Towards hypermedia campaigning? Adoption of new media by political parties in comparative perspective

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Abstract

This paper analyses changing strategies of election campaign communication in a rapidly evolving media environment, characterized by the rise of digital communication channels and online social networks as new tools of political campaigning. Using an expert survey to campaign managers of sixty eight political parties within twelve European nations, representing both old and new EU member states, the study investigates the perceived importance of different types of communication platforms in meeting campaign objectives, especially with regards to differences between new and direct modes of campaigning in comparison to traditional campaign channels. The attributed significance to these various channels is then analysed against a range of variables on macro (country) level as well as meso (party) level. The results suggest that while some differences can be observed in regards to adoption of particular types of social media between individual parties as well as between new and old EU member states (e.g. Facebook is seen as more important in younger democracies), overall we can see a relatively high level of homogeneity in strategies for campaign communication in the sample. The data points to the embedding of new communication platforms within election campaign strategies across most nations and parties; this indicates that the move towards "hypermedia" campaign style, integrating both old and new campaign tools and communication platforms, is now becoming a standard feature of professional campaigning in Europe.

Introduction

There is a widespread consensus that trends captured by the terms professionalization,

marketization and mediatization explain dramatic shifts in the way parties execute their

election campaigns (for review see Lilleker, 2014). These broad concepts provide a wide-

ranging assessment of new forms of politics and new types of relations between politicians

and voters (Negrine & Papathanassopoulos, 1996; Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999; Blumler &

Kavanagh, 1999), but there are few attempts to understand how campaigns are designed, what

party priorities are when developing a communication plan and how these can be explained.

This is particularly true when one considers the vast suite of communication options that are

available in the digital age. The advent of Web 2.0 (John, 2013) and the subsequent boom of

social network sites (SNS) in particular, significantly enhancing opportunities for direct

communication and interaction between political actors and citizens (Lilleker & Jackson,

2010) and has challenged the top-down, centralised mode of communication synonymous

with the third or postmodern age of political communication (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999;

Norris, 2003). Web 2.0 has brought fresh challenges for both electoral marketing practitioners

as well as for political communication theorists and researchers. In light of the rapid

permeation of Internet and social media into the sphere of democratic politics, Jay Blumler

has recently announced the possible end of the "third age of political communication"

(Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999), the concept which was an attempt to capture the key features of

the way politics is communicated from the 1990s on. According to Blumler, while many

characteristics of the previous era are still in place, we might be already witnessing an

emergence of a new age, with online communication technologies assuming an ever more

important role in the nexus between political actors, voters and journalists, and forcing

politicians to significantly broaden their repertoire of communication tools and campaign

strategies. As Blumler puts it,

"If there is a fourth age of political communication, its crux must be the ever-expanding diffusion and utilization of Internet facilities – including their continual innovative evolution – throughout society, among all institutions with political goals and with politically relevant concerns and among many individual citizens. /…/ Whereas in the past political leaders and their strategists geared up to cover and intervene in television, radio and press outlets, now they are involved to a considerable extent in multi-dimensional impression management" (Blumler, 2013).

Following the success of the 2008 Barack Obama campaign, which is broadly considered to have been the first to fully exploit the potential of the online environment and utilize social media, there has been a surge in adopting new media and especially social networking sites for electoral mobilization across the Western world (Lilleker & Jackson, 2010; Johnson & Perlmutter 2010; Cogburn & Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011). Despite the widespread turn towards "Web 2.0 campaigning" (Lilleker & Jackson, 2010; Gibson, 2013), bringing the parties the ability to bypass the editorial control of traditional news media organizations (Zittel, 2004) and significantly reduce campaign costs (Gueorguieva, 2008), parties have not abandoned the older tools and campaign techniques. Indeed, some scholars argue that even today, the 24/7 mass media still remain dominant for campaigns, especially as they continue to be the primary source of information for the general population (see Lilleker & Vedel, 2013). Hence it is argued parties now run hypermedia campaigns (Howard, 2006). New media are treated as an addition to, rather than a substitute for, the traditional and "offline" methods of electoral campaigning.

Our data examines the extent of the adoption of hypermedia campaigning, and in particular how new media competes with old media and what factors explain adoption of digital media campaigning. Rather than analysing the use of digital media by parties through an analysis of their websites, as has become a strong trend in academic research (Lilleker & Jackson, 2011; Gibson, 2013; Lilleker & Koc-Michalska, 2013), we reassess some of the trends identified in

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those studies through surveys with party strategists. In asking the designers of the campaigns

to weigh different communication tools according to their utility to the campaign we gain the

perspective of how important new media are in relation to old media, how different new

media tools rate against one another as well as data that can be used to explain why different

parties, across different political systems, might place more or less emphasis on digital

campaigning.

After exploring the trends in digital campaigning learned from previous studies, and situating

digital campaigning within the broader trend of professionalization we outline the measures

used and present data that explores in detail the uptake of digital campaigning and

explanations based on macro-level (systemic) and meso-level (party) variables prior to

drawing some conclusions on the trajectory for digital campaigning.

Comparative research on online political campaigning

While academic research on the adoption of new media in electoral campaigning is growing

exponentially, there are still many gaps in our understanding of the scope and depth of

diffusion and the particular factors enabling, fostering or impeding the use of online

technologies in campaigns across Europe and beyond. Most research on these topics remains

restricted to nationally-based case studies (e.g. Baxter & Marcella, 2012; Jungherr, 2012;

Larsson & Moe, 2012; Strandberg, 2013; Gibson, 2013; Williams & Gulati, 2013; Carlisle &

Patton, 2013; Nielsen & Vaccari, 2013; Macková, Fialová, & Štětka, 2013) making

comparisons difficult, often due to utilizing incompatible methodologies or measures.

Reviewing the state-of-the-art of the field, Lilleker and Vedel claim that "/…/ there is the

need for more comparative research and the extent to which not only organizational factors,

resources, incentives and orientation, shape Internet use but also the extent to which the

political and social cultures, structures and traditions impact upon campaign strategy"

(Lilleker & Vedel, 2013, p. 28). Existing comparative cross-national studies – as scarce as

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they are – usually tend to focus on just one particular type of communication medium or

social networking site (e.g. Twitter – see Enli & Skogerbø, 2013; Vaccari, Valeriani, Barberá,

Bonneau, Jost, Nagler & Tucker, 2013) and/or their geographical scope and diversity is

usually rather limited, mostly to a narrow group of countries. Only a handful of studies have

so far attempted to encompass broader, pan-European territory and wider range of

communication technologies (e.g. Vergeer, Hermans & Cunha, 2013).

The paucity of comparative research means information about not just the mere adoption of

new media for electoral campaigns, but also on the explanatory factors related to the adoption

of specific tools in the parties' campaign repertoire, and their usage, remains patchy.

Variations in usage have been proven to correlate with national contexts, more especially the

infrastructure, the institutional arrangements, the legal provisions and the political culture

which exist in each country (Ward, Owen, Davis & Taras, 2008). For instance, uses differ in

countries with a proportional election system (which tend to promote a nationwide, party-led

debate) than in those with a majority system (which are usually more conducive to more

localised and individualised electoral campaigns), hence due to national contextual variations

different political uses of the Internet emerge. Recent cross-national studies tend to find a

broad homogeneity emerging where most parties in most nations adopt digital technologies,

with many attempting to copy the Obama model to some extent (Lilleker & Jackson, 2011).

Yet, differences suggest macro-level factors are reducing in their explanatory power.

The debate continues, however, as to whether meso-level variables, in particular physical

resources such as finances or staff, or the orientation or ideology of the party or candidate,

offer the most explanatory power over innovative digital campaigning. Thus we find in

literature two competing hypotheses, that candidates or organizations that have the greatest

resources at their disposal, or that are more center left, are most proactive online. Sudulich, in

a comparative study of Italy, Spain, the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain found ideology

was one factor and that the left performed best in terms of interactivity (Sudulich, 2009).

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Alternatively, Copsey (2003) argued that marginalized voices, and in particular those on the extreme right, find the Internet most appropriate for community building. Copsey's finding was confirmed when the outlier within the 2010 UK parliamentary contest was the far-right British National Party. Their website was the only one to match that of Obama in terms of its interactivity (Lilleker & Jackson, 2011). In Germany and the UK, however, we find the parties with the largest and most innovative presences are those with the largest parliamentary representation and representing both centrist viewpoints. The fact that various studies have been undertaken across a range of countries and time-periods mean the findings are indicative but require testing with a wider sample, at a time when usage of the Internet and social media are more deeply embedded within society. Election campaigns offer a perfect opportunity, they are times when innovations are considered and strategists actively weigh up their options. Within broader patterns of innovation, associated with the professionalization of election campaigning, we position the use of digital campaigning as providing new ways to campaign within an ongoing trend of professionalization.

Election campaign professionalism and the new media

However, instead of the commonly used "phase approach" to the process of campaign professionalization, distinguishing between a pre-modern (party and organization-centred), modern (candidate-centred), and post-modern (message- and marketing-driven) phase (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999; Norris, 2000, pp. 137-147; Plasser & Plasser, 2003, pp. 22-24), we see professional campaign management primarily in the ability of parties to mix strategic and structural components of different "phases", and define election campaign professionalism as the degree of a party's adaptations to modernization-related transformations in the campaign environment, which contains a number of structural and strategic components (e.g. Tenscher, Mykkänen & Moring, 2012).

Obviously, such an approach to the professionalism of electoral campaigns asks for an

investigation of the meso level, i.e. the political parties involved. In recent times, there have

been a handful of studies that have taken this route (Strömbäck, 2009; Gibson & Römmele,

2009; Tenscher et al., 2012; Tenscher, 2013; Tenscher & Mykkänen, 2014). While Gibson

and Römmele as well as Strömbäck have focused on parties' campaign structures

("CAMPROF-index"), Tenscher and colleagues have also investigated parties' campaign

strategies. Having turned to campaign managers' evaluations as indicators for the degree of

election campaign professionalism, they have analysed the relevance of different

communication channels as an integral part of professional campaigning.

Despite these promising attempts, however, we still have little knowledge about the extent to

which theoretically derived components of professional election campaigning – including a

variety of "new" and direct modes of communication – correspond to the practitioners'

perceptions of election campaign professionalism, particularly in a comparative perspective.

We want to answer this question by differentiating between different means of "new" and

direct campaign channels and their perceived importance for election campaigning.

We therefore test whether components that are regarded as integral to a professionalised

strategy are given equal weightings in importance across parties and nations so assessing

whether the current "post-modern" phase of election campaigning is characterised by greater

granularity than models and theories suggest. Taking granularity rather than homogeneity as

an overarching hypothesis we therefore expect both *country- and party-dependent differences*

to explain the importance of "new" and direct modes of campaigning. On the one hand, it has

been demonstrated that there are country- and even region-specific patterns of election

campaigning in general (Swanson & Mancini, 1996; Plasser, Scheucher & Senft, 1999;

Norris, 2000; Farrell, 2002; Plasser & Plasser 2003; Tenscher et al., 2012) and web

campaigning in particular (e.g. Kluver, Jankowski, Foot, & Schneider, 2007; Ward et al.,

2008; Lilleker, Koc-Michalska, Schweitzer, Jacunski, Jackson & Vedel, 2011; Lilleker &

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Jackson 2011). We assume that these patterns should result in (or emerge from) diverse understandings of professional election campaigning via "new" and direct communication channels. We especially assume that:

H1:   The younger a democracy is, the higher "new" and direct modes of campaigning are perceived as an integral part of professional election campaigning. This hypothesis is based on the assumption that the choice of campaign channels is highly dependent on experience. Since there is a longer tradition with traditional and mediated modes of campaigning in established democracies, the introduction of new modes might be impeded. But:

H2:   The perceived importance of new and direct modes of campaigning will be dependent upon their utility for reaching a wide cross-section of a national electorate, so will depend on the national internet penetration figures

On the other hand, variations in practitioners' understanding of "new" modes of campaign professionalism might be explained by meso factors, namely party's size, ideology, resources and due to facing an internal or external shock (Gibson & Römmele, 2009; Strömbäck, 2009; Tenscher et al., 2012; Tenscher, 2013; Tenscher & Mykkänen, 2014). Against this backdrop, we investigate the following hypotheses:

H3:   Centrist and catch-all parties will be most likely to rank all modes of communication as integral to their election campaign strategy given their objectives in reaching the greatest number of voters across a range of social groups.

H4:   The younger a party is, the more it turns to "new" and direct modes of campaigning, while older parties rather rely on traditional modes of campaigning.

H5:   Client parties located at the fringes of the political left-right spectrum perceive "new" and direct modes of campaigning as more important than centrist, catch-all parties. This assumption is based on the idea that fringe and client parties tend to be

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marginalised within an indifferent mass media environment which makes it more

necessary to directly communicate with target groups and voters.

H6:   Oppositional parties evaluate the importance of "new" and direct campaign channels

higher than governmental parties. Once again, this would reflect the necessity for

oppositional parties to compensate their publicity deficit in the mass media as well as

having greater freedom to interact with their supporters.

In addition to these general differences, we expect variations between different modes of

"new" and direct communication channels which have not been discussed in political

communication research so far.

Methodology

Case selection

To acquire knowledge of practitioners' understanding of the importance of "new" and direct

means of campaign communication we conducted a survey among top-ranked party

secretaries and campaign managers in twelve European countries. The countries selected

reflect the broad spectrum of political, media-, and campaign-related differences in

contemporary Europe (see Table 1).

-Table 1 here-

First of all, the selected countries vary *politically*. Most of the selected countries are

parliamentary democracies of which three have a monarchical tradition (Netherlands, Spain,

and United Kingdom). But the countries vary in democratic experience. While there have

been parliamentary elections in France and the United Kingdom since the 19th century, in the

new EU member states, Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia, democracy was introduced

no earlier than 1990. The countries also differ in their *electoral systems*: Most of the countries

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examined operate a proportional representation electoral system in which either parties and/or

candidates are elected. However, France and the United Kingdom use first past the post, and

so candidates and not parties run for election.

Almost all countries have a coalition government, Malta being the exception. In addition, the

party systems differ in the number of parties represented in parliament, from two (Malta) to

16 (Spain). In most of the countries, five to ten parties are in parliament.

Second, the countries selected vary in their *media* environment, representing different

"models of media and politics" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Four belong to the Mediterranean,

polarized pluralist model (France, Malta, Portugal, and Spain) and four to the North/Central

European, democratic corporatist model (Austria, Finland, Germany, and Netherlands). Three

countries were classified as "transitory", since their media systems are still under

construction, respectively the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia. Finally, the North

Atlantic or liberal model is represented by the United Kingdom.

Finally, we selected the countries on their *campaign regulations*. We have chosen two

discriminating indicators: limitations to electoral expenses and restrictions on advertising.

While in eight countries electoral expenses are regulated by law, (almost) no limitations exist

in the Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands, and Slovakia. The Netherlands is the only

country in our sample in which electoral campaign advertising is unrestricted. In most other

countries moderate regulations of the content, timing, and/or extent of specific (not all)

advertisements (e.g., TV commercials, billboards, posters, and trinkets) exist. In France, all

paid media activities are strictly controlled.

We selected all parties represented in the European parliament and those parties that were,

according to pre-election polls, expected to win at least one seat in 2014. In total, 82 parties

were approached for an interview with the key individual with oversight of strategic decision

making during election campaigns, depending on the nation and party these were party

secretaries, campaign managers or their equivalent (one person per party).[1] Response rates

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varied from one party (Malta) to eight parties (France, Netherlands (Table 1). On average,

82.7 percent of those parties contacted participated (SD = 14.6). Our final sample consists of

68 parties. The interviews were conducted between February and September 2013 either face-

to-face, by telephone or mail using a semi-standardized questionnaire, which asked

respondents to rate the importance to the party of different aspects of professional

campaigning in national parliamentary elections as detailed below.

Operationalization and method of analysis

To measure the importance assigned different modes of professional campaigning, we make

use of a set of closed questions. Respondents were asked to state *how important each*

indicator is for a professional national parliamentary election campaign in their country.

They could answer on a scale from 1 ("not at all important") to 5 ("very important").[2] We

differentiate between indicators measuring traditional and mediated communication on the

one hand and "new" and direct campaign channels on the other:

- *Traditional and mediated communication*: 1) use of paid media such as TV spots, posters
  or advertisements, 2) presence of party and top candidates on TV.
- *"New" and direct communication*: communication with voters via 1) email, 2) Facebook,
  3) twitter, 4) YouTube, and 5) other new media.

At the macro level we have eleven *independent variables* which are prominent in the

literature to affect modes of campaigning (e.g. Swanson & Mancini, 1996; Hallin & Mancini,

2004; Esser & Strömbäck, 2012):

- *Old versus new EU member state* (EU-entry before/after 2004),
- *Experience with democratic elections* (years since the first democratic election took
  place),
- *Degree of fragmentation of the parliamentary system* (the degree of competition in the
  "political market", measured as number of parties represented in the national parliament),

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- *Turnout in the last parliamentary elections* (measured in percent),

- *Size of the population,*

- *GDP,*

- *Literacy rate* (in percent; Source: PISA 2009),

- *Internet penetration* (in percent; Source: internetworldstats.com, December 2011)

- *Interest in politics* (four-point-scale, recoded to "strong or medium" and "low" and "not at all", Source: Eurobarometer 78.1, November 2012),

- *Model of media and politics* (liberal, democratic corporatist, polarized pluralist, and transitory),

- *Campaign regulations* (i.e. limitations on electoral expenses and restrictions on advertising).

We have the following independent variables at the meso level:

- *Party's age* (years since party's foundation),

- *Size* (percentages of votes obtained at the last national parliamentary election),

- *Party type* (dichotomous variable differentiating catch-all and client parties depending on the share of votes),

- *Parliamentary role* (differentiating between governmental, oppositional and extra-parliamentary party).

- *Ideology* (a five-point scale ranging from 1 "far left" to 5 "far right"),

- *Internal shock* (number of years since the last change in party leadership),

- *External shock* (difference between percentages of votes gained in last national parliamentary elections and next to last national parliamentary elections).

Empirical results

Prior to analysing our data in order to test the hypotheses we explore the data to gain a general

sense of media priorities. Table 2 shows that traditional modes of communication prevail, but

they are closely followed by new modes of campaigning. The perceived most important mode

of communication in the mediated category is television (traditional mode) and this is

matched in mean importance by face-to-face communication (traditional mode). Facebook is

placed third (new mode) followed by broad canvassing activities (traditional) then

communication via email, YouTube, Twitter and other social media platforms. Paid

advertising it would appear has the lowest perceived importance. However the standard

deviations show much diversity of opinion for most features, it is only television and face-to-

face canvassing that is agreed by most respondents to be most important, there is high

diversity of evaluations. Therefore, we explore whether our hypotheses have the explanatory

power over these divergences in opinions.

-Table 2 here-

Macro-Level factors explaining difference

Overall macro-level factors show few coherent patterns in differences for media prioritization.

Figure 1 shows that there is a clearly identifiable group of nations where parties all appear to

prioritize all forms of communication, whether via mediated and traditional or direct and

"new" new modes; they are Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands

and Slovakia. The diversity in these nations' experiences of democracy, media systems, GDP,

literacy rates, internet penetration and political interest offer a clear sense of a lack of any

pattern forming that can be explained by macro-level factors. Similarly the three nations

where we find parties to prioritize direct and new modes of communication over traditional

and mediated are Finland, France and Portugal, again highly divergent systems. However

these represent broad national averages that conflate a number of forms of communication

into groupings.

-Figure 1here-

Looking at the results of bivariate correlations (Table 3) we find Hypothesis 1 is proven only

for Facebook, perhaps indicative of the fact that as Facebook has become the almost global

social network of choice, and in young democracies where party systems are more fragile and

fragmented, and media do not fully fulfil their democratic role, parties occupy spaces in

online platforms which offer opportunities to reach the largest number of hard to reach voters.

Hypothesis 2 is surprisingly unproven suggesting that all parties, independent of the number

of people with access to the Internet, see a value in reaching out to the percentage of the

electorate that are actually online. One possible explanation for this fact could be that above a

certain level, Internet penetration might stop being a factor in parties' assessment of the

importance of new media in campaigning (the average penetration for the countries in the

sample is 79%).

-Table 3 here-

That Facebook correlates significantly with the experience with democratic tradition (the

younger a nation is, the higher the evaluation), the size of the population (the smaller a

population the higher the evaluation) and GDP (the lower the GDP the higher Facebook's

evaluation) indicates Facebook is a more catch-all medium. In contrast Twitter correlates

positively with GDP only, the higher the GDP the higher Twitter is evaluated. We may

suggest Twitter is deemed more effective for reaching a more educated, higher skilled

population. YouTube correlates negatively with the literacy rate, reflecting perhaps that video

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is a better medium for a nation with a larger number of lower educated voters. The perceived

importance of other new media correlates positively with the size of the population, reflecting

that some nations have alternatives to Facebook that remain popular and so with a large

population it is worth targeting every group via every available social media. We therefore

note platforms may be evaluated based on their perceived appropriateness for campaign

contexts.

While statistical analysis offers some indications, due to the small sample it is appropriate to

focus on mean scores and standard deviation to explore the data, this is shown in Table 4. It

shows that evaluations of Facebook's perceived importance is significantly higher in new EU

member states and is highest in transitory states. On the other hand: Twitter is perceived

significantly more important in older EU member states. There is some minor impact of the

restrictions on advertising on the perceived importance of YouTube and other new media.

This may reflect the need to deliver messages directly to voters using every available channel

where advertising is heavily restricted. Interestingly evaluations are not affected by

limitations of campaign expenses; this may reflect the fact that, independent of restrictions,

social media remain a low cost means of disseminating campaign messages.

-Table 4 here-

Meso-Level factors explaining difference

Examining the meso-level factors we first compare evaluations of new and direct means of

communication versus traditional media. Figure 2 provides a strong sense of the spread of

difference between the German Greens (Grüne) who prioritise all forms of communication

(and are a fringe, opposition party) and the UK Independence Party (UKIP) who are fringe

but extra-parliamentary but who have fairly narrow and targeted communication priorities.

-Figure 2 here-

Exploring meso-level differences in more detail we firstly develop usage typologies using a

two-step cluster analysis (Table 5). This shows that we are able to construct almost discrete

groups of parties with differing overall communication strategies. The "Generalists" prioritise

all forms of communication, and while we would expect these to be largely centrist and catch-

all parties we see from the list some divergence from this pattern with the inclusion of the

Hungarian far-right Jobbik party, and German left Linke. "Average users" rate all forms of

communication, but to lesser degrees, suggesting they see each as important but perhaps have

a more measured view of social media emerging from a less catch-all strategy, again there is a

range of divergent party types within this grouping. "Selective users" pick from a suite of

specific communication tools, these tend to be smaller parties such as UK's junior coalition

party Liberal Democrats and the Dutch ChristenUnie. Finally, "Email avoiders" are a group

who perhaps prefer using channels that permit broadcasting to all as opposed to collecting

emails, building a database and then segmenting and targeting voters. Email avoidance may

be a factor of low resources, and indeed most are smaller, fringe parties.

-Table 5 here-

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Looking in more detail at meso-level factors, using mean scores and standard deviation as an

indication of priorities and the diversity of perceptions, we find (Table 6) one or two

interesting patterns. Firstly, as indicated in the cluster analysis, evaluations of the importance

of emails depend on the party type (catch-all parties assess a higher importance) and a party's

position at the left-right-spectrum (centre parties assess a higher importance than fringe

parties). We suggest this is actually a factor of resources, as centrist parties tend to have

greater resources, although there are no significant differences linked to whether parties are in

government, opposition or outside parliament. Evaluations of Twitter and Facebook are

independent from most party-related factors, it would appear usage of these platforms is

explained better by macro-level factors. Oppositional parties perceive YouTube as having

slightly higher importance, but the real difference is between parliamentary and non-

parliamentary parties. The reason for non-parliamentary parties to suggest YouTube is of

lesser importance is most likely due to not having resources to construct videos. The

assessment of other new media depend on party type and, particularly, the party position on

the left-right spectrum, which may indicate that non-centrist fringe parties try to use every

available platform in order to make up for any resource differentials they face.

-Table 6 here-

Multivariate regression operationalizing all meso-level variables (Table 7) shows that, firstly,

party's age is the strongest predictor for evaluations of the importance of email, Facebook and

YouTube: the younger a party is, the higher these channels are evaluated. This may reflect the

need to build awareness as would be expected of a new party. The importance of email is

explained by the most variables: parties in younger democracies evaluate email higher;

similarly the higher the GDP; and the lower people's political interest. Catch-all parties

evaluate email higher than client parties; and the longer since a change in party leadership, the

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higher email is evaluated. This may actually reflect the fact that where resources allow,

having a database of contacts is important and email remains a "killer app" in acting as a pull

medium building awareness and increasing hits on websites, videos or other platforms

(Lilleker & Jackson, 2011). The importance of other new media is positively affected by the

size of the population and the implementation of limitations to campaign expenses as noted

earlier.

-Table 7 here-

Hypothesis 3 is therefore proven for email only, as it is hard to find a clear indication that

centrist, catch-all parties campaign differently to their more ideologically-driven counterparts.

We do find hypothesis 4 proven for email, Facebook and YouTube suggesting that younger

parties may embrace social media to a greater extent than their more established counterparts.

This finding also links well to the macro-level findings where parties in younger democracies

with more fragmented party systems equally turn more to social media. Hypothesis 5 may be

proven for other new media platforms only, but in reality we do not find client parties on the

fringes dedicating greater interest in social media, suggesting normalization in uptake across

parties and nations. Equally we find little evidence to indicate that opposition parties have

differing strategies to parties of government, disproving Hypothesis 6. Overall, we find a

rather complex picture of the selected meso-level factors having a different kind of impact on

the perceived importance of different types of new media, pointing towards the need for a

more nuanced understanding be taken towards the adoption of new communication platforms

by parties in future research.

Conclusion

In order to determine and explain the embeddedness of hypermedia campaigning through analysis of the evaluations of strategists of differing media platforms we find mixed patterns. Macro-level explanations are few. H1 seems to explain Facebook use only, H2 is not proven at all. Parties in younger democracies seem to see Facebook as more important (possibly due to higher personalisation in weak party systems and the lack of tradition within parties permits greater innovation)

Meso-level indicators are equally mixed. We find clusters of behaviour but no overall patterns, though a hint that there may be a divide with some parties placing more weight on traditional modes of communication while others see new media having greater potential to meet campaign objectives. If there is a clear finding it is that most parties see some new modes of communication as at least equal in importance to traditional means of communication.

Therefore we suggest our data shows the full embedding of new media within campaigning across most nations and parties, and the adoption of most platforms as opposed to there being national specific forms of communication. There are some variances which make logical sense, for example that YouTube seems to be used to reach populations with lower literacy rates and in newer democracies reflecting that video is a more suitable for a lower educated and politically literate electorate. Largely though we find Facebook is now seen as virtually a catch-all medium. Facebook is definitely a feature of campaigning across all democracies but we see a hint that it is marginally more important in transformatory systems. This may suggest that Facebook is seen as more important for building awareness and possibly making connections when a party system is fragile and fragmented. So parties see this as a further platform to use to target hard to reach voters in nations where there is lower partisan loyalty, more parties and, we would suggest, a more commercial, less public-service oriented media system.

Meso-level explanations to an extent reinforce these findings. The fact that centrist parties

prioritize the importance of using email and Facebook suggests again these tools are

perceived as catch-all mediums. Equally reinforcing the notion of these as awareness building

tools, and perhaps also relationship building tools, younger parties also seem more likely to

flock to social media, in particular Facebook and YouTube.

However these minor differences suggest nothing more than a granularity of strategy at the

party level. Parties selecting the communication tools they find to be appropriate and hence

their priorities are shaped by a range of factors. While some of these may be detectable

through statistical analysis they may also be due to the personal preferences and prejudices of

the individuals directing campaigns. Hence the few significant indicators offer hints at

explanatory factors but may not tell the full story. Therefore our data overall, and in particular

the data extracted on media priorities, suggests homogeneity of campaigning across EU

political parties. While differences emerge, these may not be as stark in reality. Parties may

use the full suite of communication tools available, though their effort may differ along with

priorities; hence seeking homogeneity may be the best explanatory factor for the current

fourth, hypermedia phase of evolution in election campaigning.

Yet of course this is based on self-reported priorities and so the ratings may be subject to

some degree of interpretation by our sample of respondents. One individual's three may mean

highly important whereas another may think, as most, this is average. Furthermore, the

responses may reflect aspiration as opposed to what is possible for the party but actual

practice may be constrained by resources. Conversely, lower prioritization may not entirely

reflect lower effort when we compare responses to actual behavior. Hence while we argue that

our data offers a clear indication of standardization of media usage, we equally note that

reality may be somewhat different. Yet, we expect the evaluations to reflect effort and

resources expended, on that basis we suggest that social media communication is now a

serious rival for traditional news management activities and, due to this, one might find

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campaigns evolve further towards using interactive communication, be more co-produced and

certainly be more social.

Notes

[1] We want to thank María José Canel (Complutense University of Madrid), Rui Dias Oliveira

(University of Aveiro), Andrej Findor and Olga Gyarfasova (Comenius University), Carlos

Jalali (University of Lisbon) Karolina Koc-Michalska (CEVIPOF, Sciences-Po Paris), Tom

Moring and Juri Mykkänen (University of Helsinki), Jolán Róka (Budapest School of

Communication), Carmen Sammut (University of Malta), Philip van Praag (University of

Amsterdam) and Annemarie S. Walter (Free University of Amsterdam) for their participation

and permission to use their countries' data.

[2] Missing values were set to 0.

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Table 1. Country characteristics (October 31st 2013)

	Austria	Czech Republic	Finland	France	Germany	Hungary	Malta	Netherlands	Portugal	Slovakia	Spain	United Kingdom
Political system	semi-presidential quasi-parliamentary democracy	parliamentary democracy	parliamentary democracy	semi-presidential parliamentary democracy	parliamentary democracy	parliamentary democracy	parliamentary democracy	parliamentary monarchy/ democracy	semi-presidential quasi-parliamentary democracy	parliamentary democracy	parliamentary monarchy/ democracy	parliamentary monarchy/ democracy
First democratic election	1945	1990	1907	1875	1949	1990	1966	1945	1975	1990	1977	1832
Last national elections	09/2013	10/2013	03/2011	06/2012	09/2013	05/2010	03/2013	09/2012	06/2011	03/2012	11/2011	05/2010
Electoral g system	proportional party list voting with preferential voting (electoral numbers)	proportional candidate/party voting with preferential voting	proportional candidate/party voting[1]	first past the post candidate voting in single member legislative districts, two-rounds system	proportional candidate/party voting	individual constituency seats; combined regional and national party lists	proportional candidate voting with single transferable votes	proportional party list voting with preferential voting	proportional party voting, closed list	proportional party voting with preferential voting	proportional candidate/party voting	first past the post candidate voting in single member legislative districts
Type of government	Coalition	Coalition	Coalition	Coalition/ Block	Coalition/ Block	Coalition	One party	Coalition	Majoritarian/currently a coalition	Coalition	Majoritarian	Majoritarian/ currently a coalition
Number of parties in parliament	6	7	9	9	5	4	2	11	5	7	7/16[2]	10[3]
Number od parties participating in this study	5	5	7	8	6	5	1	8	5	6	6	6
Party system	moderate pluralistic	polarized pluralistic	polarized to moderate pluralistic	moderate pluralistic	moderate pluralistic	polarized to moderate pluralistic	polarized pluralist	moderate pluralistic	moderate to polarized pluralistic	moderate pluralistic	moderate to polarized pluralistic	polarized pluralistic
Model of media and politics	democratic corporatist	transitory	democratic corporatist	polarized pluralist	democratic corporatist	transitory	polarized pluralist	democratic corporatist	polarized pluralist	transitory	polarized pluralist	liberal
Limitations to electoral expenses	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Restrictions on advertising	Moderate	Moderate	None	Strict	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	No	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

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[1] One member (from the Åland Islands) is elected by a simple majority vote.

[2] There are 7 parliamentary groups. One of them is called „Plural Left" (composed of three parties that agreed to distribute territories where they were able to run) and another is called „Mixed Group" with eight parties.

[3] Plus The Speaker and one Independent

Table 2. Evaluation of mediated and direct modes of professional campaigning

	Mean	SD
Mediated communication		
Presence of party and top candidates on TV	4.57	0.630
Use of internet advertisements	3.03	1.727
Use of paid media such as TV spots, posters or advertisements	2.68	1.966
Direct communication		
Communication with voters face to face	4.57	0.816
Communication with voters via Facebook	4.00	0.914
Canvassing	3.87	1.413
Communication with voters via email	3.51	1.228
Communication with voters via YouTube	3.46	1.043
Communication with voters via twitter	3.32	1.190
Communication with voters via other "new" media	3.16	1.253
Communication with voters via telephone	2.69	1.273

Note: Scale: 1 ("not at all important") to 5 ("very important"), N=68; missing values were set to 0
italicized "traditional" modes of campaigning

Table 3. Bivariate correlations between direct and new modes of campaigning and macro-level factors (Pearson's r)

	email	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube	Other new media
Facebook	.519**				
Twitter	.273*	.439**			
YouTube	.269*	.470**	.529**		
Other new media	-.152	.143	.375**	.308*	
Number of parties in parliament	-.080	-.227	.204	-.206	.025
Experience with democratic elections (in years)	-.084	-.395**	-.050	-.194	-.001
Size of population	-1.09	-.287*	.045	-.084	.253*
GDP	-.088	-.313**	.249*	-.163	.084
Literacy rate (PISA 2009)	-.186	-.149	-.015	-.265*	-.133
Internet penetration	-.063	-.235	.118	-.135	-.080
Political interest	.020	-.070	.090	.053	.051
Turnout in last national elections	-.102	-.211	.299*	-.046	-.159

Note: N=68; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

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Table 4. Comparisons of means between direct and new modes of campaigning and macro-level factors (in brackets SD)

	Email	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube	Other new media
Country groups					
Old EU member states	3.41 (1.152)	3.82 (.932)	3.49 (1.155)	3.31 (1.086)	3.27 (1.201)
New EU member states	3.82 (1.425)	4.53 (.624)	2.82 (1.185)	3.88 (.781)	2.82 (1.380)
F-test	*1.444 (n.s.)*	*8.445***	*4.192**	*3.958[+]*	*1.668 (n.s.)*
Model of media and politics					
Liberal	4.00 (.894)	3.17 (1.169)	3.33 (1.366)	3.33 (1.366)	2.50 (1.378)
Democratic corporatist	3.42 (.987)	3.88 (.864)	3.69 (.970)	3.35 (.745)	3.23 (1.032)
Polarized pluralist	3.15 (1.387)	3.95 (.887)	3.20 (1.322)	3.30 (1.380)	3.40 (1.501)
Transformatory	3.94 (1.389)	4.56 (.629)	2.88 (1.204)	3.88 (.806)	3.00 (1.211)
F-test	*1.626 (n.s.)*	*4.428***	*1.715 (n.s.)*	*1.141 (n.s.)*	*.910 (n.s.)*
Limitations of campaign expenses					
No	3.64 (1.254)	4.16 (.850)	3.52 (1.122)	3.56 (.821)	2.92 (1.115)
Yes	3.44 (1.221)	3.91 (.947)	3.21 (1.226)	3.40 (1.158)	3.30 (1.319)
F-test	*.408 (n.s.)*	*1.215 (n.s.)*	*1.079 (n.s.)*	*.390 (n.s.)*	*1.428 (n.s.)*
Restrictions on advertising					
None	3.33 (.976)	3.87 (.743)	3.60 (.986)	3.00 (.378)	2.67 (.900)
Moderate	3.67 (1.187)	4.09 (.949)	3.36 (1.190)	3.67 (.977)	3.20 (1.254)
Strict	3.00 (1.773)	3.75 (1.035)	2.63 (1.408)	3.13 (1.808)	3.88 (1.553)
F-test	*1.219 (n.s.)*	*.665 (n.s.)*	*1.845 (n.s.)*	*2.912[+]*	*2.607[+]*

Note: Scale: 1 ("not at all important") to 5 ("very important"), N=68; missing values were set to 0
** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

Table 5. Cluster analysis on evaluations of direct and new modes of campaigning (N=63)

	Email	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube	Other new media	Label
Cluster 1	4.26	4.57	4.3	4.3	4.04	**Generalists**
Cluster 2	2.86	3.43	2.76	3.05	2.81	**Average Users**
Cluster 3	4.42	4.33	3.42	3.08	1.92	**Selective Users**
Cluster 4	1.14	3.43	3.14	3.14	4.57	**Email Avoiders**

First step: hierarchical cluster analysis (Ward); second step: K-means cluster analysis; 5 outlier cases;
Note: Scale: 1 ("not at all important") to 5 ("very important"), N=68; missing values were set to 0

Cluster 1 (n=23)	Cluster 2 (n=21)	Cluster 3 (n=12)	Cluster 4 (n=7)
BZÖ	BE	CDA	FN
CDS-PP	CDU	CU	Grüne
CiU	Con	Együtt 2	KOK
D66	CSSD	GP	LO
FAC	GL	KDU-CSL	Most-Híd
FDP	IU	LD	PG
FPÖ	KESK	PRG	UPyD
Grüne	LMP	PS	
Jobbik	OL-NO	PvdD	
KDH	ÖVP	SGP	
Lab	PCP	SPOZ	
Linke	PP	TOP 09	
MoDem	PS		
MSZP	PvdA		
ODS	RKP		
PCF	SDKÚ-DS		
Piraten	SDP		
PS	SP		
PSD	SPÖ		
PSOE	VAS		
Sloboda	VIHR		
SNP			
SPD			
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Table 6. Comparisons of means MW (in brackets SD)

	Email	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube	Other new media
Party type					
Catch-all party	3.75 (1.079)	4.03 (0.941)	3.39 (1.202)	3.50 (1.082)	2.92 (1.204)
Client party	3.25 (1.344)	3.97 (.897)	3.25 (1.191)	3.41 (1.012)	3.44 (1.268)
F-test	*2.889[+]*	*.070 (n.s.)*	*.228 (n.s.)*	*.135 (n.s.)*	*3.014[+]*
Parliamentary role					
Not in parliament	3.50 (1.378)	3.67 (1.751)	2.50 (1.225)	2.50 (1.378)	2.83 (1.602)
Opposition	3.58 (1.266)	4.08 (.818)	3.61 (1.175)	3.63 (.998)	3.29 (1.088)
Government	3.42 (1.176)	3.96 (.806)	3.08 (1.100)	3.42 (.929)	3.04 (1.429)
F-test	*.126 (n.s.)*	*.558 (n.s.)*	*3.186**	*3.287**	*.506 (n.s.)*
Party position					
Fringe party[†]	2.83 (1.337)	3.75 (1.055)	3.08 (1.165)	3.42 (1.379)	4.00 (1.128)
Centre party[††]	3.66 (1.164)	4.05 (.883)	3.38 (1.199)	3.46 (.972)	2.98 (1.213)
F-test	*4.739**	*1.091 (n.s.)*	*.590 (n.s.)*	*.020 (n.s.)*	*7.114**

Note: Scale: 1 ("not at all important") to 5 ("very important"), N=68; missing values were set to 0
[+] $p < 0.1$*; $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$
[†] either extreme left-wing (code 1) or right-wing (code 5) party
[††] positioned at the center of the left-right-spectrum (codes 2, 3, 4)

Table 7. Explanations of evaluations of new and direct media campaign channels (Beta values)

	Email	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube	Other new media
Country level					
Old/new EU member state	1.311	.896	.627	.811	.752
Fragmentation of the parliamentary system	.018	-.124	-.061	-.292	-.304
Experience with democratic elections	-1.087*	-1.008[+]	-.599	-.093	-.626
Size of the population	.142	.065	.202	.183	.510[+]
GDP	3.730**	1.915	.879	-.135	.102
Literacy rate	.188	.504	.370	.157	.354
Interest in politics	-1.781*	-1.029	-.801	-.484	-.331
Turnout in last parliamentary election	-1.621	-.583	.546	1.227	.978
Campaign regulations: limitations of expenses	-.283	-.050	-.043	.131	.603*
Campaign regulations: restricted advertising	-.723	-.087	.204	.565	.766
Party level					
Party's age	-.410**	-.358*	-.175	-.372*	.039
Ideology	.079	.219	.230	.099	.049
Party type (catch-all)	.363[+]	.076	.138	-.124	-.252
Parliamentary role (governing)	-1.27	-.154	-.039	.065	.013
Parliamentary size	.097	.076	-.201	.059	.129
External shock	-1.81	-.205	-.105	-.198	-.171
Internal shock	.316[+]	.110	.036	.021	.137
Constant	13.465	-3.850	-11.432	-8.635	-19.599
R^2	.399	.362	.361	.237	.413
Adjusted R^2	*.155*	*.103*	*.103*	*-.071*	*.175*

Note: OLS Linear Regressions, N = 68, [+] $p < 0.1$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$
Model of media and politics and internet penetration not included due to high colinearity

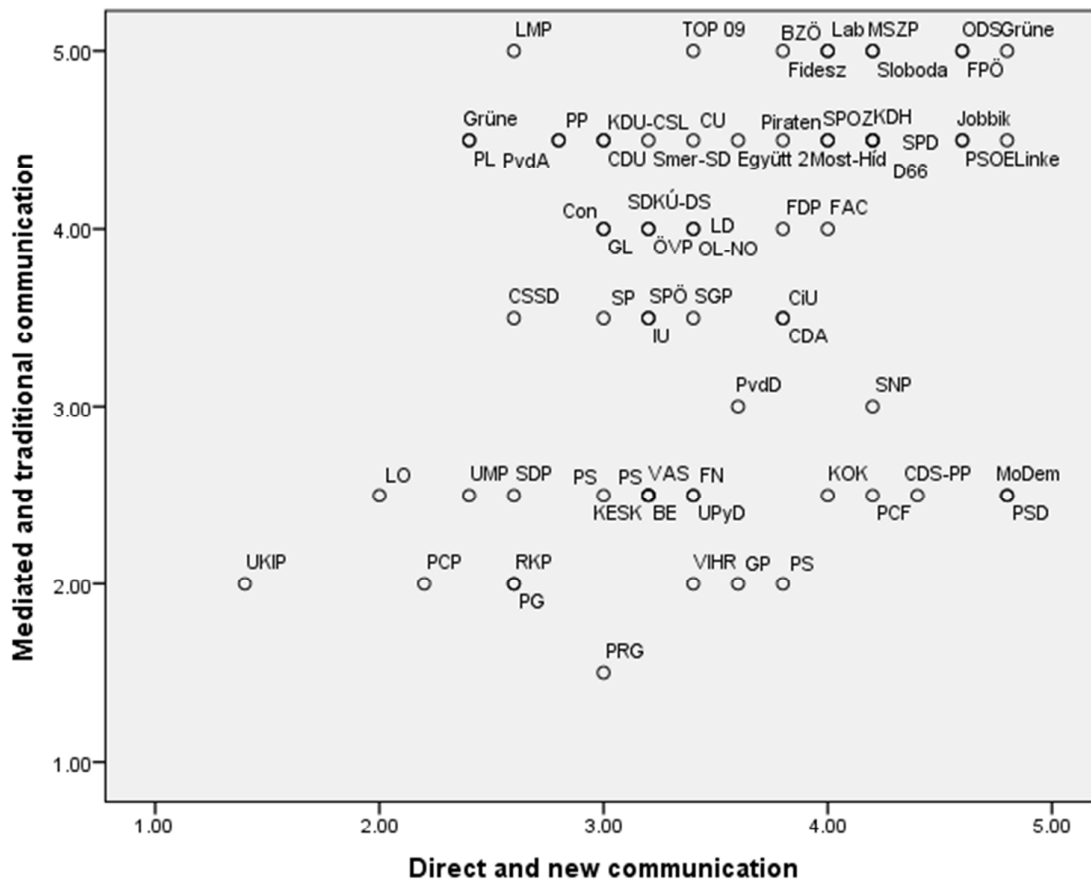**Figure 1. Countries' evaluations of mediated and traditional versus direct and new campaign channels**
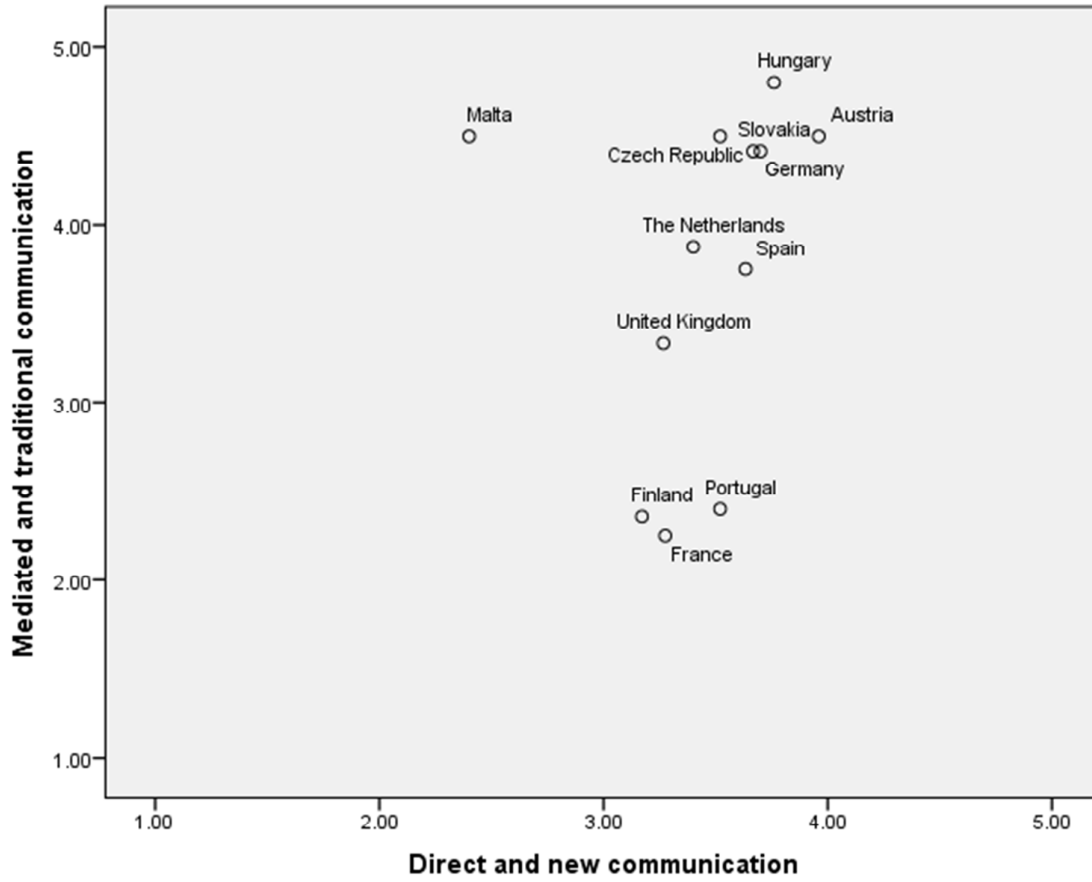
Note: Scale: 1 ("not at all important") to 5 ("very important"), N=68; missing values were set to 0
Pearson's r = .219 (n.s.)

Figure 2. Parties' evaluations of mediated and traditional versus direct and new campaign channels

Note: Scale: 1 ("not at all important") to 5 ("very important"), N=68; missing values were set to 0
Pearson's r = .336 (p < 0.01)