45	29.03%	27
46-50	8.60%	8
over 50	12.90%	12
Total	100.00%	93

Q31- Education		
	%	
Middle School Degree	2.15%	2
High School Degree	41.94%	39
Bachelor's Degree	31.18%	29
Master Degree	22.58%	21
Doctorate (Ph. D)	2.15%	2
Total	100%	93

Q32- Occupation		
	%	
Student	36.56%	34
Employee	36.56%	34
Freelance	11.83%	11
Entrepreneur	3.23%	3
Unemployed	9.68%	9
Retired	2.15%	2
Total	100%	93

Q32- Which political party did you vote in the 2013 General Election?		
	%	
Movimento 5 Stelle	26.88%	25
Lega Nord	3.23%	3
Popolo della Libertà	3.23%	3
Fratelli d'Italia	4.30%	4
Partito Democratico	32.26%	30
Con Monti per l'Italia	2.15%	2
Abstained	5.38%	5
Underage	5.38%	5
Other	17.20%	16
Total	100%	93

Q33- Which political party did you vote in the 2018 General Election?		
	%	
Movimento 5 Stelle	29.03%	27
Lega	8.60%	8
Forza Italia	2.15%	2
Fratelli d'Italia	3.23%	3
Partito Democratico	19.35%	18
Liberi e Uguali	7.53%	7
Più Europa	10.75%	10
Abstained	10.75%	10
Underage	0.00%	0
Other	8.60%	8
Total	100%	93

## Appendix D- Transcription and analysis of the interviews

**Themes and related colors:** anger; enthusiasm; involvement thanks to emotions; use of social media; involvement thanks to social media; direct democracy.

### Interview No. 1

Interviewee: Elena

Place and date: her home in Signa, June 04, 2018.

Age: 47; occupation: employee; level of education: Middle School Diploma.

Interviewer: what was your political orientation before the M5s? Elena: I did not have any political orientation. I do not want to say I was anarchist because I have never been anarchist. I was completely disinterested, completely distant from politics.

Interviewer: which political party did you vote in the General Election in February 2013? Elena: I voted the M5s because I have started to follow the movement in 2010. Actually, to follow it more assiduously because I always followed Beppe Grillo. Then, when he took the purely political road, he thrilled me.

Interviewer: how did you start to follow him? Elena: through social media, especially Grillo's blog.

Interviewer: did you become interest of the M5s because it gave you some hope? How did it make you feel? Elena: it gave me so much hope, a great desire to do something. It has been so engaging. I felt the M5s was something that came into me.

Interviewer: what the emotions do you feel about Italian politics? And, what did you feel before the movement? Elena: disinterest, disgust, angry. Before the M5s, politics and I were two completely different worlds. I had the impression that politicians were talking about a parallel reality that was not linked to me. I did not feel it mine. I was bored talking about politics.

Interviewer: did you start to approach the M5s through the blog as a simple voter and then you become an activist? How did the transition happen? Elena: it was gradual, but not in long times. It was like a fire. I started to read articles on Grillo's blog and follow who was writing on it. Through the blog I have learnt of a writer and director, called Silvano Agosti, who wrote a wonderful book in my opinion, "Lettere dalla Kirghisia" where he draws a society that way would be very nice to have in a utopian. The 5-star promotes this, a society made up of normal people who take care of their territory, who participate actively in politics but not as a job, but for the real welfare of the community. All this has thrilled me, not only Grillo, also all those who gravitated around him, various intellectuals.

Interviewer: when the M5s in Signa organizes the Meetups where do you meet? Elena: where people host us, usually at bars. Organizing Meetups at bars means to in the audience, people see you and everyone participate; it's open to everyone, even if you're not 5-star supporter. Everyone can say what they think. Obviously, they have not to come to argue, but if they want

to participate, they can come and make a productive discussion, it can be something contrary to what we think, but it has to be productive.

Interviewer: at the emotional level, what motivates you to continue to be an activist? Did the Movement give you enthusiasm and hope? Elena: the Movement has awakened so many emotions. I do not consider myself like a fan, but part of this great project. It woke up emotions that could compared to the emotions you feel in friendship: there is a lot of friendship, collaboration. There is a sense of belonging that was lost. I think that there is a lack of interest in politics because until now politics has always been seen as something for a small “elite” and “know-it-alls”, while the plebs has been ruled to their decisions. In fact, for me the representative democracy is dead long since.

Interviewer: the M5s promotes direct democracy as ideology. What do you think about it? Elena: I believe in it and I work for it, I work so that many people will participate more. As Grillo said "be the mayors of your square meter". If you are interested in the welfare of your country you must do something. It does not matter to do great things, but people must participate, bring their experience and ideas. You should confront your ideas with the ideas of other people, improve your ideas or change them if they are not feasible to achieve. But, if you do not confront with others, you do not change and remain with your ideas, convinced that you have the truth in your pocket. The discussion and the comparison are important, and this is what the M5s does.

Interviewer: I read on the M5s blog that there are some municipalities that are trying to develop platforms or even points of contact where the citizen can not only inform themselves but go to express their ideas. Elena: exactly. In Signa we are trying to do it with our program; we want to have active citizen participation. We are for the participatory budget. In my opinion, beyond the technicians that are necessary, the proposal of the simple citizen who lives the reality every day is fundamental. Not that he should tell you what are the shopping chapters that you must use, but the citizen who lives the reality of everyday is essential to create a town on a human scale. I am hopeful that Italy is going towards a participatory path of citizens.

Interviewer: so, do you think that direct democracy can be a strength of the M5s? Elena: absolutely yes, even if it is debased. I think it's a strong point. Direct democracy should not be only a strength of the M5s, but of the single individual. The only political party that advocates direct democracy is the Movimento, but if everyone would have realized the real potential of participating in local life, everyone would have advocate direct democracy.

Interviewer: are you register in Rousseau? What do you think about the participatory tools that derive from direct democracy? Did they make you closer to the M5s? Elena: yes, I am registered on Rousseau. When I have approached the movement, Rousseau was not born. They were at the beginning and they did not develop this platform of direct democracy. The blog was the reference point. The blog was the vehicle, the means of the movement. At the beginning, the medium was the Internet, social networks and the Meetup platform. We communicated with the Meetup platform.

Interviewer: are the social networks important? Elena: yes, for sure. I find Facebook very interesting if it is used doing a specific activity, as politics. I use it to do politics, to spread

political information. I like when someone participate in discussion on my Facebook page. I would like to involve people of any political ideology when I post on Facebook.

Interviewer: does this use of social networks and Rousseau increase your involvement in the movement now? Do you feel more involved by the fact that the movement is the biggest user of social networks and the Internet? Elena: yes, you're always up to date, even when you're not physically at the meeting, at the event or at the informative gazebo, you're connected; there is an immediate exchange of info. We are all in contact. The social media allow you to be here and at the same time I can be at a meeting. We do direct streaming for meetings to involve more. You must try to involve citizens. What I like about the M5s is this, people are interested in their territory on a large scale, including the nation and Europe.

Interviewer: have you voted on Rousseau? Elena: yes, I have always voted, I have never written and proposed laws due to lack of time. I have always voted and used “call to action” and “activism” that are two functions on Rousseau and allow you to know in real time the next activities at the local level.

Interviewer: have you signed up on any Facebook groups related to the M5s? Elena: yes, I am on many groups related to the M5s. I have created the Facebook page of Signa and Lastra a Signa M5s group with other activists.

Interviewer: in general, do you think that the M5s have understood more the emotions of citizens than other parties? Elena: yes, absolutely yes, because they are close to the people, they are present in the territory, they stay in touch with people. They are like a magnet because you feel them near and real, so it makes you feel part of a great project, of a big family. They create enthusiasm.

## **Interview No. 2**

Interviewee: Carlo

Place and date: my house in Signa, June 06, 2018.

Age: 58. Occupation: freelance; Level of education: High School Diploma.

Interviewer: what was your political orientation before the M5s? Carlo: center right.

Interviewer: which political party did you vote in the General Election in February 2013? Carlo: Movimento 5 Stelle.

Interviewer: what do you feel about Italian politics? What are your main emotions? Carlo: I'm very angry and I feel to be fooled because I think that in Italy there is a right and a left wing that are part of the same side of the coin. They fight each other, they make-believe to fight each other, but each of them lives because there is other. In the moment in which one falls, the other too. They support each other. I consider the M5s as a break of this scheme.

Interviewer: So, you are mainly angry? Carlo: yes. In 2013, my vote was a protest vote. At that time, the M5s was ridden by the protest. So far, they have protested, now they cannot do it anymore. They must prove facts because they are at the government. Now it's a hope. I consider the M5s a hope.

Interviewer: I read an article where a member of the M5s wrote that the M5s has been able to take the general anger of citizens and turn it into a political proposal, in a project. Can we say that the M5s understood the emotions of the citizens better than the other parties? Carlo: Sure. **The M5s succeeded in changing this anger in something of positive without leading it to violent acts.** We are talking about millions of people who live in great discomfort and if these millions of people begin on streets we don't know what can happen. So far, **the M5s has managed to channel angry people into a calm way, so that bad things did not happen.** Both the Lega and the Movimento are able to speak to people's belly, they are experts. They are experts of the word. Di Battista is the number one.

Interviewer: when did you get closer to the M5s? Carlo: I knew other people of Signa in the Movimento. **I get closer to the M5s even thanks to the use of computers, the Internet, Facebook and all the social networks that were a news compared to other parties.**

Interviewer: are you an activist? Carlo: yes, and when you do the meetings I participate.

Interviewer: now what motivates you to continue supporting the movement? Carlo: on an emotional level, being able to believe in something, in a movement that can change the situation. I know it's hard, but I do not trust others. Or the M5s or nothing. I do not have an alternative. I like this government because I liked both the movement and the Lega.

Interviewer: talking about direct democracy, we can say that direct democracy involves more because there are participation tools, such as Rousseau, referendum. Have these elements involved you? Carlo: sure. **Individuals can now give voice to their thoughts in a more direct way, not only when we vote. People feel to be more involved.**

Interviewer: I read on the M5s blog that in some municipalities where the movement was elected, they are trying to create points through the Internet and physical points where citizens can propose their ideas and reflections. Carlo: this already happen with the gazebos. The function of the gazebos is that and they are present even outside the election period. **They are used to gather citizens' ideas, suggestions and complaints. This is a huge step ahead of other political parties that look for voters only before elections. The M5s is always available for people.** The problem is that there are some rules that need to be reviewed; some rules of the M5s could fit 5 years ago when it was a protest and opposition movement, now it's changed, we are in government. They must be restructured.

Interviewer: are you subscribed to the Rousseau page? Do you actively participate? Carlo: yes, I voted. I have not proposed laws, I do not have specific knowledge and techniques to propose laws. I voted for the contract for the government with the Lega, of course.

Interviewer: do you have an account on Facebook? Carlo: yes, I have Facebook, not Twitter.



Interviewer: how do you use Facebook for political purposes? Carlo: to comment, post, share, discuss with others from other parties. Maybe I expose myself a little too much. I like a lot to develop discuss.

Interviewer: does using social networks make you feel closer to the movement? Carlo: it makes me feel more involved, it makes me feel something more. I can express my ideas, even criticisms towards the movement.

Interviewer: the key figures of the M5s make a massive use of social networks, what do you think? Carlo: they are born thanks to social networks, it's their life. Without that they would not have become what they are. They know how to communicate with people. The movement was a brilliant marketing operation. In 2012 they were at 5%, now at 32%.

Interviewer: therefore, do you think they have involved more thanks to the use of social? Carlo: sure, they have gone directly in people's homes and they are close to citizens. Also, today TV is not credible. People know a lot about things thanks to social media, things they did not know before. On the Internet a more real information is available, you have a choice. Television news are unidirectional and biased.

Interviewer: do you think that also Rousseau and the Meetup platform increase the sense of involvement? Carlo: of course. People feel more taken into consideration. This has happened to me, even if I do not believe in direct democracy alone, because I believe democracy is parliamentary. I see direct democracy as a poll, how to get an idea of what people's belly says, then politicians must make decisions on parliament.

Interviewer: do you think the M5s has been able to involve more than the other parties? Carlo: sure, he gave hope to many people. It is a hope for many and this is the most beautiful thing about the M5s. It gave back the opportunity to feel important. I saw this also from the passion with which we create debates. People feel considered again. It is the movement of the excluded. Anger has been channeled in a right way. For many the movement is a social revenge.

### **Interview No. 3**

Interviewee: Jonathan

Place and date: on Skype, June 08, 2018.

Age: 28. Occupation: student and employee; Level of education: Bachelor's Degree.

Interviewer: what was your political orientation before the M5s? Jonathan: center left.

Interviewer: which political party did you vote in the General Election in February 2013? Jonathan: Partito Democratico. This time I voted the M5s because it seemed the best thing for the country, for the development. I saw that the situation never changes, and since I believe in their political program, I voted the movement.

Interviewer: How did you approach the M5s? Jonathan: I looked for information, watching Tv and videos on YouTube.

Interviewer: so, did you use social media to search for information? Jonathan: absolutely, Facebook, YouTube and then television news.

Interviewer: do you also read news on the Internet? Jonathan: yes, sometimes I also read news on the Internet.

Interviewer: on the emotional level, when you approached the M5s and now, what emotions do you feel? Jonathan: angry because things do not change, the debt increases. I think there is not a long-term project. It seems to me that solutions of other parties are always: there is debt, so I sell government bonds and increase V.A.T. But I don't think that's the solution. Things have to be changed more seriously and the M5s seemed to me to be the most appropriate.

Interviewer: so, we can say that the M5s gives you some hope? Jonathan: yes, I would say yes. I know they do not have the magic wand, but they gave me hope that things can be changed in a slow but effective way. Maybe they will not solve everything, but I think something will work out. Thanks to them, I have a little more hope.

Interviewer: Do you follow and M5s leaders on socials? Jonathan: I follow Di Maio and others, also Di Battista. I do not have Twitter.

Interviewer: do you think that the massive use that the M5s does of socials, for example they make streaming video and post a lot, can increase involvement? Jonathan: absolutely yes. It makes me feel more involved and part of something, of this movement. Even if I do not write, I feel more involved with them. It is an effective way to communicate with people. I have used for example the M5s blog to read their electoral program and to understand which parties to vote. Their program gives me hope.

Interviewer: do you believe that the M5s has been able to transform the anger of Italians in a project and political proposal? Jonathan: absolutely yes. I am convinced that many people have been attracted by this anger that they represent. Many people were captured by this anger because it expressed their anger.

Interviewer: as you know, the M5s has direct democracy as one of the ideologies. What do you think about it? Jonathan: I think it's right even if I do not know how it is technically available. What I can tell you is that especially among young people there is a lack of political participation. My idea is to become an activist. I am not an expert in politics, but I inform myself by looking at television news and reading information on the Internet. At least I try to inform myself.

Interviewer: so, do you believe that greater involvement can derive also thanks to direct democracy? Jonathan: Yes, I believe it, but I do not know how technically it can be possible to overcome representative democracy. What I hope is that there is greater involvement, especially among young people. We should start from greater involvement, as Di Maio and the movement are doing. It's a right way because young people use social media. It has happened even with me: it is from social media that I have started to engage more with politics because looking at the politicians of the M5s who say various things it is impossible not to be interested. With

social media, messages arrive more directly. The Internet helped me to start to be more informed.

Interviewer: do you think that the M5s involve more than other parties? Jonathan: yes, they are present both physically and socially. For sure, it is the movement that is closer to the people. I think this is quite objective and explains how the movement is continuously increasing. They come closer through different channels. They are effective communicators.

Jonathan: I feel hope thanks to the M5s, and at the same time I am also a little angry because I saw that in many years other parties didn't do anything. Mine is a positive, non-destructive anger. I'm angry, but let's work actively and seriously to change things even if it will take time.

#### Interviews No. 4

Interviewee: Nicola

Place and date: bar in Scandicci, June 09, 2018.

Age: 49. Occupation: employee; Level of education: High School Diploma.

Interviewer: what was your political orientation before the M5s? Nicola: extreme left.

Interviewer: which political party did you vote in the General Election in February 2013?  
Nicola: Movimento 5 Stelle.

Interviewer: what emotions do you feel about what it is happening in Italy? Nicola: euphoria, enthusiasm. Involvement. An all-encompassing feeling.

Interviewer: do you think the M5s has been able to understand the emotions of Italians? Nicola: I do not say it; the election result says so. It seems obvious to me.

Interviewer: what motivates you to continue being a M5s activist? Nicola: it's not over. The dream was this, to bring ordinary citizens to lead this country, at least to try. Who is wrong are those politicians who have decided to close in the rooms to decide the fate of the country without the people. One of the movement's slogans is "head and heart", the head to do things and the heart not to be disconnected from reality, not to be out of real life. One of the reasons I entered in the M5s is because the other parties seemed completely disconnected from reality. They speak only of spreads. I hope, I wish with all my heart, that what I am doing is for future generations. I hope I have made my choice for future generations. We cannot go on as we have gone so far.

Interviewer: do you think that the M5s has been able to take the anger of the Italians and turn it into a project, a political proposal. Do you agree with this sentence? Nicola: completely. The sentence is from Grillo. In 2010, when Italy we almost had bankruptcy, the M5s channeled anger into something good and purposeful: we proposed law, proposed municipal motions, political commitment. I totally agree with this sentence.

Interviewer: how did you get to know the movement? Nicola: Grillo, I followed Grillo's blog for years, in 2009 I signed up and then immediately after the M5s.

Interviewer: on which social networks are you registered? Nicola: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram. I use Facebook only for a purpose, which is the M5s. I post, write, comment to give more visibility to the action of the movement. There are some people who live far from here that wrote me that they voted the M5s thanks to what I have written on Facebook. On Facebook I also follow so many pages of the movement that I should take the phone and look at.

Interviewer: do you think that the use of Facebook makes you closer to the movement? Nicola: sure. I think it is a great means of dissemination of information and a great means of propaganda.

Interviewer: Are you a member of Rousseau? Nicola: yes, I vote and discuss laws: I have never proposed laws.

Interviewer: do you think that Rousseau and the Meetups are means that increase involvement? Nicola: absolutely, of course. These platforms get people closer to the politics. The blog of Beppe Grillo was the sixth blog in the world in 2013, then obviously has fallen. A law voted on Rousseau becomes law, a government contract voted there becomes a government contract. You understand that your vote counts; your click assumes greater importance.

Interviewer: do you think that direct democracy is a strength of the M5s? Nicola: I hope it is a strength for this country. Look at Switzerland. We can no longer complain, we must vote and participate, so we can make the difference.

Me: do you think these participation tools can get people closer to the M5s and to politics? Nicola: yes, to politics and to the M5s because we propose it. I

Interviewer: summing up we can say that from the emotional point of view the M5s gives you hope. Nicola: my work and personal situation did not allow me to be among the angry people, I am a very lucky person. The M5s gave me the opportunity to give someone back this fortune, to try and give everyone this fortune. The movement makes me feel important because I can make the difference.

## **Interview No. 5**

Interviewee: Gaia

Place and date: her home in Signa, June 10, 2018.

Age: 28. Occupation: employee; Level of education: High School Diploma.

Interviewer: what was your political orientation before the M5s? Gaia: left.

Interviewer: which political party did you vote in the General Election in February 2013? Gaia: Movimento 5 Stelle.

Gaia: I am a M5s activist for 5/6 years. I started to get closer to the movement thanks to Beppe Grillo. I started to follow him on the Blog and then I saw his videos. After that the Acireale (my hometown) Meetup was formed and I met people. I don't like just talking without being active, and what I liked about the movement is that everyone can say what he thinks, everyone is important, and we together can look for solutions and proposals. There are all social classes. Everyone tries to do something. Thanks to the movement I met "Zero Waste" in Sicily; I liked the waste theme. I have done many activities with "Zero Waste" always with the M5s that sponsors it. Indeed, the movement believes in the circular economy.

Interviewer: what are your emotions about what is happening in the Italian politics? Gaia: dramatic. I have no children and for now I do not think I want them because looking at now I do not see a good future prospective. We are just destroying. The laws are missing, but the solutions would be there. I like Beppe Grillo because he gave scientific data in his blog even before creating the movement. He opened a new world because only watching watch TV we do not know what the reality is and what is behind it. Grillo gave the information that was missing to Italy and has made so many things to come to the surface.

Interviewer: how do you look for information? Gaia: I follow Travaglio and I inform myself on the blog and on the Internet reading the "Fatto Quotidiano". I read it because for me it is the truth.

Interviewer: do you think that the movement makes great use of the Internet and social networks? Gaia: the movement grew up just thanks to this. If it was just for word of mouth or Grillo's shows it would not have been so successful. If the movement had not used the Internet, it would have disappeared.

Interviewer: do you think the Internet has increased the involvement? Gaia: yes, many people want to know how the world goes.

Interviewer: do you think that the use of social media is a tool to create greater involvement? Gaia: yes, involvement. Thanks to the social media when can know what the politicians of the movement are doing. For example, look at Di Maio: we know what he did that day, what proposal he is working at. Even at the low level: we, in Acireale, had a member of the Sicily region who published what she was writing, what she was working at and which activities she wanted to do in the future. These are all things that people want to know.

Interviewer: do you use Facebook? Gaia: yes. Only for information. I do not publish my photo. If I post is only about the movement or animalism. I use Facebook for political purposes and to get information about the movement.

Me: on Facebook do you follow the official pages of the M5s? Gaia: yes, only the official ones. Then I use the Meetup platform to talk about the activities; on the Meetup platform we share the information between the several groups of the movement.

Interviewer: do you think that the use of social media makes the movement closer to Italian voters? Gaia: I think so. The beautiful thing about the M5s is that it is made up of ordinary people who become involved in public affairs, who make proposal and do not have a political past. With the movement there is renewed, we, as citizens, can carry on our ideals. For example,

the movement gives anyone the chance to be the Minister of Health. I know Giulia Grillo and a doctor who works with her, who is from Acireale. I know them well. And it makes me so glad, it's a joy! These things happen, it's not a closed party. They give their time at the disposal of the citizen. It's not the same thing as Forza Italia where you do not know politicians, or Renzi. Actually, who proposed him? The Leopolda is such an old thing and you must pay to vote for the party secretary.

Interviewer: are you signed up in Rousseau? Gaia: yes, to vote.

Interviewer: what do you think of direct democracy? Gaia: I am favorable of direct democracy. You choose the candidates according to their curriculum of who. Everyone should take care of public affairs. Many people tell me they do not understand anything about politics, but what does it mean? It's about us, about ordinary people. If you have an idea and you must carry out it.

Interviewer: has direct democracy get you closer to the M5s? Gaia: yes, of course. It gives a sort of power; your decision really counts within the M5s. You can say what you think.

Interviewer: are you in favor of using participation tools? Gaia: yes, and without doubts they have increased my participation and involvement. The M5s had an amazing idea.

Interviewer: do you think that the movement is trying to establish more points of contact with citizens than the other politicians? Gaia: yes, the goal of the movement was this, to bring people together. People who has been voted are all common people. Everyone can do politics; what does it mean to be a politician?!

Interviewer: how do you use Rousseau? Gaia: on Rousseau I voted the candidates for the Sicily region and for the General Election. I voted some laws. I have never proposed laws.

Interviewer: going back to emotions, you said that the situation in Italy is dramatic, almost disgusted. What emotions does the M5s make you feel now? Gaia: hope that we can change the situation in better. It gives certainties that other parties do not give. The certainties are made by internal regulations. The regulations indicate the right path. You must follow the guidelines of the citizens and to understand what these guidelines are we go through the Rousseau platform. If you do not follow the guidelines people you must leave.

Interviewer: I see that you are very enthusiastic. Gaia: yes, I'm very enthusiastic because I saw the movement born. Up to 5/6 years ago it was nothing. The beauty is just that: it was done by a "crazy" gentleman who decided to do information and involve people to good things. I believe that they are good people because I know them; I know who the people of the Meetups are. I trust, and I want them in the government. The movement is made up of ordinary people who want to change the situation in Italy, like you. In the movement we all have the same objectives, we entered for that reason.

Interviewer: you said that now you are enthusiastic, and you desire to contribute to the change. When you started to get closer to the movement, what were your emotions? Gaia: positive. Maybe I was angry because I saw who represented us in the government was not suitable and up to it. Europe and America were making fun of us because we had Berlusconi in the council. I want those who govern us to be able to do it, or others, such as Merkel, will make fun of us.

Interviewer: do you think the Movement has been more capable than the other parties to understand the emotions of Italians? Gaia: yes, especially anger. The movement is using these emotions in a positive way; it gathers people who were tired of voting for people who have never done anything for the Italians, who have never achieved what was promised during the political campaigns. Maybe many Italians were fed up with old politicians and angry at them; the M5s gave hope to these people that were angry with other politicians because the movement has given a beginning to the change by involving young people, graduate people and those who have the skill to do, who are not colluded with the traditional political parties. The M5s is open to anyone and people are there because they are voted. There isn't political nepotism in the movement.

Gaia: the M5s gives me a sense of security, pride for having followed them from the beginning and seeing them where they are now. I have a sense of pride because if they have arrived where they are now it is also thanks to me, thanks to those who have made propaganda with them, thanks to those who made the gazebos. It's all thanks to us, ordinary people who have actively participated if they are where they are. I feel proud. I have a sense of importance because I can make the difference.

## **Interview No. 6**

Interviewee: Fabiana

Place and date: municipality in Scandicci, June 11, 2018.

Age: 56. Occupation: unemployed; Level of education: High School Diploma.

Interviewer: what was your political orientation before the M5s? Fabiana: left.

Interviewer: which political party did you vote in the General Election in February 2013?

Fabiana: Movimento 5 Stelle. I knew many candidates.

Interviewer: when did you approach the M5s? Since when? Fabiana: since 2011 because I followed Beppe Grillo. I was interested, he said new things. I followed him on the Internet, on TV, in the newspapers. I never went to the shows. I followed him on his blog where he was writing articles that interested me, for example on water. I followed him for this reason: he was actually the only one who talked about certain new topics.

Interviewer: what were your emotions when you approached Grillo? Fabiana: enthusiasm. I could identify myself with the message he was carrying. I said, "finally there is someone who talks about things and divulges the same things that I also share".

Interviewer: what did you feel and what do you feel now about Italian politics? Fabiana: there was a lot of disappointment because there was no one who could reflect a message of renewal that has been proposed only by the M5s. It seemed strange to me that these parties were so old that they did not see, that they were short-sighted. There was a need for new things; there was a need for a change that no one proposed.



Interviewer: did you feel emotions like anger? Fabiana: I was angry at the administration. For example, I volunteered in an eco-friendly store that helped communities in Bolivia, Colombia, etc. It was selling eco-friendly products. I was very angry at the administration of my town because it forced us to close the shop: they did not understand the message behind it, but only looked at the commercial logic because our store could bother the dealers in the area. We had obtained the space from the municipality and took it away from us. So, there was a lot of anger.

Interviewer: what emotions does the M5s give you? Fabiana: sometimes it still gives me enthusiasm for the things that I do and sometimes it makes me angry because they limit me a lot and I do not like being limited; this becomes a problem. The administration limits me; it also depresses me. I feel angry at them, but also at my movement mates because they do not support. I often work alone, apart from my colleague with whom I get along very well. There is a lot of anger and a sense of impotence. But then, when we reach a minimum result, we start again and there is once again enthusiasm.

Interviewer: did the M5s give you hope? Fabiana: yes, for the change and moving on.

Interviewer: speaking on a general level, do you think that the M5s has been more able to understand the emotions of Italians than other parties? Fabiana: yes, the M5s spoke a lot to the Italians' belly. Very much and therefore, people who were captured were also uncritical because they went after what moved their belly. But, the M5s transformed the anger in something positive and purposeful. This anger has evolved in enthusiasm.

Interviewer: do you think that in general the M5s has involved more Italian voters? Fabiana: yes, the M5s is not a traditional party and it has get closer to people in a subtler and subterranean way, coming to the problems of people and society. The M5s has get closer to people by interpreting the need that there was at that moment. People no longer felt represented.

Interviewer: do you have any social networks? Fabiana: yes, Facebook and Twitter. On Facebook I have a personal account and an official account. I post useful information about politics. I don't write on Twitter, I usually read the tweets of colleagues in Brussels. I don't read newspaper, I can't read them. I read news on the Internet.

Interviewer: are you register on Rousseau? Fabiana: yes. I voted the candidates for the General Election and the proposals for the electoral program.

Interviewer: Rousseau and the Meetups are characteristics of the Movement that other parties do not have. Do you think they are strength of the M5s? Can these tools increase participation? Fabiana: the blog yes. Rousseau maybe less because you must sign up and you must give your details and people are not willing to register. The blog yes because it is more immediate, everyone can access.

Interviewer: one of the ideologies that the movement supports is direct democracy, what do you think? Fabiana: direct democracy is only pursued by the movement. It is practiced by many municipalities and would be a very good thing. We should be educated to make direct democracy. Direct democracy was discussed even in the time of the Greeks: power given to the people.



Interviewer: I read on the blog that in some municipalities you are trying to make a two-way communication, in the sense the municipality spreads the information to the citizens, but at the same time also listens to them. Fabiana: Federico practices direct democracy, he has no councilors. He calls people, part-time technicians and citizens that available for different activities, such as looking at the administrative budget, or see what can be done for the river that is flooding. An open and enlightened mayor can involve the citizens. Also do it in Carrara, they do not have councilors. Direct democracy could be a strength, a great collaboration with citizens.

Interviewer: did you get closer to the movement also for this ideology? Fabiana: yes, for the prospects it gave me even though now I see that it is not so easy. I like being able to express myself and I do what I can. I need to express myself with someone. I believe in what I can do, in what my colleague and some of the politicians can do. I know personally some of them. I believe in some people who can do good.

## **Interview No. 7**

Interviewee: Giancarlo

Place and date: his home in Lastra a Signa, June 12, 2018.

Age: 64. Occupation: retired; Level of education: Middle School Diploma.

Interviewer: what was your political orientation before the M5s? Giancarlo: extreme right.

Interviewer: which political party did you vote in the General Election in February 2013? Giancarlo: Forza Italia.

Interviewer: what are the emotions that have pushed you closer to the M5s? Giancarlo: anger. In 50 years I have heard so many speeches and bad things. So, I tried a new party.

Me: is there anger about politics? Giancarlo: a lot of anger. In 1987 I bought the “Sole 24” and it was written that there were grants for the artisans, a short article on the front page. So, I asked the business consultant to get some information because I needed to change two ovens and I needed help. After having got information, he told me that it was not possible to get the grants because reading the various paragraphs he read that the funds were only for Fiat industry craftsmen. So, this creates anger inside me.

Interviewer: for these negative emotions did you get closer to the M5s? Giancarlo: yes, for these emotions. With the Movement there could be a renewal.

Interviewer: how did you get closer to the movement? Giancarlo: when I work I always have the radio on in the economy channel. I hear “Radio 24”. I like to hear everyone and compare what they say. Then social media were obviously fundamental. I read a lot on Facebook, I saw many videos and read debates and interviews.

Interviewer: do you have Facebook? Giancarlo: yes. I follow many pages of the M5s where I read discussion and posts. I feel more involved because they use the social.

Interviewer: what do you think about direct democracy? Giancarlo: I support the movement for their pursuing direct democracy because if you don't participate, you can say and write what you want, but nobody knows anything of what you think, and politicians go on doing what they want. There must be greater involvement. Until now we can only vote to express our ideas. We have only this mean of direct democracy. With social media there is involvement.