



THE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION AND THE IMPACTS UPON CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

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What we know

- Parties and campaigners highly professionalized
 - Adopting latest techniques and utilizing latest technologies
- Parties and campaigners highly marketized
 - Tailoring campaigns for the psychological requirements of target audiences
- Electoral engagement, trust and participation appears to be declining
- But non-conventional (clicktivist) forms of participation have become widespread.
- Campaigns seek to harness clicktivism to meet the organisational objectives

Outline, Context and Data

- UK election, May 7th 2015
- Conservative majority, 67% turnout
- Online and Social – ‘the new wild west’
- SoTrender data on party activities and their rankings for user engagement
- A representative survey of 2,037 citizens on ‘non-traditional’ participation and the attitudes, motivations and barriers

UK parties on social media

Ranking for communication channels

1. Face-to-Face/Canvassing
2. News appearances (agenda setting)
3. Email and/or Telephone
4. Online presences (websites, personal profiles)
5. Television appearances (non-news)
6. YouTube/Twitter
7. Facebook/Internet advertisements
8. TV/Radio Spots
9. TV/Print Media/Outdoor advertisements

Survey of campaign directors, UK only data

For full data see Lilleker, Stetka & Tencher, 2014, *Information, Communication & Society*

“Social media is like the new high street, it’s a place where people can drop in, see what you’re about and say hi. So its our job to make it attractive and informative for them” (Web developer, UK party, Interview, March 2015)

Party use of Facebook, Twitter & YouTube

	FACEBOOK POSTS	TWEETS	VIDEOS
CONSERVATIVE	183	1,730	42
LABOUR	432	1,436	49
LIB DEMS	107	4,841	101
GREEN	217	901	113
SCOT NATS	166	1,340	28
UKIP	174	1,451	10
PLAID CYMRU	274	2,070	43

Data presented for the six weeks of the campaign only

Visitor Engagement

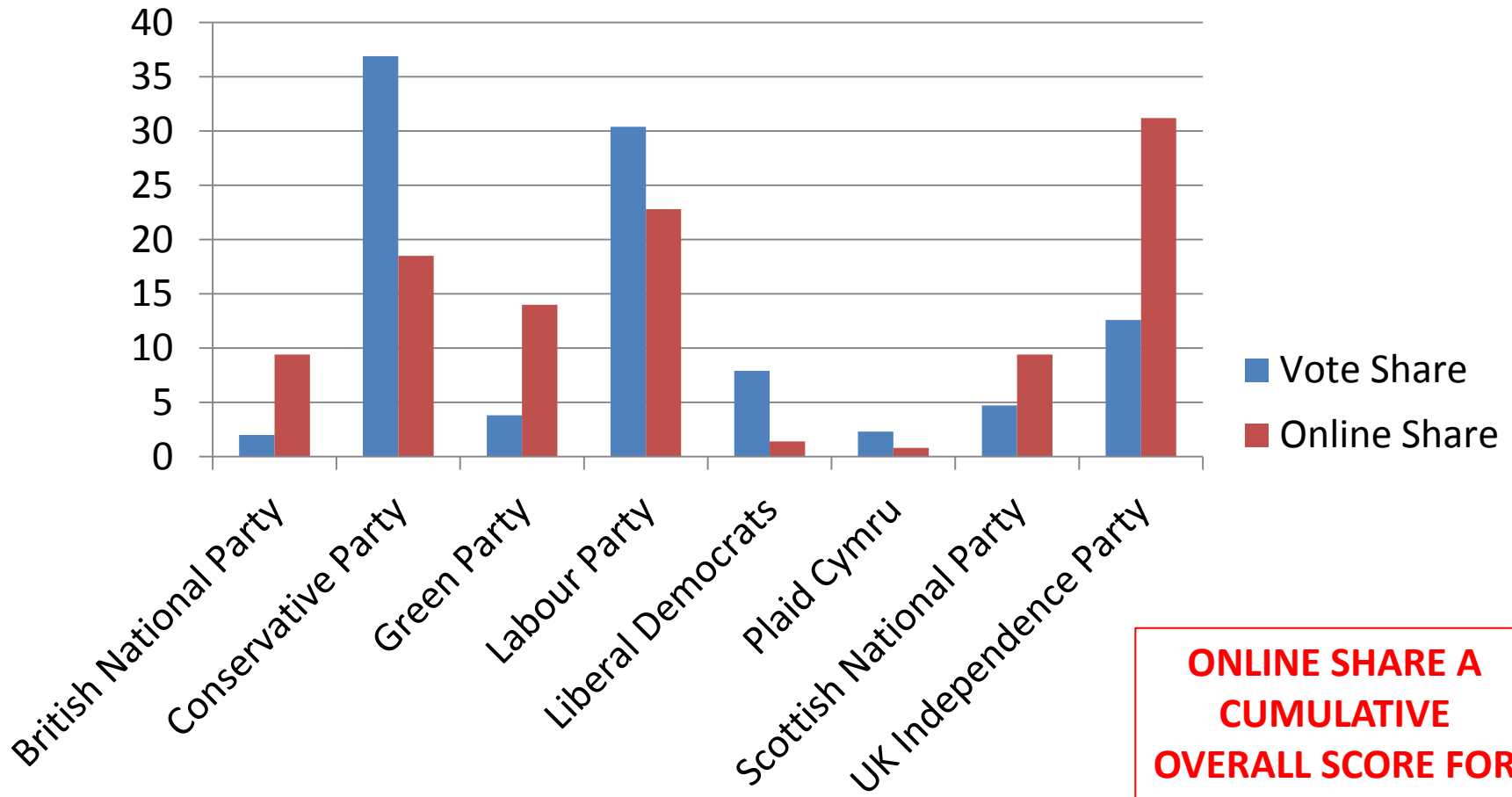
	FACEBOOK FANS	FB INTERACTION	TWITTER FOLLOW	RETWEET	YOUTUBE SUBS
CONSERVATIVE	480,955	4,171,734	157,590	282,335	42
LABOUR	304,875	8,600,334	215,578	443,841	49
LIB DEMS	113,126	190,533	95,722	238,736	101
GREEN	215,955	2,638,966	137,057	222,322	113
SCOT NATS	203,883	1,171,707	94,088	350,405	28
UKIP	462,672	6,668,586	103,744	354,653	10
PLAID CYMRU	18,223	153,743	18,802	169,855	43

Trolls or Activists?

	Occasionals	Likers	Debaters	Writers	Activists
Conservative Party	35.66	39.80	19.55	3.47	1.53
Green Party	42.50	41.91	11.23	3.09	1.27
Labour Party	43.08	34.90	16.68	3.68	1.65
Liberal Democrats	32.72	37.01	24.72	4.40	1.16
Plaid Cymru	43.46	43.43	9.33	2.68	1.10
Scottish National Party	43.48	44.43	7.69	3.46	0.94
UK Independence Party	34.12	48.43	11.06	3.64	2.75

Occasionals (lurkers who interact very rarely), Likers (only like), Debaters (who comment only and may include trolls), Writers (who comment or publish only) and Activists (who like, share and comment and may be ambassadors). Data shows percentage of their fans who perform these acts

Online v Offline



**ONLINE SHARE A
CUMULATIVE
OVERALL SCORE FOR
'SUPPORT'**

Patterns of Participation

	Percentage engaged (N = 2037)
Voting (have and would)	68.3
Voting (probably or definite)	87.1
Signed a petition	40.0
Taken part in a demonstration	6.5
Boycotted a company or product	17.3
Contacted an elected representative	15.8
Joined/ <u>Rejoined</u> a political party	5.9
Followed a party, MP or candidate on social media	10.1
Followed a non-governmental political organization (e.g. 38 Degrees etc.) or charity (e.g. Oxfam <u>etc</u>) on social media	13.9
Shared political content (e.g. blogs, posters, news pieces etc.) on social media	12.3
Commented about politics on social media	16.1
Discussed politics with friends or family	50.5
Did not participate in any political activity	32

Note: numbers do not add to 100% as respondents could choose more than one option

Turnout was actually 66.1%

Online as a Pathway to Participation

	Traditional Political Participation	Non-Traditional Political Participation
Commented about politics on social media		.823
Shared political content (e.g. blogs, posters, news pieces etc.) on social media		.807
Followed a non-governmental political organization (e.g. 38 Degrees etc.) or charity (e.g. Oxfam etc) on social media		.714
Followed a party, MP or candidate on social media		.667
Joined/Rejoined a political party	.830	
Taken part in a demonstration	.820	
Contacted an elected representative	.665	
Boycotted a company or product	.568	.323
Cronbach's Alpha	.709	.782

Clear Dichotomy using cluster analysis

Traditional forms (Verba et al)

Online forms

Boycott/Buycott marginal

Petition signing excluded as fits both

Patterns of Participation

	PET	DEMO	BOY	REP	JOIN	FOLL	NGO	SHARE	COMM
PET									
DEMO	.221**								
BOY	.352**	.391**							
REP	.334**	.417**	.340**						
JOIN	.204**	.578**	.354**	.430**					
FOLL	.258**	.269**	.260**	.311**	.283**				
NGO	.363**	.245**	.345**	.328**	.200**	.424**			
SHARE	.293**	.266*	.296**	.278**	.250**	.445**	.476**		
COMM	.284**	.216**	.299**	.251**	.180**	.443**	.442**	.615**	
DISS	.294**	.137**	.281**	.256**	.164**	.192**	.260**	.287**	.291**

Attitudes to modes of participation

Action→ Motivations ↓	Sign a Petition	Take part in a demonstratio n	Boycotted company or product	Contact elected representative	Join/Rejoin a political party	Follow party, candidate or MP on SM	Follow NGO on SM	Share political content on SM	Comment about politics on SM	Discuss politics
Others benefit from this	1.7689	1.5596	1.6734	1.4899	1.1958	.1215	1.9520	1.4622	1.0778	1.1871
I personally feel good	1.7158	1.1609	2.3443	1.6668	2.0606	1.7720	1.4934	1.6917	1.7151	1.6144
Encouraged by my friends	.8797	1.2220	.8060	.8957	.8774	1.0494	.8550	1.0971	1.2253	.9427
Friends also do this	1.2498	1.4472	1.3736	1.1637	1.3673	1.3393	1.2792	1.0625	1.1835	1.3198
I would earn respect from peers	.9047	1.0617	.9894	1.0748	.7604	.7697	.8912	1.0295	.8939	1.0776
I influence others	1.0145	.9610	.9368	.9702	1.6293	.9207	1.1696	1.0858	1.0521	1.1977
I influence policy-makers	1.1827	1.3176	.9953	1.1523	1.1332	1.0626	1.0230	.8889	.8713	.7683

Mobilisation Factors

Action→ Motivations ↓	Sign a Petition	Take part in a demonstratio n	Boycotted company or product	Contact elected representative	Join/Rejoin a political party	Follow party, candidate or MP on SM	Follow NGO on SM	Share political content on SM	Comment about politics on SM	Discuss politics
I see friends share/like political content on SM	1.0125	1.0628	.9843	.8917	.6686	1.2382	.9572	1.3361	1.3633	1.2509
Encouraged via SM by parties to join their campaigns	1.0383	1.0380	1.0471	1.1606	.11614	1.4090	1.1097	1.0754	.9958	.7882
Encouraged via SM by NGOs to join their campaigns	1.5272	2.1742	1.3259	1.1630	1.4590	1.3853	1.7311	1.4786	1.3915	1.1924
Encouraged via SM by friends to join political campaigns	.9034	.7273	.8569	.9391	1.2000	.9533	1.0048	1.0500	.9707	.8719
Encouraged by friends or family to be involved in political campaigns	.9524	1.2524	1.2438	1.2947	1.4221	.8064	.8332	.7334	.8687	1.1704

Mobilisation Factors

Action→ Motivations ↓	Sign a Petition	Take part in a demonstratio n	Boycotted company or product	Contact elected representative	Join/Rejoin a political party	Follow party, candidate or MP on SM	Follow NGO on SM	Share political content on SM	Comment about politics on SM	Discuss politics	
I see friends share/like political content on SM	1.0125	1.0628	.9843	.8917	.6686	1.2382	.9572	1.3361	1.3633	1.2509	
	<u>Follow a party on social media</u>										
Encouraged via SM by parties to join their campaigns	1.0383	1.0380	1.0471	1.1606	.11614	1.4090	1.1097	1.0754	.9958	.7882	
	Level of partisan support .804**										
Encouraged via SM by NGOs to join their campaigns	1.527	Receive emails from party I am closest to					.812**	1.7311	1.4786	1.3915	1.1924
	Visit party websites .324**										
Encouraged via SM by friends to join political campaigns	.9034	.7273	.8569	.9391	1.2000	.9533	1.0048	1.0500	.9707	.8719	
	Am a member of a party .534**										
Encouraged by friends or family to be involved in political campaigns	.9524	1.2524	1.2438	1.2947	1.4221	.8064	.8332	.7334	.8687	1.1704	

Pathways to Voting

	Voting Likelihood (Pearson's r)
Signed a petition	.128**
Taken part in a demonstration	.083**
Boycotted a company or product	.090**
Contacted an elected representative	.159**
Joined/Rejoined a political party	.100**
Followed a party, MP or candidate on social media	.109**
Followed a non-governmental political organization (e.g. 38 Degrees etc.) or charity (e.g. Oxfam etc) on social media	.083**
Shared political content (e.g. blogs, posters, news pieces etc.) on social media	.096**
Commented about politics on social media	.106**
Discussed politics with friends or family	.173**
Did not participate in any political activity	.168**

Political Attitudes, Participation & Elections

- Air war dominates, ground war a feature of marginals, social media an intermediary function
- Content designed to be shared, but advocates are a minority 1-7,000 per party
- Online of a suite of participation, but offline remains discrete
- Personally feeling good a strong mobilisation force
- NGOs and peers (face to face) very influential
- Few actions designed to influence policy-makers and parties have little influence beyond partisans

THANK YOU

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