



BEHIND THE DIGITAL CAMPAIGN

An exploration of the use, impact and regulation
of digital campaigning

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Digital campaigns are increasingly significant in electoral contexts and are being used by political parties, candidates and citizens to raise awareness and garner support. Although some believe that they level out the political playing field, we believe that the reality is somewhat different:

Whilst digital media makes it easier for individuals and organisations to mobilise support on low budgets, online political campaigning is, on the whole, a professional affair.

Once the preserve of citizen activists and the political fringe, this report highlights how the internet has now been adopted by mainstream parties, well-resourced candidates and third-party organisations. Citizen-led campaigns are still an important, emergent, part of the political landscape but it is mainstream political parties and their candidates who are emulating the style, format and delivery of earlier issues-based collectives, with varying degrees of success. Indeed, campaigns that engender (even if they do not necessarily emanate from) grassroots activism appeal more to a population seeking change and resonate particularly well with younger audiences, the group least likely to democratically engage in traditional ways. Much is made of the lessons to be learned from the 2008 Obama campaign but, as we will show, online campaigning works better in some contexts than it does in others and this is particularly true for personality-led or issue-based campaigns more than it is for party-led campaigns.

Online campaigns particularly benefited presidential elections fought in France and the US. They have lent themselves less well to legislative or parliamentary polls, such as those seen in Australia, Canada or in the UK for elections to the European Parliament. Online fundraising strategies work best where there is a well-established culture of personal donations to political causes or parties and a strong candidate to coalesce around. Such strategies appear to be less relevant in countries that rely on established systems of state funding or on party-based campaigns.

Expenditure on online tools does not necessarily predict outcome: just as it is virtually impossible to assess the cost of candidate (or MP) websites, the impact of political campaigns depends more on the message than on the delivery medium. Where spending figures are available, global indications suggest that campaign funds have more impact when spent on mainstream media broadcasts or traditional styles of political mobilisation than on digital media. No wonder a slogan commonly heard amongst political activists is that 'offline is the new online'. In short, the transformative power of the internet has been and, in the throes of the UK's current general election, continues to be, over-stated.

This report highlights patterns and emerging trends in recent elections across the UK, Europe and beyond and our findings support the earlier assertion that candidate-led campaigns are better suited to online strategies than are party-led initiatives. The aim of online campaigns is to turn potential supporters into campaigners and, ultimately, voters and in this vein, the UK has seen Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs) establishing their own online presences well ahead of elections. Similarly, those sitting MPs who have an online presence tend to use it to connect with their existing constituents throughout the year, rather than for campaigning *per se*. This report describes how digital communication strategies are commonly used as a means of conducting ‘pavement politics’ – enabling representatives to promote their views to potential supporters and mobilise support.

These trends symbolise a move towards a perpetual campaign, which is described in the report as the main shift brought about by the use of digital communication platforms by representatives in the UK. Following the success of individual MPs and PPCs, political parties began to harness the organisational capacity of the internet, using online strategies to raise their profile in general and to wrest control of the communications environment away from mainstream media. Much of their expenditure and experimentation occurred throughout the pre-election period, as strategies were deployed to drive traffic to party websites, or to develop supporter databases and networks.

Political parties benefit too from supportive bloggers, with clusters of websites emerging around ideological hubs. Interconnections often spring up between the different clusters – either when they are debating with each other or when they join forces – as occurred during the last European Parliament elections, during which parties and supporters organised against the British National Party (BNP).

By highlighting national and global trends, this research provides a body of evidence demonstrating the growing significance of the internet on political campaigning. It concludes that we cannot expect a US or even French style of online campaign during the current UK general election. We cannot even anticipate that political parties and candidates will develop online strategies that are not already in existence; we cannot assume digital innovation. Rather, we expect momentum to be built around strategies and platforms that largely already exist and have been tested, if not in the UK then elsewhere. Mirroring international experiences, engaged citizens – those who are already politically active and online – are likely to emerge as a new force in political contexts, providing unique campaigning tools and potentially even engendering deep and lasting changes in the cultures of political parties in the UK. The general election is an obvious catalyst for the emergence of such applications and websites.

Although optimistic, we remain cautious and our findings suggest that the internet is unlikely to lead to dramatic changes in the electoral landscape in the short-term. The perpetual campaigns being mounted by political parties and representatives in the UK mean that the less predictable online behaviours during elections are likely to be associated with third-party and

independent supporters rather than the major political parties. These third-party campaigns are in turn likely to drive up political participation and knowledge amongst the wider public, given that popular attention tends to be focused on unofficial campaigns rather than on the strategies of politicians and parties.

Our analysis draws upon the regulatory regimes in other countries and through this we are wary of the creeping risk of over-regulation. While some countries have introduced stringent legislation to limit negative campaigning and third-party activism, we see these as largely unsuccessful and suggest that such approaches in the UK would hinder the potential broadening out and deepening of public engagement in the democratic process.

Better guidance, not legislation, is the key to ensuring the effective use of digital media within campaigns. Existing regulations, although largely by implication, already capture the key issues relating to digital campaigning.

In reflecting on our findings in the context of the regulatory environment in the UK, we are largely satisfied with the approach taken. We believe that the approach should remain light, focusing on monitoring the digital landscape and ensuring that political parties and candidates are asked to record and report online expenditure and fundraising as it relates to campaigns (as the Political Parties and Election Act 2009 requires). We believe that parties and candidates need better guidance on the new and emergent issues relating to online campaigning that this report highlights.

INTRODUCTION

New digital media offer opportunities to transform political campaigning and representative democracy just as they have shrunk the world, removing many of the barriers of space and time, reshaping the way we communicate, trade and learn.

It is now much easier to get in touch, keep in touch, research and campaign. It is far easier for politicians to bring issues to the public's attention and vice versa – although, perhaps ironically it might be considered harder to maintain topical interest – and to connect with like-minded individuals. The instant society places new expectations on political organisations as citizens increasingly expect them to be accessible, available and responsive. Globally, citizens are leading the way in the deployment of innovative digital media and this revolution is driven by motivation, mobilisation and expectation, not by the technology itself. Citizens now use mobile phones to spread messages about electoral and human rights abuses, often contravening state-imposed restrictions, to draw the world's attention to stories that the mainstream media does not cover. Meanwhile, advocacy organisations run digital campaigns to put their concerns onto the public agenda. In many countries, there is little regulation except to prevent infringements of copyright law and enforce measures against cyber-fraud. In others, citizens are limited in how they can use the internet only during the election campaign period while elsewhere, digital communication is heavily monitored at all times.

The internet is fast becoming a vehicle through which the opinion of ordinary people can be expressed on matters normally reserved for political leaders.

The speed with which online communication is being adopted by political parties and representatives varies according to socio-cultural, economic and democratic context.¹ In general, opposition parties use online campaigns more than do those in government. In presidential elections, candidate-led digital strategies have become increasingly significant, while remaining less relevant in legislative and parliamentary contexts. This, however, has potential to change. As we shall see later in this report, local and national representatives in the UK make everyday use of the internet to establish stronger links with supporters. Major political parties in the UK, which once viewed online communication as inherently risky, are beginning to establish a perpetual internet presence; the line between representation and campaigning is becoming blurred as a result.

Whether launched during elections or run throughout the year, online campaigns worldwide have become synonymous with a new kind of 'user generated' politics, potentially transforming

the way that representatives engage with citizens. This report will focus on the implications of these trends in the UK, exploring in detail:

- how the internet is coming into political prominence internationally;
- different campaigning and regulatory environments in which elections are staged around the world;
- the emergence of perpetual online strategies in the UK, linking citizens, politicians and institutions; and
- patterns of electoral uses of the internet in the UK (in by-elections, local and Mayoral elections, and in European elections).

This report utilises research, interviews and analysis conducted during 2008-2009 in order to examine the underlying strategies and influences leading to the use of digital media by political parties and others during the 2010 UK general election.

The first section of the report sets the scene for a discussion of online campaigning, highlighting the role of the media and internet in shaping public awareness of politics and elections. The report then looks in more depth at the situation in the UK, describing how a perpetual online campaign is emerging with political parties using the internet to segment and mobilise supporters who – in turn – are using the internet to challenge the culture of political parties. Drawing on interviews with party organisers and those running websites in support of them, and by monitoring the perpetual use of digital technologies by representatives and candidates, as well as the use of online campaigns during local, European and by-elections, the report highlights how much of the framework for the current UK general election has been laid down in the preceding perpetual campaigns. The third section outlines trends in online campaigning internationally, providing a general overview of the use of digital strategies around elections before looking at specific case studies in seven countries – from Australia to Japan – selected on the basis that they provide examples of different landscapes for digital campaigns within advanced democracies. Finally, the report contextualises the discussion in terms of regulations and the need, if any, for change before providing a conclusion of the research findings.

Methods and Approaches

Various methods were used to track online activity internationally, including the monitoring of candidate and party websites during elections and the thematic analysis of press, blogger and academic accounts of digital campaigns. In the UK, online campaigns were monitored during the May 1, 2008 local and London Mayoral elections. Online campaigning during the June 2009 election to the European Parliament was closely observed and the internet strategies used during a number of parliamentary by-elections were examined, these were:

- Crewe and Nantwich (May 2008);
- Henley (June 2008);

- Haltemprice and Howden (July 2008);
- Glasgow East (July 2008);
- Glenrothes (November 2008); and
- Norwich North (July 2009)

Data was generated by monitoring activity around the European and Mayoral elections and tracking the year-round online strategies of MPs, MEPs and candidates. Semi-structured interviews with online strategists in the Conservative Party, the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats, as well as with MPs and online activists, were used to deepen knowledge about the ways in which online strategies are devised. Participants included:

- Alex Hilton – Founding Editor of Labour Home, an independent website affiliated to the Labour Party;
- Dan Thain – Former Web Editor and eCampaigns Manager for the Labour Party; now working for Blue State Digital – the web agency associated with US presidential candidate Barack Obama’s successful online campaign;
- Derek Draper – Then Editor of LabourList, an independent website associated with the Labour Party;
- Jonathan Isaby – Joint-editor of ConservativeHome, an independent website associated with the Conservative Party;
- Lynne Featherstone, MP – Chair of the Liberal Democrats’ Technology Advisory Board;
- Mark Pack – Editor of Liberal Democrat Voice, an independent website affiliated to the Liberal Democrats;
- Rishi Saha – Head of New Media for the Conservative Party; and
- Sunder Katwala – General Secretary of the Fabian Society.

Most of these interviews were recorded. Annotated notes from these were verified with each participant before being analysed thematically. Information from the interviews has been anonymised. The report focuses on common approaches across the parties, or on differences between them and explores the ways in which those involved in online campaigns understand the context in which they occur.

THE MEDIATION OF POLITICAL LIFE

The mainstream media has long played a role in shaping public understandings of and popular attitudes towards politics. In the US, television remains a primary source of information.² Similarly, in the UK, television news presenters are trusted more than are journalists.³ In both countries, print media are in decline: despite the existence of a free press, newspapers are often seen as a mouthpiece of the establishment.⁴ This is particularly true in the UK where the 'story management' techniques of spin-doctors are well documented.⁵

Newspapers, seeking to boost their circulation figures, now tend to focus on popular themes.⁶ In New Zealand, for example, press coverage is often reduced to headlines about the latest controversies, followed by a commentator-led discussion about their implications.⁷ Across Europe, too, press journalists increasingly focus on politicians' character, rather than on their policies.⁸ Citizens, watching from the sidelines, are turned into spectators.⁹

Instead of relying on the print media, growing numbers of citizens in the US now access information about political events online.¹⁰ Similar patterns are emerging internationally, with people using digital communication to stay in touch with political events: the rise of 'conviction politics' around the world highlights a desire for authenticity in the face of perceived (and real) political and media manipulation. Catching the prevailing mood, politicians in advanced democracies have begun to develop new – and more direct – ways of communicating with their constituents. It is in this context that the internet has become significant, allowing established and aspiring politicians to bypass the press and broadcast their opinion, or to hear directly from the public.

A General History of Internet Campaigning

The internet has been harnessed by political representatives in advanced democracies since the mid-1990s. Initially, it provided space in which corporate information could be displayed: a bit like a notice board, the internet was host to static pages containing information about politicians and political parties.

While the spread of internet use has been uneven, there has been a steady growth in the availability of – often free – online tools encouraging varying degrees of interaction. Initially, online forums were dominant. These are now referred to as part of Web 2.0 (the second generation of web design that enables the two-way flow of information, encouraging user generated content). Already in existence by 1998, forums were initially used by specialists but acquired a more general appeal as increasing numbers of citizens gained access to the

internet. Today, there are a plethora of communities of interest online discussing diverse topics from sports to current affairs.

Blogs emerged at the same time as forums and were originally seen as online diaries in which people could record personal or work-related information on date-stamped pages. The line between blogging and journalism has become increasingly blurred as citizen activists have used online platforms to discuss political events that often did not get covered by the mainstream media. Meanwhile journalists and politicians have now begun to use blogs as a way of widening their audience and reach. With a highly engaged online citizenship, France now has the highest per-capita number of citizen bloggers in Europe; Iran has one of the highest per-capita number of citizen bloggers in the world.

With the proliferation of dedicated citizen bloggers and the emergence of social networking sites like Facebook (which became publicly accessible in 2006), video-sharing websites like YouTube (which was created in 2005), photo-sharing websites like Flickr (launched in 2004), and micro-blogging applications like Twitter (launched in 2006), online political activity has tended to concentrate into hubs, with citizen activists linking to each other's websites and to those of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and to single-issue campaigns. Few links exist between these hubs and the websites of politicians, which until 2004 hosted largely static, corporate content: there were exceptions, but those political representatives who blogged tended to do so in 'broadcast' mode.

Since 2004, however, online campaigning has flourished, with politicians emulating the best examples of citizen-led activism. Candidates in the US have pioneered most of the innovative practices now associated with online campaigning, but politicians there have – until recently – had little online presence during non-election periods. As we shall see, many party- and candidate-led campaigns in other countries have borrowed from the techniques used in the US, but in the UK in particular, candidates have developed more of a perpetual online presence: the extent to which this has harnessed the enhanced interactivity of Web 2.0 and the platforms that form part of it is largely an individual matter.

Is the Internet Equalising or Power-Enhancing?

Around the world, the websites of political representatives and candidates combine several key functions: they provide a direct link between voters and candidates, improve citizen access to political events, and are cheaper than broadcast and print media.¹¹ This is particularly important in contexts where structural inequalities disadvantage particular candidates. Successful challengers to elite incumbents often need to rally volunteers: in the US, the internet helps them to do so.¹² But online campaigns there have not brought about the anticipated levelling-out of the political playing field, partly because of their limited reach in comparison to traditional campaign methods.¹³

Moreover, internationally, the internet is often mobilised by wealthy third parties and individuals who want to maintain the status quo or support an incumbent, either by investing in their election battle or by launching negative campaigns against opponents. Globally, the internet has provided a resource for well-established political figures who want to set the tone of political debates during elections.¹⁴ This becomes all the more significant when considering that major parties (and those who are politically dominant) already gain more media attention and with it, higher levels of public recognition.

Despite recent investment in online campaigns, there is little indication that citizens in advanced and developing democracies visit candidate or politician websites in any great numbers. Often, they visit 'candidate selector' (or non-partisan 'party profile') and news websites that enable them to obtain overviews of political campaigns during elections: those visiting candidate websites tend to have specific motivations for doing so.¹⁵ In advanced democracies, public awareness of elections is more often boosted by independent, although politically aligned websites.¹⁶ In the UK, these tend to be active throughout the year, building up a consistent readership. It is only during elections that traffic to party websites exceeds that of supporter websites.¹⁷ Even then, citizens are more likely to disseminate political jokes and link to YouTube content virally, via Facebook and through emails, than they are to visit official campaign websites.

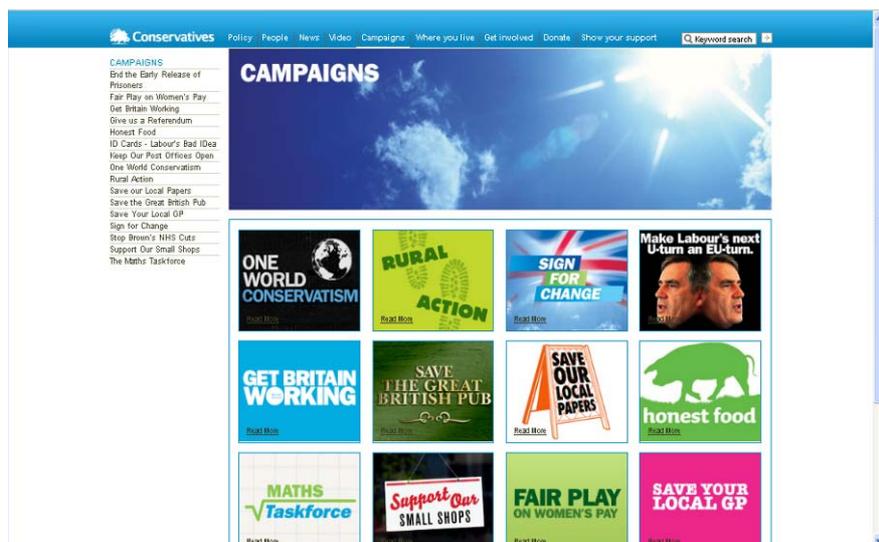
While political parties and representatives are now seeking to increase their online audience share by improving their 'brand image', it is their behind-the-scenes deployment of segmentation processes that provides the more powerful campaigning tool in advanced democracies, such as the UK.¹⁸ Segmentation enables campaigners to create direct relationships with groups and individuals on the basis of their expressed interests: a form of targeted marketing, its effectiveness is due to its avoidance of overloading the public with information.¹⁹ It reduces the possibility that people will feel drawn into unwanted dialogue: visitors to candidate websites often seek specific information and do not always want to interact.²⁰ Segmentation also reflects the international, internet-mediated trend towards single-issue forms of political engagement.²¹

The segmentation approach borrows heavily from marketing strategies in the commercial sector.²² It is used to ensure that communications strike a balance between engagement and targeted information to maximise the advantages of an online presence.²³ While candidate websites use interactive features as a way of encouraging people to visit for as long as possible, much of their content is geared towards stimulating offline activism.²⁴ This approach, merging focused online and offline activity, is necessary because the internet tends to create an environment in which allegiances are often as fragile as they are hard-won.²⁵ Political parties, therefore, must translate low-commitment online networks into strong offline affiliations. Before discussing how political parties are attempting to do this in the UK, we outline the development of online campaigning around the world.

THE EMERGENCE OF ONLINE CAMPAIGNING IN THE UK

The culture of political journalism described earlier in this report has led to a politics of scandal, with arrangements around party funding, MPs' expenses, the communications allowance and political 'spin' all coming under increasing scrutiny. Citizens, meanwhile, have sought to harness new media to create more immediate (and direct) forms of politics. Responding to both trends, politicians – and, latterly, political parties – have begun to use online and mobile platforms as a way of bypassing the hostile communications environment, building relationships with citizens and generating a perpetual campaign.

Here, we present the results from interviews with political actors in the Conservative Party, the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats conducted in 2009, which highlight some clear differences of approach. They are divided procedurally, if not ideologically. All realise the importance of investing in digital communication throughout the year, with the proviso that the pace of online campaigns picks up during an election period. Each understands the importance of an additional 'at arm's length' approach – at least in theory – with parties offering tools to grassroots supporters, enabling them to become activists and organisers. All claim to replicate the online strategies used in the US presidential elections, in a bid to appeal to niche voters and increase offline activism.²⁶ All want to harness the fundraising capacity of the internet, but anticipate little income-generation and less need for heavy expenditure. The similarities between UK political parties end there.



The Conservative Party's approach borrows from brand-management strategies used in the private sector: search engine optimisation and internet advertising drive traffic to a symbol-laden website.

In early 2009, The Conservative Party had put seven staff into place to run their web strategy, working alongside a design agency; Labour had only three members of staff within the new media team. They worked closely with a digital design agency (as well as volunteers and advisers) to implement their plans and approach.²⁷ The Liberal Democrats relied more on party volunteers to develop their online campaign strategy. Their sophistication is less a product of expenditure than a reflection of a federalist structure within the party that lends itself well to online strategies.

The Conservative Party's approach borrowed from brand-management strategies used in the private sector: search engine optimisation and internet advertising drive traffic to a symbol-laden website. Their top-down, marketing driven concept of online campaigning differed from that of the Liberal Democrats, whose website is designed to stimulate offline activism, online deliberation and networking.

The Labour Party had hitherto been slower to develop its online strategy.²⁸ During 2009, however, it created a constellation of websites that enable members to campaign within the party and to mobilise offline support.²⁹ In addition, there has been a growth of independent websites – most notably, LabourList, which was set up to challenge the dominance of the Conservative blogosphere (discussed below).

The following account provides an overview of aspects of online campaigning during 2009 that are likely to be significant in the election campaign, as described by party organisers and supporters during our interviews.

Segmentation

Political parties all recognise that new technologies can refine the ways in which they target niche voters. Labour, for example, established two campaign websites – Go Fourth and Labour Space – that are at arm's reach from, but not independent of, the party. The Conservative Party developed a series of issue-based campaigns on its main website. The Liberal Democrat website linked to single-issue campaigns on Facebook.

Each party used data-capture methods: once people sign up to a campaign or website, their email addresses and stated preferences (e.g., a desire to hear more about a particular concern) go onto the relevant databases. Despite this, they used segmentation to different ends. Labour Party members are encouraged to get involved in campaigns and activities in which they have expressed an interest: to this end, it set up MembersNet, a dedicated social networking members-only website that links off their main website, although they use Facebook to coordinate campaigns designed to attract a broader range of members and supporters.³⁰ The Liberal Democrats believed that their segmentation approach offered a refined way of targeting niche audiences with messages directed on the basis of their expressed interests.³¹

While the Conservative Party sought to increase membership of its Facebook group, it was reticent about letting supporters develop their own campaigns.³² The Conservative Party saw segmentation as a blunt tool, simply deepening the commitment of existing supporters when its priority was to broaden reach. For Labour and the Liberal Democrats, meanwhile, the deepening of involvement online was seen as a way of increasing offline activism, thereby broadening out participation.³³

Brand Management versus User Generated Content

There was growing recognition across the three main parties of the need to generate the kinds of online content that people will want to circulate. Video content proved popular, but party strategists recognised the danger that representatives will rely on it to such an extent - without using the best techniques for doing so - that it will lose its impact.

There was an acknowledgement that for political leaders to retain control of the communications environment *and* appeal to voters, they will need to have a good sense of what the public wants and needs from online campaigns.³⁴ The parties also recognised that online campaigns rely – much as conventional offline campaigns do – on the personalities of candidates. As a result, the use of external consultants and focus groups has become commonplace.

The Conservative Party was ahead of the others in terms of its generation of a brand image and data capture. They attract more traffic to the main website than the other main parties through search engine optimisation, but they are less capable of generating sustained interest and do little to encourage user generated content on the main party website. This is left to independent supporter websites and blogs, such as *Iain Dale*, *ConservativeHome* and *Dizzy Thinks*. Indeed, the prior existence of an actively deliberative blogosphere made it easier for the Conservative Party to establish a more top-down web presence.³⁵ The website is designed to encourage traffic around its various pages; it does, however, make use of Facebook Flickr, and YouTube, attracting interest in this way.

Labour and the Liberal Democrats, meanwhile, invested less in developing online brands; instead, they encouraged activists to produce user generated content in the belief that this will be more popular amongst a broader cross-section of the population and will have a longer lifespan given the likelihood that it will be circulated virally.³⁶ Both Labour and the Liberal Democrats fed user generated content into their policy agenda. Strategists in both parties believed that user generated content – the use of Facebook and Twitter included – was more likely to attract interest from undecided voters than party-produced material; nonetheless, the parties produced applications and packages that might interest potential voters and can be distributed virally by supporters.

The Perpetual Campaign

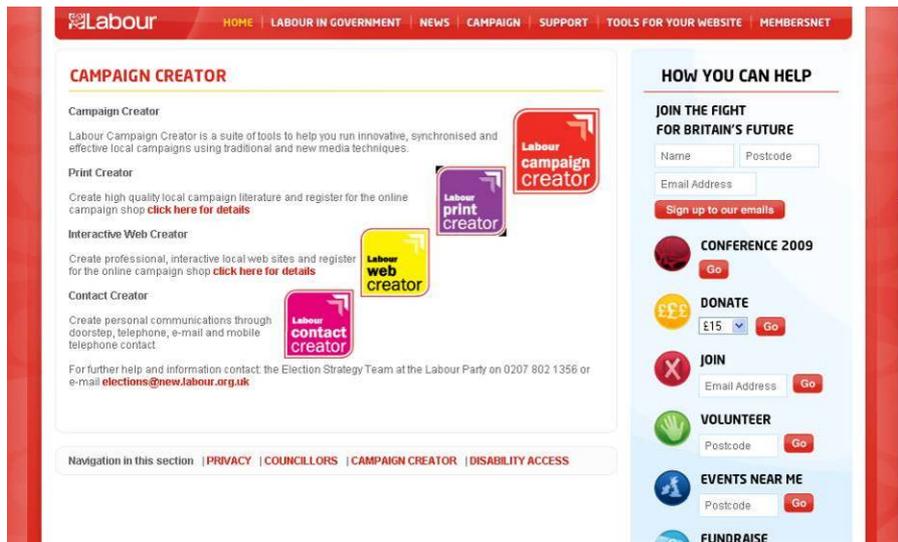
All party strategists had a narrative about the perpetual nature of their online campaign. The Conservative Party believed that they were ahead of the game in terms of brand management, gaining a larger audience share. The Liberal Democrats believed that they had understood the potential of the internet to activate the party's support base, replicating its offline strategies online. Labour, meanwhile, believed that it had been able to generate an online hub around its member network, generating opportunities to reach out to non-members.

All of the strategists interviewed for this report were wary about deploying their online strategies too early: the perpetual campaign is a gradual process and they felt that it would be counter-productive to bombard the public with viral marketing in non-election periods. Moreover, they feared alienating the existing membership if the internet has too profound an influence on their party's culture. They all used low-level perpetual campaign strategies to demonstrate their electoral readiness.

At present, the perpetual campaign is more the preserve of independent websites, which often try to set the news agenda but often end up fighting it.³⁷ As we shall see below, the perpetual campaign is becoming more widely used by individual MPs and Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs) whose online strategies are, in a real sense, blurring the line between representation and campaigning.

Party strategists feared alienating the existing membership if the internet has too profound an influence on their party's culture.

It is unclear whether any of the parties believe that there will be great monetary rewards for developing an online presence. Although each has a means of collecting small donations online, the narrative around giving is subdued.³⁸ Despite this, money was being spent by each well before the election – Labour is rumoured to have spent around £2 million developing Contact Creator, a canvassing tool, and a further £300,000 on an updated version – Campaign Creator and Phone Bank – which has been developed by a web agency that has been retained to set up candidate templates and party websites.



The Labour Party's approach is designed to encourage grassroots activism – emulating the style used by Obama to organise mass support for his candidacy.

The Conservative Party is rumoured to have spent half a million pounds on its Facebook channel alone. With the costs of search engine optimisation, a web agency and advertising costs added, their budget could exceed that of Labour's. The Liberal Democrats have relied more on members volunteering their technical know-how. All employ staff to fulfil functions, from coaching MPs to developing campaign web strategy. In addition, they use online tools to manage internal communication, briefings and membership requests.

Online Membership

While two thirds of new Labour Party members joined online (around 120,000 people), there is little indication that they had come to the party because of the internet. The websites around the party are often read by existing supporters rather than by newcomers. Labour is considering creating a tiered membership structure that allows supporters to get more involved before deciding whether they want to join the party. This practice has already been adopted by the Conservative Party, who offer a friend-level involvement with the party via their website. This was first conceived during the 2007 Ealing Southall by-election, enabling ordinary people to get involved in the campaign.

All of the party strategists interviewed for this project were critical of the media hype around the internet; none believes that it can of itself be used to reach new audiences on a sustained basis.

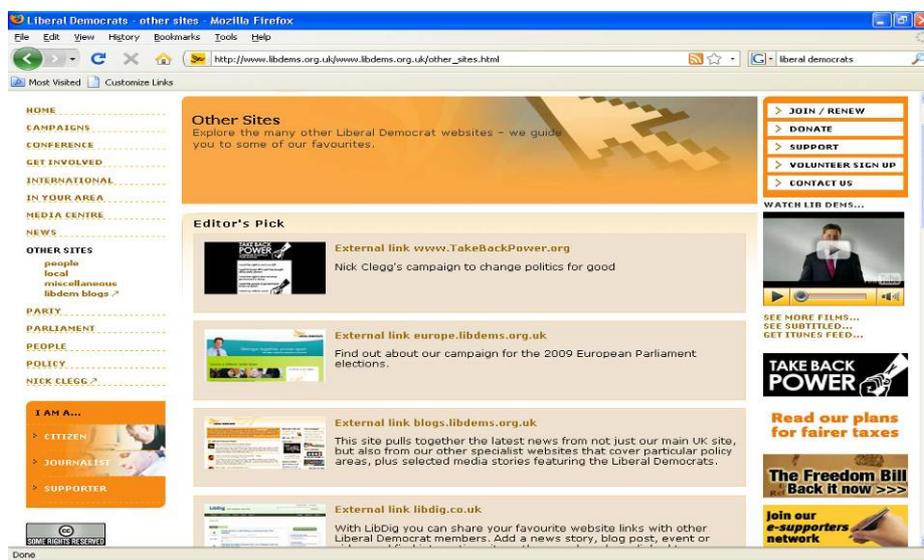
Mobilisation

Email has long been favoured as a communication tool by political parties, and there is every sign that this is continuing during the election – albeit that some mobilisation will occur

through Facebook. There are examples of PPCs using their online presence in this way, long before the election was triggered.

One MP interviewed for this research attributed their election victory to a well-established online presence, which enabled them to appear as a visible and active campaigner; this MP now has a volunteer base reaching into the thousands. For political candidates, the priority is to capitalise on the personal relationships they can create through online campaigning.

Without funds to pour into marginal seats, Labour's strategy is to use the newly re-vamped 'phone bank' – in effect a campaigning call centre that is used to target activists living in safe seats to canvass swing voters. The Liberal Democrats are doing the same thing using Facebook. For both parties, the focus is on campaign management – ensuring that strategies are streamlined and coordinated.



The Liberal Democrat website links to single-issue campaigns on Facebook.

Independent Websites

As described earlier, the Conservative blogosphere has a more established tradition than that of the left, although the Liberal Democrats incorporate online discussion into their main online campaign strategies. One can indeed argue from both UK and overseas examples that blogging as a platform is more suited to opposition than it is to supporting the government of the day. ConservativeHome claims to be the first professional blog (started just before the 2005 elections, catching scoops about the party's leadership battle, and predicting who would win).³⁹ Independent websites have since sprung up around the other main parties; they are, according to our interviewees, less well-received among the political elite than is ConservativeHome. They do, however, appear to have more widespread popularity amongst party members.

Those running independent websites recognise that they are often preaching to the converted, although they believe that they are also able to attract new supporters.

The value of independent websites is supported by research in other countries, which suggests that unaffiliated visitors become more committed to a particular message after having visited supporter websites.⁴⁰

Independent websites open up opportunities for people to be involved in different ways. They do not see their role as being to offer another conduit for the party leadership to reach potential supporters. Instead, they prefer to see that the voices of ordinary people percolate through to the political elite. However, there is a lot of resistance within political parties to taking the content of online deliberations onboard.⁴¹

The strength of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat blogosphere reflects the fact that – as supporters of opposition parties – they have more opportunities to engender discussion and activism. Recognising this, Labour’s strategy has been to simulate the ‘politics of opposition’ online – even within its official web strategy: the ‘No Ifs No Buts’ petition about city bonuses (which attracted more than 19,000 signatures on the first day it appeared on the party’s ‘Go Fourth’ website) is an example of the Labour Party’s attempt to reposition itself as the party of change.⁴² Comments left by those signing the petition were forwarded to the relevant parliamentary select committee.

Social Networks

As of June 2009, Politicians still appeared to be largely in broadcast mode despite not only the potential for conversation that social networks offer but also the public desire for their elected representatives to engage in different ways⁴³. Whilst almost one third of MPs were using Facebook, they were largely using it as a one-way publishing medium and this ignores the real benefits of social media. In our view, the key to harnessing this new generation of tools is conversation and engagement; where citizens can communicate with their MPs and get a response. Most MPs have a long way to go before they can claim to truly understand the power of social media. Previous Hansard Society research⁴⁴ showed that over half (51%) of Liberal Democrat MPs had a presence on Facebook, the figures for Labour and the Conservatives were 15% and 9%, respectively and:

- 46% of MPs were using Facebook primarily as a communications tool
- 31% of MPs were using Facebook primarily to canvas and campaign
- 13% of MPs were using Facebook primarily for personal information
- 10% of MPs’ Facebook pages were ‘inactive’

This research also looked at the frequency and nature of MPs’ Facebook pages:

- 42% of MPs published at least one item daily
- 17% regularly made multiple posts in the same day
- 23% published no more than once a week
- 6% published less than that

Twitter has become an increasingly relevant and much talked about tool for the digital politician. In December 2008, only two MPs were regularly dispatching 140-character 'tweets', as a Twitter message is known. As of October 2009, this had risen to over 12% of MPs. That's about the same number with a blog but half as many as use Facebook. This rapid rise has led to the portrayal of Twitter as either revolutionary or a pointless fad. The reality lies somewhere in-between, a continuation of the increasingly fast news and information cycle that started with the printing press and evolved through radio, TV and blogs. As Labour MP and the party's 'Twitter tsar', Kerry McCarthy, suggests, any MP who uses Twitter 'is doing what we've always done in a new setting'.

Labour MPs accounted for 61% of parliamentary twitterers and the Liberal Democrats, always early adopters of new media in the House, had a quarter of their MPs twittering. Liberal Democrat MP Lynne Featherstone was first in early 2008. Conservative MPs were the least likely to use Twitter. This reflects a strategy that places less emphasis on digital campaign tools for incumbent MPs but much more for Prospective Parliamentary Candidates, where the Conservatives lead the league table, just slightly ahead of Labour.

Assessing the value of Twitter is not easy: A purely quantitative 'follower' count is interesting but inherently problematic. Not least, we know that Twitter is notorious for 'follower spam' and it is difficult to assess the quality of listening or level of engagement (if any) - which is what really matters.

The wider public has yet to engage with Twitter, fewer still use it as a tool for following politics, therefore its reach to voters must be considered narrow. Hansard Society research⁴⁵ suggests that only 2% of the public surveyed use Twitter to follow a political group or politician (twice as many use Facebook). Most of those using social media do so to keep in contact with friends and family or follow celebrities. Worse still, feedback from Hansard Society focus groups suggests that the public are sceptical of politicians using social media; that they are doing this 'to look cool' or 'to curry favour' and because 'some adviser that has told them to do it'. In terms of followers, Downing Street has 1.7 million and Sarah Brown has 1.1 million but, by contrast, the top UK elected politician by far is Boris Johnson with 70,000 followers and the top MP is John Prescott, who has 16,000 followers. Further afield Barack Obama has 3.5 million followers and Britney Spears 4.6 million - almost one thousand times more than Kerry McCarthy!

This suggests that that power of Twitter is in reaching the influencers and mediators of political discourses, not the public. Influence at this stage is limited to political activists, insiders and the media. Kerry McCarthy is clearly the politician with the greatest digital reach, but that's largely

because of her role within the Labour Party and her influence beyond these circles is perhaps limited. And, as McCarthy knows only too well, not all coverage on Twitter is positive, so measuring retweets and mentions only goes part of the way to determining influence. Influence in fact would appear to be determined by two things. Primarily it's about an established real-world profile (either within or outside established party structures) and, second, an ability to say something controversial (preferably at odds with or which could embarrass the party). For this general election at least, it's all about creating a profile amongst the media commentators who follow Twitter and through this filter bed of mainstream media, twittering has its ultimate but limited potential to influence the election. Twitter's value lies in it being a conduit to the mainstream media or as a foil for the story itself - launching an otherwise uninteresting policy in Twitter can make it news.

Representatives

The Conservative Party does not try to encourage reticent MPs to develop an online presence. Labour, meanwhile, has created an interactive content management system to provide a basic template for their MPs. The party-run platform provides a simple interface that all MPs can use, although some choose to develop their own, many using volunteers to do so. Similarly, the Liberal Democrats provide a website template for those who need it, but encourage MPs and PPCs to develop their own approaches to online campaigning.⁴⁶

All parties have web teams who drive traffic to the website using search engine optimisation techniques, and generally try to ensure that most MPs and PPCs are visible online. But they also try to make sure that those MPs who are taking more risks (for example, those who blog) are being sensible. The role of the web team is advisory – making sure parties are public-facing enough, and training MPs to use websites.

Summary

The British political landscape is now one of perpetual campaigns that exist beyond the traditional election period. Party websites (and the underlying digital technologies behind them) are becoming increasingly sophisticated, particularly in terms of how they capture and allow management of contact data, extending the marketing reach beyond members to an interested public of potential voters. The focus changes across the main parties, ranging from brand-management to greater emphasis on user-generated content.

The perpetual campaign is in part driven by the internet and its potential to allow party strategists to control the message more effectively than when they were reliant on varyingly hostile or tame mainstream media outlets. However, care has to be (and has been) taken to ensure that this new approach does not dilute or distort the party's culture. Independent websites too play a key role in seeding and sustaining the perpetual campaign. Whilst blogging appears to be more effective in opposition, many blogs on all sides of the political

debate appear to maintain relatively strong informal ties to the machinery of the party that they support. Social media is highly visible and talked about in the media but politicians' use remains largely in the transmission phase and the public are yet to engage with these tools, making them conduits to the influencers rather than tools to directly connect with voters.

THE ONLINE PRESENCE OF MPS AND PPCS

Beyond the party strategies, individual MPs and PPCs have adopted digital media as a communication, campaigning and, in some cases, engagement tool. Politicians in marginal constituencies are more likely to use a range of online tools throughout the year to keep in touch with potential voters and to connect with local campaigns.⁴⁷ However, as of 2008 at least, many MPs including those in 'safe' seats had an established web presence throughout the year, as Figure 1 (below) shows.⁴⁸

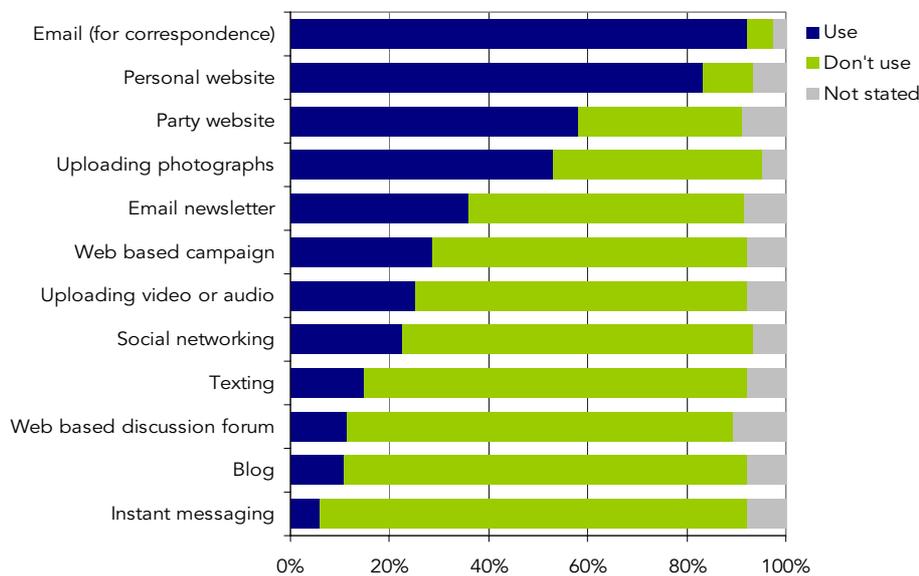


Figure 1: Adoption of online technologies amongst current MPs (2008)

MPs mainly use emails, rather than blogs or social networks, to engage or communicate with constituents as Figure 1 (above) illustrates. An exploration of Facebook – the social networking tool most widely used by politicians – identified that at least 172 of the 646 sitting MPs had a profile, albeit that many of these may have been set up by interns and are not used; more than 10% of MPs used Twitter.⁴⁹ The take-up of social networking websites by MPs is well above that of the general population.⁵⁰

The Liberal Democrats are the most active party when it comes to making use of Facebook, evidenced both through the percentage of their MPs that take up the format (see Figure 2, below) and the range and extent of connections that they foster on the website (they have just under 30,000 friends, compared to just under 25,000 for the Labour Party and fewer than 20,000 for the Conservative Party). In terms of political party prominence, however, Labour is most conspicuous (followed by Liberal Democrats and Conservative Party), with 50% of total MP profile share, reflecting their parliamentary majority.

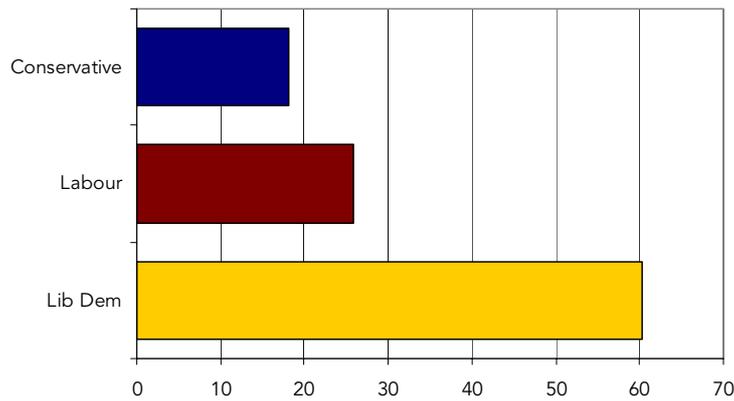


Figure 2: Percentage of MPs on Facebook by Party, 2008/9

Although there has been a marked growth in the use of Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and YouTube by MPs, they are mostly used as platforms onto which they upload messages, photographs and video content rather than a means of interacting with constituents. The tendency is for politicians to use their websites – whatever their form – as a personal mouthpiece rather than an interactive space.⁵¹ Figure 3 (below) highlights the level of interactivity of MPs’ blogs.

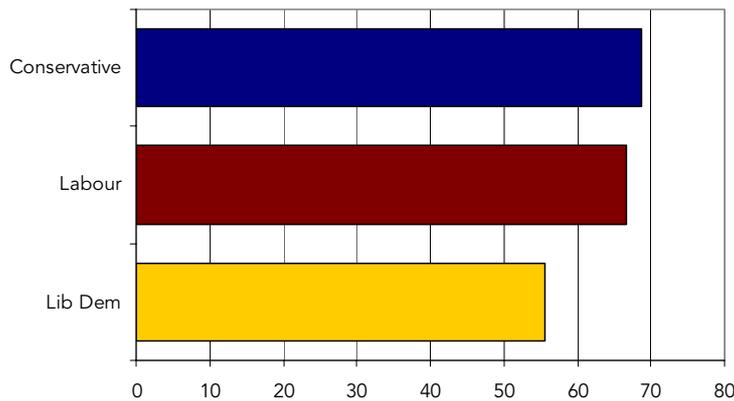


Figure 3: MPs’ Interactivity – Percentage of Blogs with Comment Function (2008/9)

In the main, those politicians’ websites that encourage visitors to leave comments offer little by way of response.⁵² This lack of interactivity is a global phenomenon, existing even in Germany and Sweden where citizens expect the internet to transform the forms of engagement available to them.⁵³ The risk-averse approach of politicians towards online engagement extends across the continent to Portugal, where it is in part a product of the restrictions imposed by party and Parliament.⁵⁴

The reticence that characterises politicians’ approaches to the internet could also account for some, but by no means all, of the public’s preference for engaging with single-issue politics.⁵⁵ The gap between politician- and citizen-led web initiatives closes when they unite around shared agendas. It remains to be seen whether politicians will shift from ‘broadcast’ to ‘engagement’ mode during the election. Our exploration of the use of Facebook by PPCs,

however, suggests that the possibility of being elected gives rise to a (possibly temporary) surge in interactive online activities.

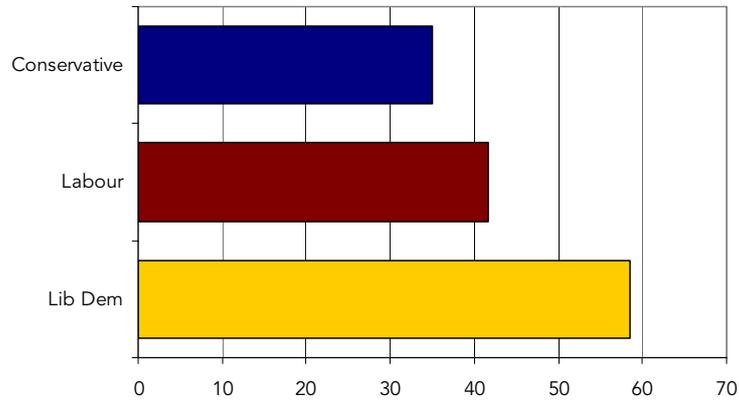


Figure 4: Percentage of PPCs on Facebook by Party, 2008/9

Figure 4 (above) highlights the fact that candidates tend to use web tools that enable a concerted build up of grassroots activism prior to the election period. The aim of this perpetual campaigning is to generate public awareness and interest in candidates; interestingly, it is the PPCs for the Conservative Party who are making the greatest inroads, attracting 35,000 'friends' (compared to just over 25,000 each for the Labour Party and Liberal Democrats). However, they are also fielding the most candidates: the Labour Party is attracting just under 250 'friends' per PPC, compared to just under 200 each for the Liberal Democrats and Conservative Party.

LONDON MAYORAL, LOCAL AND PARLIAMENTARY BY-ELECTIONS

The picture that emerges from our analysis of web-based campaigning during the May 1, 2008 local elections suggests that political parties provided candidates with the platforms through which they could campaign. As with MPs, councillors maintain a web-presence during non-election periods, with varying levels of interactivity. In most cases, these are accessed via council web pages. Political parties' websites also provide links to their prospective and sitting councillors.

It was the London Mayoral election, which also took place on May 1, 2008, that saw each candidate launch dedicated campaign websites. Media speculation suggested that Boris Johnson, the Conservative Party Mayoral candidate, spent the greatest amount on his website.⁵⁶ The three main candidates employed dedicated web-teams to develop their online campaign strategy – each using Facebook and YouTube in different ways. For example, Ken Livingstone, the Labour Party Mayoral candidate, broadcast rebuttals of Johnson's first Party Election Broadcast on YouTube, enabling him to bypass television broadcast regulations.⁵⁷

Candidates also made use of newspaper platforms, such as the *Guardian's* 'Comment is Free' blog to exchange views on policy matters. Gaining airtime in this way was an important part of the strategy of candidates, although other tactics were also used: Brian Paddick, the Liberal Democrat Mayoral candidate, and Ken Livingstone both bought adverts on Google while Boris Johnson used search engine optimisation techniques to ensure that his name cropped up more often on search engines for 'London Mayor'.

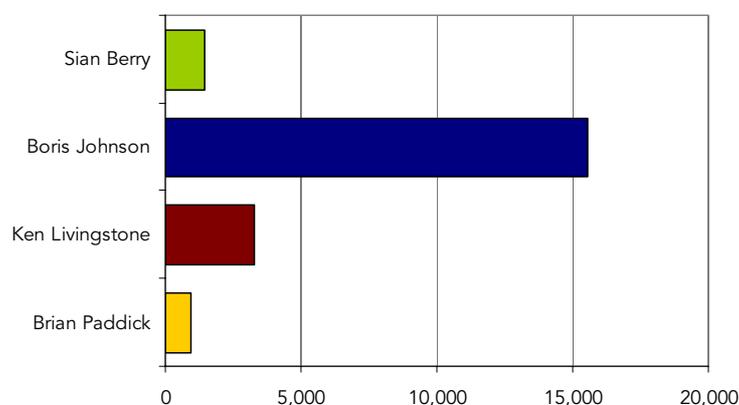


Figure 5: Official Facebook Supporters/Friends/Members for London Mayoral Candidates

Boris Johnson's campaign generated the most attention; it is not clear, however, whether this was to do with his offline popularity.⁵⁸ He had vastly more supporters on Facebook than did his

rivals, as Figure 5 (above) shows. The success of online campaigns can be attributed in part to the ways in which citizens engage with them; Johnson's supporters raised his already well-known profile online before he stood for election.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, Paddick was commended for his online campaign, devised by a leading US strategist, but activism there did not translate into votes.⁶⁰

By-elections in the UK (Crewe and Nantwich (May 2008); Henley (June 2008); Haltemprice and Howden (July 2008); Glasgow East (July 2008); Glenrothes (November 2008); and Norwich North (July 2009)) have seen an increase in citizen-led engagement with online campaigns via Facebook in the more heavily contested seats. Candidates in Crewe & Nantwich also campaigned online via their party websites (linking to YouTube channels and Facebook profiles); this stimulated citizen engagement, with the public forming support groups (or the opposite).

In Henley, a safe Conservative seat, candidates challenging the incumbent made use of Facebook. The heir apparent did not, however. In Haltemprice & Howden, the incumbent, David Davis, had forced a by-election by standing down as an MP in protest against government plans to increase the pre-charge detention limit for suspected terrorists. For the purposes of his campaign, he developed a wide-ranging web strategy (incorporating Facebook and YouTube channels): it is interesting to note that, before the election, he had no website as a sitting MP, however.

Meanwhile, the Scottish National Party (SNP) who gained the seat in Glasgow East barely used the internet, suggesting that online campaigns are less useful in areas of social and economic deprivation. By contrast, the Labour Party candidate in the Norwich North by-election – the first post-expenses scandal election – used independent websites like LabourList to mobilise support from people living outside his constituency; the Conservative Party candidate relied on a traditional broadcast-style website, combined with offline campaigning methods – a similar approach was used by the Liberal Democrats.

Three factors appear to be at play in local elections and by-elections. Whilst the various party machines made online tools available for local elections, use was generally limited and it was only in the London Mayoral election (a relatively large-budget, personality-driven event) that the internet played any significant part. Therefore, the first factor is budget (and, by extension, scale). Factor two is one of reach; standing for the local council it is perhaps more important to door-knock than to blog (anecdotal evidence from MPs suggests that a large proportion of the audience for their blogs are not in their electorates). Thirdly, the evidence from recent by-elections suggests that the socioeconomic status of the constituency is a factor in choosing how much digital media to use. This is seen in the near invisibility of the internet from the campaign in Glasgow East, a constituency with one of the lowest levels of digital adoption in the UK.

UK ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

In the June 2009 European elections, the independent websites described earlier focused mainly on domestic political issues, although they did highlight issues relating to the European election – often linking to campaign websites set up by other organisations. One such website was the third-party ‘Hope Not Hate’ campaign that was set up by a coalition of organisations to challenge the far right. Other single-issue third-party websites emerged – many anti-European Union – using Facebook and YouTube to spread their message or invite engagement. In addition, candidate selector websites, like PoliticalCompass and VoteWise, were deployed specifically to educate the public, or to provide easy ways of accessing information about the political parties standing for election.

The information on the super-national party websites, which are restricted from actively campaigning, was of a more standardised form, providing information about MEPs in their party; some links to Facebook were in evidence – particularly on websites run by parties on the left (although not Labour associated parties). This reflects a pattern found in the May 2008 local elections, in which information about the candidates was available online, but often buried on local council or regional party websites. The exceptions come in the form of existing MEPs or prospective candidates who had managed to build up a web presence over a sustained period – actively using Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and blogs to engage citizens.

At a candidate level, there were more online developments than had been evident during the local elections. A maximum of 69 were running from each party: some sitting MEPs were standing down but still had a website presence (as recorded in Table 1, below). In addition, 47 of the Conservative Party candidates had individual websites.⁶¹ This compares with 58 Labour Party candidates and 55 Liberal Democrat candidates. Sixty three Green Party candidates had their own websites – as did 24 members of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). Three BNP candidates had individual websites, and its national website had a campaign focus during the elections, unlike those of the other parties whose websites were more information-oriented.

The South West had the highest number of candidates with individual websites (17), reflecting the fact that it elects a higher number of MEPs. Yorkshire and Humberside, the East Midlands, the West Midlands and the North West also saw candidates use individual websites (15, 15, 15 and 14 respectively); these were the areas where the BNP had a heavy electoral presence on- and offline. The North East was the region in England with the fewest candidates using independent websites (three); Scotland had nine and Northern Ireland had none. Wales had 14.

Prospective MEPs were more active than sitting MEPs in terms of their use of online campaigns in general, as Table 1, below, demonstrates. While most parties used Facebook, the BNP relied almost exclusively on referrals from the website 'digg.com' to link to online discussions on partisan websites, as well as to YouTube clips, although nine BNP candidates had a page on Facebook and three blogged during the elections.

Table 1 (below) gives a snapshot of styles of online campaign run by candidates across the main parties, including individual websites and profiles on party websites. Note that the number of candidates per party exceeds 69 in some cases because a number of incumbents were standing down in the election, but had an online presence.

Table 1: Website use by sitting MEPs and Prospective MEPs (PMEPs)

Party	Candidates		Online interaction		Blogging		Facebook Page		Facebook Group	
	MEP	PMEP	MEP	PMEP	MEP	PMEP	MEP	PMEP	MEP	PMEP
CON	28	51	2	8	2	9	7	21	3	12
LAB	20	54	1	2	2	5	11	22	1	6
LD	11	60	1	3	3	6	6	25	1	1
GRN	2	67	-	8	-	11	2	16	1	8
UKIP	9	63	-	4	1	5	2	17	1	8
BNP	-	69	-	2	-	3	-	9	-	-
Total	70	364	4	27	8	39	28	110	7	35

The 2009 elections to the European Parliament suggest that, whilst party websites were important, it was the websites and social media pages of individual candidates that were most prominent. It was also the case that incumbent MEPs appear to have been less digitally active than prospective candidates. This election also saw the emergence of a more prominent civil-society led campaigning side as an attempt to mitigate any potential far right vote.

AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

This part of the report is divided into four sections. The first highlights how the proliferation of mobile phone technologies in developing and advanced democracies has enabled citizen-led campaigns to flourish – in some cases inspiring wealthy parties to emulate their digital strategies during elections – with the internet playing host to their messages and images. The second focuses on the use of party-led digital campaigns in contexts where there is little internet proliferation. The third develops several case studies, featuring countries that are beginning to develop regulatory responses to online campaigns. The final section of the report reflects on the findings of the first three sections in the context of the current regulatory environment. In conclusion we offer insights into the strengths and drawbacks of different statutory approaches in a context in which online campaigns are becoming more viral and less centralised.

Mobilising Support: Citizen-Led Digital Campaigns in Developing Democracies

Dominant, state-sanctioned narratives can be challenged by opinion leaders who switch ‘channels’ of communication

The extent to which citizen-led campaigns attract interest and support depends to a large extent on the media interest generated – a lesson learnt during the 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine.⁶² Several countries have since seen citizen-led campaigns being picked up and amplified by the media (for example, Burma, Moldova, Kenya, Zimbabwe and, most recently, Iran). With the emergence of social networks (e.g., Facebook), video-sharing websites (e.g., YouTube), photo-sharing websites (e.g., Flickr), and micro-blogging websites (e.g., Twitter) and mobile phone technologies that enable citizens to submit information to these platforms, digital strategies have become increasingly potent. In repressive regimes, citizen activists are often forced to bypass government-imposed controls restricting internet access and media reporting: new technologies enable them to do so.

Even when citizen initiatives do not attract such high-profile attention, they highlight the way that digital communication is coming into play in electoral contexts. In India, for example, non-partisan websites were set up during the 2008 election containing information about the different parties and candidates: these were designed to encourage digitally connected young people to vote, and to provide poor parties with an online platform. Meanwhile, the All India People’s Manifesto was published online to promote a human rights agenda to all political parties: it highlighted the needs of the country’s poorest communities and proposed solutions

via a manifesto.⁶³ VoteReport, meanwhile, was set up to monitor electoral violence. Similar monitoring initiatives were used in recent elections in Angola, Kenya and Zimbabwe: citizen activists used mobile phones to report on electoral processes and abuses. Dedicated websites were set up in each country to display information sent in by text - or picture - message, pinpointing where violence or intimidation had occurred. These websites were established, not only to protect fellow citizens and support grassroots activism, but also to alert the world to the electoral situation, providing the focus for calls to action.

Similarly, Iranian citizens spread messages about alleged vote rigging after the 2009 election and organised protests virally, mostly via mobile phones but with Twitter also coming into prominence as a way of disseminating breaking news, information and links to video footage hosted on YouTube. Activists in Iran received considerable help from the international community to help them bypass increasingly stringent state-imposed controls to ensure that their stories were heard.



Iranian activists and opposition candidates were forced to bypass state-imposed controls to protest against alleged vote rigging during the 2009 election.

While these developments may be understood to signify digital revolutions, their salience and relevance can be challenged on three counts:

1. Those using digital forms of communication are generally not representative of the population as a whole, meaning that any grassroots activism emerges among those who are already engaged or have the means with which to become involved.⁶⁴
2. The 'digital revolution' theory fails to consider how the regulatory responses to citizen activism can sometimes lead to more draconian forms of censorship than those that preceded it.
3. Questions have emerged about the extent to which online campaigns are people-led rather than being artificially stimulated as a result of high levels of interest from citizen journalists and traditional media.⁶⁵

However, the proliferation of sophisticated mobile phone technologies has provided resource-poor parties, groups and individuals around the world with a means of launching digital campaigns. In the Philippines, for example, electoral challengers used low-cost mobile phone tools in the 2007 elections.⁶⁶ The use of mobile phone based campaigns is not limited to developing democracies. Where citizen-led mobile phone campaigns have proven popular in advanced democracies, political parties have been quick to follow: in Spain, for example, political parties used text messaging strategies in the 2008 elections, inspired by the citizen rallies organised using mobile phones after the Madrid train bombing in 2004.⁶⁷

Top-Down Strategies in Contexts of Low-Proliferation

Even in those countries where internet proliferation is low, the use of mobile phones is becoming increasingly commonplace. This explains why in India's first 'digital election' to the Lok Sabha in 2008, the wealthy Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ran a text messaging campaign during which 1 billion messages were sent out (there are 370 million mobile subscribers in India, compared to 45 million internet users) and internet kiosks were set up around the country so that those without internet access could download material onto their mobile phones and distribute it to their friends.⁶⁸ The BJP also launched internet marketing campaigns via social networks, paying for search engine optimisation – the process of improving ranking in search engine results – throughout the election. While the Indian National Congress (INC) was slower to develop its digital strategy, its message and content resonated more strongly with the popular vote.



The ANC had 8,517 subscribers to its official website page and 25 Facebook groups. The ANC, COPE and the DA used Twitter to launch public debates and connect with constituents.

South Africa was the first country on the African continent to have any party-based online campaigning during its 2009 elections. Given the low levels of internet proliferation there (estimated at around 10% of the population), it is worth noting that those who have internet

access in South Africa are representative of a particular demographic (i.e., white English speakers), who are also more likely to vote for the Democratic Alliance (DA), the main opposition party to the ruling African National Congress (ANC).⁶⁹ Despite this, all three parties – including the newly formed Congress of the People (COPE), composed of former ANC activists – developed a web presence.

The digital strategies of the main parties relied on mobile phone compatible platforms: ANC and the DA hosted debates with citizens about policy on Twitter. Perhaps reflecting the availability of the internet to its supporters, the DA had the most Facebook subscribers and, according to search-ranking tool Google Trends, was the most searched for party on the internet. However, South African internet users in general were more interested in reading about sport than politics – the number of searches for Indian Premier League cricket (which had transferred to South Africa amidst security alerts following the bombings in Mumbai) was higher than the count for all parties, combined.⁷⁰

These examples have a mirror in the UK too; where digital media has only low levels of penetration its value lies in the connected intermediaries who can then disseminate content to the disconnected. In a UK context, tools such as Twitter in effect act in exactly the same way: Twitter is an effective tool to communicate with the media-savvy, politically active, high-use digital native but it is ineffectual as a tool for direct communications with votes. The ‘twitterati’ become mediators, particularly when those recipients are also journalists or popular bloggers.

Online Campaigning Styles and Regulatory Issues in Advanced Democracies

As the following seven case studies show, approaches to internet and electoral regulation around the world reflect contextual specificities. For example, Japanese law restricts politicians’ use of websites during polls in case it will advantage the opposition parties unfairly: they have embraced the internet while the party that has governed for most of the last four decades tends to ignore it.⁷¹ Korean legislation actively encourages online campaigning but seeks to limit the ability of citizens to discredit politicians using the internet.⁷²

The case studies were selected to illustrate the various regulatory responses to digital campaigning in advanced democracies with high levels of internet proliferation. These will help to place the UK electoral landscape in context, as it has a similarly high proportion of the population with access to online forms of communication. As Table 2 shows, levels of internet adoption in the countries chosen are all relatively high.

Table 2: Broadband subscribers per 100 inhabitants (December 2008)⁷³

Country	OECD Ranking	Subscribers per 100 inhabitants
Korea	6	32
Canada	10	29
United Kingdom	11	29
France	13	28
United States	15	26
Australia	16	25
Japan	17	24
New Zealand	18	22
<i>OECD Average</i>	-	22

The case studies below are arranged in order of the countries approximate similarity to the UK culturally, historically and in terms of their parliamentary/governmental systems and democratic landscape.

Canada

Canada is in many ways similar to the UK in that it has a Westminster-style parliament and uses the same electoral system (First-Past-The-Post) to elect members to the House of Commons (lower house). Members of the upper house (Senate) are appointed by the Governor General (based on nominations from the political parties represented in the House of Commons) normally for a term of five years.

Campaigning Styles

Although most political parties developed websites during the 2000 Federal Parliamentary Election (dubbed Canada's 'first internet election'), opposition and fringe parties were the first to pioneer innovative, localised strategies: their governing counterparts tended to run more centralised campaigns.⁷⁴

By 2004, the internet was better integrated into the campaigns of political parties, albeit that a lot of focus was on email and communication was top-down in nature.⁷⁵ In the 2008 election, there was more online campaigning than ever before: all parties had channels on YouTube for example, with their content attracting varying degrees of controversy. The New Democratic Party (NDP) stood out because its 'e-campaigner' website encouraged citizen-led initiatives – albeit that the tool emerged late in the election process and was limited in its functionality, relying on party activists to kick-start its use.

Given that local candidates often only have relatively small state-funded budgets (but still the equivalent of between £30,000 to £60,000, which is significantly larger than in the UK) with which to campaign, political parties are coming under increasing pressure to co-ordinate online campaigns (or at least provide highly interactive templates that can be used by local candidates). Candidates also receive reimbursements on eligible election expenses of up to

60% so long as they have received at least 10% of the vote. The need for parties to develop an online campaign strategy is all the more pressing because of the popularity of the internet in Canada, where approximately 80% of the population go online regularly and use social networks, such as Facebook.

Regulatory Issues

Regulatory regimes were first put in place by the Elections Expenses Act 1974 (EEA) to tackle inequalities between political parties; campaign finance laws were modified in 2004, after the 'fourth party system' had become embedded to ensure fairness. By imposing spending limits on campaigns and introducing state funding for political parties, and the allocation of free broadcast slots during elections, the EEA sought to bring to an end the situation that saw ruling parties capitalising on their connections with media outlets and financial backers.

Subsequent amendments have aimed to tackle alliances between parties and advertising companies hoping to secure lucrative contracts from elected government.⁷⁶ In addition, they have sought to regulate third-party spending following the 1988 election, which saw pro-free trade campaigners outspending anti-free trade campaigners by four to one, and subsequent campaigns during which anti-abortion campaigners threatened to outspend candidates in particular districts.⁷⁷ As a result of these changes, election periods in Canada are short, spanning five weeks. Online campaigns are usually established in advance of the electoral period to allow for a build up of support for political parties: this online activity is difficult to regulate.⁷⁸

The only regulatory issue relating to the internet in campaigning contexts concerns the publication of results in eastern provinces and territories while the more western ones are still voting due to the numerous time-zones that span Canada. All traditional media outlets have to respect the law regarding publication of results to ensure that the elections on the west coast are not compromised, but an internet activist tried to challenge the legislation, claiming that it limited his right to free speech. As a result of his unsuccessful bid, the High Court has extended the legislation to apply to the internet.

New Zealand

New Zealand has had a unicameral Parliament, the House of Representative, since the upper house (the Legislative Council) was abolished in 1951. It uses a voting system known as Mixed Member Proportional (MMP), where half of MPs are elected in a constituency and half from a party list based on that party's share of the vote (therefore, the public gets two votes, one for a candidate and one for a party). In a variation unique to New Zealand amongst the examples included here, electorate MPs are elected from two geographically overlapping electoral rolls, the General Roll and the Maori Roll.

Campaigning Styles

Since the internet was first introduced in campaigning contexts in the late 1990s, it was mostly used by political parties to produce corporate websites, providing information about their work

and details of their political beliefs. In the 2005 general election, some candidates began to use YouTube, Flickr and Facebook with fewer producing interactive blogs: all used party templates, however. Similar patterns were found in the 2008 general election. In both elections, citizens spread messages virally: however, the Electoral Finance Act 2007 (EFA) (which has subsequently been repealed; see below), limited the extent to which they could do so.

Regulatory Issues

The EFA was introduced to tighten election spending by political parties and limit third-party activity during elections. This followed controversy surrounding the 2005 general election, during which there were allegations of breaches in electoral spending rules by the Labour Party, anonymous donations to the National Party and misuse of parliamentary funding by the Progressive Party. More notoriously, a negative campaign targeting the Green Party and Labour Party saw leaflets being mailed to citizens' homes: the Exclusive Brethren Church, who produced the leaflets, published them anonymously, displaying only the names of individuals and a post-office box address. There were allegations that Exclusive Brethren Church members were acting in support of the National Party.

The EFA was introduced by the former-Labour-led coalition government despite opposition from other political parties, including the National Party, which is now the lead coalition partner, and in the face of criticism from public bodies, such as the Human Rights Commission, the Law Society and from citizens. A high-profile campaign emerged to counter the legislation,⁷⁹ with the *Dominion Post* newspaper carrying several columns opposing it.

The EFA extended from three months to 10 months (in a cycle of three years) the period during which regulations applied. During this time, the use of campaign material (which was reclassified to include t-shirts, emails and YouTube videos alongside traditional items, such as billboards, pamphlets, broadcast and press advertising) could be monitored. The new legislation required that all political advertising, whether published online or offline, carry an authorisation message and the name and address of the producer. The law exempted:

the publication by an individual on a non-commercial basis, on the internet of his or her personal political views (being the kind of publication commonly known as a blog). EFA 2007, §5(2)(g).

All political advertising is banned on polling day, which means that billboards and posters must be taken down and campaign websites taken offline (or material removed). In addition, the law stipulated that individuals were required to register with the state as a third-party if they spent more than NZ\$1,000 [£425] over the election year campaigning against a local candidate, or more than NZ\$12,000 [£5,000] on advertising relating to an election. Registered third parties were permitted to spend up to NZ\$120,000 [£50,000] during an election (under half of the amount recommended by the New Zealand Electoral Commission). Non-sitting candidates

could only spend NZ\$20,000 [£8,500], while incumbent MPs could spend three times as much (drawing on state funding).

In the run-up to the 2008 general election, the New Zealand Electoral Commission requested that a citizen campaigner shut his 'dontvotelabour.org.nz' website down because it was in contravention of the EFA. Its author, a pro-life activist, did not want to display his name and address on the website and eventually redefined it as a 'blog' to exploit ambiguities in the EFA.⁸⁰ Meanwhile, adverts protesting against polytechnic funding cuts were withdrawn because their producer – a local mayor – was required to register as a third-party; campaigners feared that newspapers challenging government legislation on other matters would be forced to register as third parties in the run-up to elections.⁸¹

Revision of Legislation Post-Election

Our research took place around the time of the 2008 general election and foregoing discussion reflects this. However, in light of the cases discussed above and due to the scale of political and public opposition to the EFA it was repealed in February 2009. Some of its regulations, particularly around donations to political parties and candidates, have been maintained through the Electoral Amendment Act 2009, which also amends the Electoral Act 1993 and delivers on the new National Party-led Government's election promise to repeal the EFA. Provisions from the Electoral Act 1993 governing electoral finance have been reinstated, although, as mentioned, regulations from the EFA regarding donations remain in force. More significantly, the electoral period has returned to three months (the EFA extended this to one year). The Electoral Amendment Act 2009 introduces less stringent regulation of third parties but regulates political advertising beyond the formal election period with regard to rules around authorisation and the identification of this on published material.⁸²

The Act restricts anonymous and overseas donations to NZ\$1,000 [£425] and donations above this amount, less the permissible NZ\$1,000 are forfeit to a Crown account (§207.I). Where the EFA explicitly mentioned digital content, the new Act does not, citing only:

- advertising of any kind; or
- (ii) radio or television broadcasting; or
- (iii) publishing, issuing, distributing, or displaying addresses, notices, posters, pamphlets, handbills, billboards, and cards. (§205)

Of particular relevance for online content, the Act makes explicit reference to voluntary, donated or discounted time and materials and the rules for their inclusion in the calculation of election expenses being based upon:

- the reasonable market value of any materials applied in respect of any election activity that are given to the candidate or that are provided to the candidate free of charge or below reasonable market value (§205.B)

Australia

The Federal (or Commonwealth) Parliament is bicameral and largely based on the Westminster model but with more recent influences from the US Congressional system. There are two houses, the House of Representatives (lower house) and Senate (upper house). Australia differs from the other case studies in that it has compulsory voting. It uses a system of preferential voting (also known as instant-runoff voting) for the lower house and a choice of preferential or proportional voting for the Senate.

Campaigning Styles

While the internet has been used in Australian elections since 1996, interest was – until recently – driven by opposition parties which pioneered increasingly sophisticated interactive and multi-media websites.⁸³

During the Australian 2007 Federal Election, however, candidates from all parties harnessed the social networking and video-sharing capacities of the internet.⁸⁴ Their web strategies were not confined to the immediate electoral period (33 days): the Australian Labor Party's 'Kevin07' website, for example, was launched several months beforehand, incorporating tools such as Flickr, Twitter and YouTube.⁸⁵ Since his election as Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd has continued to use his online presence to keep voters aware of political developments.

The digital strategies of mainstream political parties attracted (some critical) media interest; spoof websites and video-clips emerged to parody some of the candidates' online campaign styles. The election also saw the use of third-party websites, such as 'GetUp' (the Australian equivalent of US website 'MoveOn.org', which provides a vehicle for ordinary people to organise and join campaigns online). These were used to highlight single-issue campaigns and raise money for political candidates.⁸⁶

The internet 'arms race' of political parties was also a source of media commentary. One account from the 2007 election suggested that some campaigns spent up to 40% of their budgets on online advertising in the run-up to the election.⁸⁷ Another, conflicting account suggested that 10% of campaign money was spent on internet campaigns, with 60% on television broadcasts, 10% on pamphlets, 10% on radio advertorials and the remainder on billboard posters.⁸⁸ Despite this expenditure, the online initiatives of political parties appealed mainly to those who were already engaged with only a small rise in political activism occurring as a result of digital campaigns.⁸⁹

Regulatory Issues

The Federal Government has proposed legislation extending to the internet the provisions of the [Commonwealth] Electoral Act 1985. This ensures that publishers of websites produced in support of a particular candidate (or to challenge another political party) are named in the same way as those producing printed campaign material. Meanwhile, the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) has come under pressure to close a loophole in existing legislation that enables political parties to publish adverts online in the immediate run-up to elections (i.e., the

three days before the polls, during which paid-for printed and broadcast advertising is technically banned), although this will not help them to tackle campaigns spread virally by supporters.

At present, restrictions on general online activity – such as anti-spam legislation introduced in 2004 – do not apply to candidates in elections.⁹⁰ The government has also begun to develop legislation to regulate any form of detrimental or harmful online content, but it is not clear how much they will apply this to negative campaigning during an election.⁹¹

United States

The US has a bicameral Congress, consisting of the lower House of Representatives and the upper Senate. The President, as head of state, is elected separately for a four-year term. Whilst the US uses a First-Past-The-Post voting system (referred to in the US as 'direct election'), it also introduces the concept of pre-election primaries in which presidential candidates are selected by registered voters and the allocation of those votes via an electoral college.

Campaigning Styles

It was in the 1998 mid-term elections to Congress that the internet first became significant in electoral contexts: while many candidates had static websites, Jesse Ventura – the Gubernatorial candidate for Reform Party of Minnesota – went one step further, sending emails to (potential) supporters. During the 2000 presidential elections, John McCain – the then Republican candidate – used the internet to raise funds. By the 2004 presidential election, online political activism was well established. The Republican Party's campaign, run by Karl Rove with candidates George Bush and Dick Cheney, sought to replicate the strategies adopted by left-leaning websites (such as MoveOn.org, described earlier). Their website enabled supporters to organise fundraising house parties, meet-ups and to write to the press. Democratic Party candidate, Howard Dean, harnessed the internet to raise funds and mobilise offline campaigns; his strategy was to transform individual supporters 'into one-person miniature campaign-organizations'.⁹²

The 2004 presidential election was the first one in which candidate websites offered interactive features.⁹³ Their fundamental aim was to create a sense of community around each candidate.⁹⁴ Supporters were encouraged to become proactive, to spread messages and engage in campaigns both for and against particular candidates. Similar strategies were used in the 2006 mid-term elections, during which supporters of Democratic candidate, Jim Webb, used YouTube to circulate video clips of his Republican rival, George Allen, who had made racist slurs.⁹⁵ Note that Allen was the incumbent, which would normally be expected to offer significant advantages in terms of public exposure and awareness.

All candidates in the presidential primaries in 2008 invested heavily in online strategies, using multi-media formats to promote their campaigns; Democratic Party rivals, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, announced their candidacies in the presidential primary online. Once the campaigns were up and running, they used a range of strategies from internet advertising to

using Facebook and YouTube to encourage citizens to organise on their behalf. It is claimed that Obama spent some \$16 million [£9.7 million] on online advertising, in comparison the Republican Party candidate, John McCain, spent \$3.6 million [£2.2 million]. Obama's Facebook advertising campaign is reported to have cost in excess of \$600,000 [£365,000], and tens of thousands of dollars were spent on advertisements on gaming websites and within the video games themselves.⁹⁶ This expenditure remained, however, a small proportion of that spent on broadcast advertising and a fraction of the overall campaign expenditure, matching the amount spent on research and polling.

During the 2008 campaign, the amount that the Obama campaign spent online slightly exceeded the amount that it spent on direct mail.⁹⁷

McCain is reported to have spent more on online advertising early in his campaign; Mitt Romney, his Republican Party rival, spent more on TV advertising. Interestingly, the amount spent on advertising did not necessarily translate into more web traffic for candidates: Clinton spent less and attracted more unique visitors to her website than other candidates - except Barack Obama - in the Democratic primaries.⁹⁸



The 2008 Presidential elections saw internet campaigning growing not only as the internet became more entrenched in society but as the options for online campaigning themselves expanded. This saw record small donations recorded on the basis of online campaigns that encouraged offline activism.

As in the 2004 elections, much of the online activity in 2008 was geared towards engendering offline activism, from house parties to canvassing. While the strategies used during the election were similar to those deployed in 2004, the online campaign of Obama was widely reported as being the most sophisticated yet in the international media.⁹⁹ Newspaper reports picked up on online discussions about the Presidential campaign: these praised the targeted strategy of

Obama's team, which used segmentation approaches to provide niche marketing to specific states and demographics.

Online campaigns in the 2008 elections were reported to have attracted unprecedented revenues from small donors; this was attributed to an 'internet effect', even though online campaigns had been used in previous elections with fewer funds raised. Obama in particular was thought to have encouraged repeat donors to make contributions online and offline over the lengthy campaign period. The medium-sized revenues thereby generated, combined with larger sums donated by corporate and individual supporters using conventional methods, were possibly more important than is often realised.¹⁰⁰ Obama was able to run without state funding meaning that his campaign spending could, in theory, have been exempt from scrutiny: despite this, and in spite of the fact that his smaller donations were within the limits set out by the Federal Election Commission (FEC), he submitted detailed accounts of his campaign expenditure and revenue.¹⁰¹ At the time of writing this report, it is unclear whether there will be any new legislation tightening up the regulation of self-financed campaigns (or those bankrolled by private donations).

Regulatory Issues

The Federal Election Commission (FEC) has been asked to clarify the rules about whether and how websites run by citizens should be registered during the elections. In this context, the FEC's main concern is to ensure that money spent by campaigns is declared (although a hypothetical third-party blogger does not necessarily need to disclose their revenue).¹⁰²

Spending on email communication does not currently need to be included in disclosures; there are fears that this approach will open up a loophole that will see wealthy donors being able to sponsor online campaigns that will, in effect, result in citizens receiving spam emails in support of candidates.

France

France has a bicameral parliament consisting of the lower Assemblée Nationale and the upper Sénat. This case study deals only with the separate presidential election, which occurs every five years and uses a two-round voting system (ballotage), where votes are cast for a single candidate and, if no candidate receives an absolute majority, the two candidates who received the most votes go forward to a second round.

Campaigning Styles

The Front National was the first party to produce a campaigning website, with other parties following suit by 2001. By the 2002 presidential election – by which time 30% of the population was using the internet – most parties had an online presence but these offered little more than 'electronic brochures' with sign-up facilities.¹⁰³ The use of new technologies failed to boost electoral participation, with Jean-Marie Le Pen – the Front National presidential candidate – progressing as far as the final run-off against Chirac, because of low voter turnout.

Web strategies became more sophisticated in 2005 during the referendum on the European Treaty, by which time around 45% of the public had regular internet access and a plethora of political blogs had emerged.¹⁰⁴ While mainstream media outlets (and mainstream political parties) supported the Treaty, internet activists opposed it.¹⁰⁵ The results of the referendum – 55% of the public voted against the Treaty – led to speculation about the power of the internet, leading to a redoubled attempt on the part of presidential candidates to harness it during the 2007 elections.¹⁰⁶

By 2007, the majority of the population had access to the internet; France also secured the reputation of being a country with one of the highest number of bloggers per capita in the world. The online campaigns that emerged during the presidential election reflected the emerging patterns in the blogosphere, emulating the way that constellations of websites emerge around hubs.¹⁰⁷

Already, the Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP) and the Parti Socialiste (PS) had started to use the internet internally – the UMP to enable online registering for congress, the PS to vote for the presidential candidate; both to drive up membership.¹⁰⁸ In so doing, they radically transformed their party membership base and the structure of political organisation from a local to a national nexus;¹⁰⁹ meanwhile, they gave members a voice – even if they had not previously been involved in the party.¹¹⁰

Nicolas Sarkozy’s (the UMP presidential candidate) campaign became known for its ability to appeal to particular demographics (young people, women). Overall, he adopted a top-down approach to online campaigning, streaming video content to audiences – dubbed SarkoTV.¹¹¹ However, as Table 3 (below) highlights, Royal spent the most on her internet campaign (€866,220 – over 4% of her budget), investing more than twice the amount spent by Jacques Chirac, who won the presidential election in 2002. Her strategy emulated the grassroots style of social networks such as Facebook; there is some speculation, however, that her dispersed leadership style ultimately failed because it made her seem weak and indecisive.¹¹²

Table 3: Top Four Spenders in online campaigns - 2002 and 2007 French Elections¹¹³

Candidate	Internet budget	Total campaign Budget	Internet as %age of total campaign budget
2007			
Ségolène Royal	€866,220	€20,712,043	4.2%
François Bayrou	€720,510	€9,746,518	7.4%
Nicolas Sarkozy	€675,571	€21,838,093	3.1%
Dominique Voynet	€130,171	€1,436,870	9.1%
2002			
Jacques Chirac	€403,752	€18,007,061	2.24%

Jean-Pierre Chevènement	€402,250	€9,707,003	4.14%
François Bayrou	€368,371	€8,892,487	4.14%
Lionel Jospin	€346,373	€12,519,697	2.77%

Sarkozy spent €675,571 (just over 3% of his budget). Françoise Bayrou of the newly formed Mouvement Démocrate (MD) came third in the election and had the most participatory internet campaign. The Green Party candidate, Dominique Voynet, spent a bigger proportion of her campaign budget online (just over 9%, or €130,171) than did any of the other candidates, in a bid to appeal to online environmental activists.¹¹⁴

It was not just the top four spenders featured in Table 3, above, who used the internet creatively. Olivier Besancenot, candidate for the far-left Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR), used his website to sell campaign products. Front National's Le Pen, meanwhile, spent almost six times as much on his online campaign in 2007 as he did in 2002, investing €29,741 (less than 0.5% of his budget) and €6,518, respectively: he encouraged supporters to spread their message online – especially on discussion forums attached to traditional media outlets.

Of all the candidates, it was the web strategies associated with Sarkozy and Royal that generated the highest level of net activism, however, It is worth noting that generally it would be expected that the major, more high-profile candidates would have the highest budgets and greatest interest.



The UMP Presidential Candidate, Nicolas Sarkozy's website – dubbed 'Sarko-TV' – made use of video clips to provide accessible information to voters. His main opponent from the PS, Ségolène Royal, spent more money on her website, which contained a range of interactive features.

Regulatory Issues

Strict limitations have been imposed on the use of general email marketing since 2006. In 2007, Sarkozy's campaign sent out three million emails, costing the party €100,000.¹¹⁵ Dubbed 'Sarkozy-spam' by critics, citizen-led complaints about the campaign were upheld, leading to proposals to limit the use of unsolicited emails in campaigns. UK law on unsolicited electronic messages (spam) is also relatively weak and could be abused in this way since it is based on a 2003 EU directive that allows for unsolicited email on an opt-out basis (contained in the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations), therefore were this to become a problem in UK, similar action could be taken specifically relating to campaign-based emails. Other legislative restrictions on online campaigning concerned the use of search engine optimisation: in 2005, the UMP bought up domain names which map the key words citizens might use in a search engine – a practice which has subsequently been outlawed.¹¹⁶ This practice is feasible in the UK where, although strict regulations exist with regard to cyber-squatting, legitimate domain names are allocated on a first-come first-served basis.

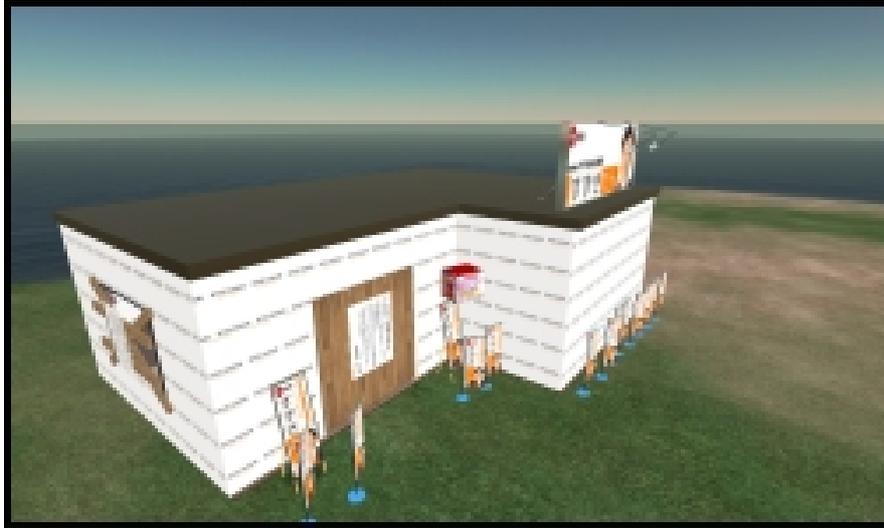
French law prohibits party advertising only on the day of the election. From midnight Saturday (since polling occurs on a Sunday) campaigning is heavily regulated such that neutrality is ensured. This ensures that no debates or online fora can occur on official party or candidate websites and the media also avoids discussion of opinion polling until after the polls close. However, this regulation does not extend to internet-based discussion amongst citizens or for citizen-led campaigning to take place (and it is difficult to imagine how, practically, such a restriction could be policed). In the French context, it is anticipated that civil society-led campaigning will become more significant in the future and there is an indication that it could be used for negative campaigning as much as to promote a candidate.

Japan

The Diet is bicameral and made up of a lower house, the House of Representatives (Shugi-in), and an upper house, the House of Councilors (Sangi-in). The lower house uses a voting system known as Mixed Member Majoritarian (MMM), which lacks the proportionality component of the New Zealand (MMP) system and has been seen as a factor leading to the traditional dominance of a single party (and now, for the time being at least, two parties).

Campaigning Styles

There is little to no online campaigning in Japan by candidates during electoral periods, due to the Public Office Election Law (POEL) that prohibits it (see below). Despite regulations under POEL, citizens have begun to spread videos of candidates' speeches.¹¹⁷ Others have found loopholes in existing legislation (which regulates only text- or image-based communications) allowing them to use podcasts. Opposition politicians are deploying new tactics to head off the ban; in the 2007 elections, the Second Life office of Kan Suzuki was closed down.¹¹⁸ Rather than removing the office from the internet, it remained in full view; the door was boarded up with a message for supporters that read:



Notice of temporary closure

According to Public Office Election Law, the office has been temporarily closed as the House of Councilors election was notified. The office will reopen when the election is over.

If campaigning through internet is allowed, we will be able to be engaged in campaigning activities in SL to the full extent. However, it is impossible to do so under the present law. It is regrettable.

Let's foster a movement for removal of ban on internet campaigning with full-scale efforts of net users in order to have the opinion of the netizens in Japan more reflected in politics.

“Stand up, netizens!”

Member of the House of Councilors, Kan Suzuki¹¹⁹

Regulatory Issues

As mentioned above, elections in Japan are heavily regulated: candidates are allowed to produce a set number of pamphlets and leaflets during elections. The legislation under POEL, drawn up more than 50 years ago, refers only to paper-based campaign materials; it has recently been extended to state that web pages cannot be created or updated during the official period of campaigning for elections; e-list newsletters may not be circulated by candidates or political parties; and third-party websites cannot be developed.¹²⁰

Restrictions on online campaigning are claimed to be justified on the basis of the digital divide: the internet is seen to exacerbate existing inequalities; the elderly and those living in rural areas are said to be digitally excluded in Japan, where 60% of the population is estimated to have internet access. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has blocked any attempts to change the legislation: some suggest this is because its main constituents are those who are least likely to go online, although it claims that it is simply seeking to prevent election costs from spiralling.¹²¹ An expert in Japanese constitutional law, Ohta Takaaki, observes:

It is hard to suppose that the total cost of internet electioneering exceeds that of conventional electioneering. For example, the legal expenses of an election campaign in Japan come to an average of ¥23,800,000 [£160,000] in the single-seat constituency of the Lower House and to ¥52,000,000 [£345,000] in the proportional representation constituency of the Upper House. At the same time, the cost of launching and operating an electioneering website in the US has been calculated at a minimum of \$15,000 [£9,000] in a statewide election and \$25,000 [£15,000] in a federal election. Besides, given that our information society will progress further, the cost-effectiveness of internet electioneering will likely increase in the future.¹²²

It is unclear how keen for change other political parties are. Potential donors are prohibited from using credit cards online, so some see little point in developing internet campaigns.

Developments Since the Last Election

The LDP has recently lost control of the Japanese Parliament for only the second time in modern history (they had governed for all but 11 months since 1955), with the recent election victory of the DPJ. It is too early to see if this will make any difference to campaign regulations (on and offline) and whether a win of a near-permanent opposition party will change the democratic culture of what has previously been virtually a single-party state, however, the significance of their majority in Japan's lower house and pro-reform agenda suggests that change is possible. Even if this is the case, Japan's electoral system is biased strongly in favour of the strong parties (it is debateable as to whether it will support even a dual-party system in the medium to long term), meaning that smaller parties are highly unlikely to gain future electoral success.

South Korea

The South Korean National Assembly is a single house with 245 of the 299 members representing constituencies and a further 54 members elected by proportional representation based on a share of the votes by party (with a threshold of 3% of votes cast and at least five elected members of the National Assembly). South Korea has an elected head of state (President), who is elected for a five-year term in a First-Past-The-Post vote. Unlike Japan, South Korea is a vibrant multi-party democracy with five major and a number of smaller political parties. This case study focuses on the presidential election campaigns.

Campaigning Styles

With internet penetration estimated to be above 70%, South Korea has a relatively long and active history of online campaigning. Millennium Democratic Party candidate, Roh Moo-hyun's election as President in 2002 is attributed in part to his successful use of social networking websites to raise funds and mobilise support offline, engaging an already active online citizenry. By the next presidential election in 2007, online campaigning was well established as a tool for traditional and progressive politicians alike: the conservative Grand National Party, having lost in 2002 and again in parliamentary elections in 2004, began to adopt an internet strategy that would appeal to older voters.

In the 2007 Presidential election, the Grand National Party's candidate, Lee Myung-bak used a top-down approach to online campaigning, streaming video content and producing information for his supporters. Interest in Lee's website may have been driven, in part, by embezzlement charges against him, which were dropped around the time of the election.¹²³ The strict regulatory environment prevented political opposition from capitalising on the scandal.¹²⁴

Regulatory Issues

The Public Official Election Act 2004 (POEA) bans publication of any material implying support for, or disapproval of, a candidate in the 180 days leading up to an election. Restricted are all communications, including the publication of opinion polls, news articles and the posting of personal opinion on bulletin boards.¹²⁵ Candidates are limited in terms of the amount they are able to spend in elections, and the polling season is kept relatively short.¹²⁶ The use of broadcast advertising is banned; direct mail is limited; brochures must be posted by local party organisations, and posters hung by election officials.

South Korean electoral law also limits the ways in which individual citizens can participate in elections online: they can visit candidate websites but not post comments that are deemed negative. The strict controls reflect a national concern with the sometime hostile behaviour of internet users in everyday contexts: citizen journalists often hold public figures to account online.¹²⁷ One of the justifications for POEA's approach was to ensure that unsubstantiated opinion circulating on the internet did not swing public opinion too far in favour of or against a candidate.¹²⁸

Summary

The seven countries described above (and the others referred to earlier) not only present different democratic environments and different cultural settings but also different regulatory approaches to campaigning (and to campaigning online). They all provide some illumination of issues (real and potential) that affect online campaigning in the UK. The internet is a relatively new arrival on the campaigning landscape and it is still too early to tell what normative arrangements are being made in many countries to manage it. However, what this summary shows is that there are consistent efforts to ensure that monitoring and regulation of formal campaigning by registered political parties and candidates is expanded to include the online. It also shows that there is an increasingly blurred and difficult to manage intersect between formal campaigning and the activities of third-parties. Whilst New Zealand has made attempts to more formally regulate third-party political activity, this appears to have been largely unsuccessful. France also acts as a case in point, showing that strict regulation of formal parties ignores the increasing reality of unofficial, citizen-led campaigning which remains almost entirely outside the control of regulators.

We have seen in the examples above that the internet has certainly become a 'business as usual' tool for campaigning. Its impact, however, is varied. In two of the examples above,

France and the US, the internet's role stands out as more significant but in both cases electors are voting for a candidate – an individual – not simply for a party. Although inherent party loyalties are a factor, the individual campaign can by its nature be more personal and engaging than a straight party-led one. The Australian Labor Party went some way towards bridging this gap, showing that a party leader's personality and popularity can be used to drive an election campaign, including the online component, even though the system is party, rather than candidate, focused.

The above examples suggest that there are inherent difficulties for anyone attempting to regulate autonomous and informal citizen-groupings within the formal context of an election. As the New Zealand experience has shown, attempting to cover all possibilities risks appearing draconian and undemocratic and is, therefore, doomed not only to failure but to ridicule. There is also a point to be made in the latter two examples, Japan and South Korea, whereby it can be seen that an inherent intent to maintain a political status quo can lead to what appears to be excessive and oppressive regulation which stifles democratic discourses.

REGULATORY CONTEXT AND THE NEED FOR CHANGE

Online does change offline. But does it require additional regulation or control? Our conclusion is largely 'no' and that existing regulations are sufficient to incorporate the sensible regulation of online campaigning so long as better explanations are produced as to what is expected in this context. Our analysis of regulations in other countries suggests that many of the measures taken to regulate the use of the internet tend to be drastic yet ineffectual. In view of this, we support changes in legislation introduced under the Political Parties and Elections Act (2009) that enable tracking of spending on online campaigning during the 'long campaign', the period immediately prior to the dissolution of Parliament.

We suggest that candidates and parties need clearer guidelines on the ways they use and report their use of digital media. It is particularly important that new and emergent issues related to online campaigning are better articulated, as well as clarifying how these need to be managed in the context of current regulations. Again, better guidance is the key to ensuring that the use of the internet and digital media falls within existing regulations, which largely implicitly capture most issues relating to digital campaigning. Two points where this is not the case include the use of imprints on websites (which are excluded, we feel inappropriately) and the points of interconnect between electoral regulations and privacy laws as they relate to bulk email and other electronic communications.

Where we have seen opportunities for the revision of existing legislation in order to improve monitoring and regulation of elections online, these instances are minor and are not deemed to be cost effective given their limited benefit. Any future changes to electoral regulations and the guidelines relating to incumbent regulations need to be more cognisant of the online environment as this will become increasingly pertinent in years to come.

Online donations

The online campaigns of all political parties have a strong focus on supporter mobilisation and awareness-raising during the election. A significant component of this seen in overseas elections has been the use of the internet as a platform to raise small donations and this is reflected in the UK. These funds are subject to the same limits on individual donations and it is important that all candidates and parties are aware of the risks of not properly recording and tracking online donations. When dealing with online donations it is important to put systems in place in order to recognise:

- Multiple donations from the same source to ensure that they do not breach any statutory limits; and
- Donations received online are, as far as is practicable, validated to ensure that the identity of the donor is authentic and to ensure that donations are not accepted from illegal sources.

Spend on online campaigns

Based on the experiences of the US and French presidential election campaigns, the proportion of the overall campaign budget spent on online campaigning varies between 4% and 10%. However, this reflects a basic operational cost during the campaign period, which does not necessarily fully factor in the staff time or expenses incurred by acquiring new IT hardware and software, hiring new media advisers and design agencies outside of the campaign period (even potentially allowing for the requirement for recording expenditure during the 'long campaign' for 2010). Whilst regulations clearly define what costs must be recorded and differentiate clearly between financial, in-kind and voluntary, they do not explicitly deal with digital media and therefore can potentially make it difficult to differentiate between business-as-usual and campaign tools. However, given the time and cost of amending legislation we take the pragmatic view that current regulations will suffice.

The perpetual campaign

We have raised questions about how the use of the internet and digital media can be monitored during the increasingly perpetual campaign. In New Zealand, the Electoral Finance Act 2007 significantly lengthened the 'election period' in a bid to regulate online activity that occurred before an election was triggered. Now reversed, questions have emerged about whether legislation can be used to monitor the uses of online campaigns ahead of elections. In the UK, this question has particular salience given that MPs are only expected to put their websites into stasis if they have been set up through the public funds (and in turn websites funded in this way must be non-partisan) or if the domain identifies them as an MP when during the campaign period they are not. This means that those who have developed their online presence independently can run them during the year, building up a community of supporters who they mobilise during an election period.

Currently, the Political Parties and Election Act 2009 (PPEA) allows for two component parts of the 'regulated period'; the 'short campaign' begins once Parliament is dissolved until the day of the election, and as previously mentioned, the 'long campaign' occurs immediately before this. Although 2010 presents an anomaly of the long campaign regulations coming into force from January 1, 2010, in future years this will cover a one-year period before the election and should therefore be sufficient to record related pre-campaigning expenditure relating to parties. For prospective candidates, the PPEA amends the Representation of the People Act 1983 so that expenses must also be recorded from a point 55 months after the previous

general election until the short campaign commences (at which time they can formally declare themselves a candidate).

Communication

In France explicit campaign restrictions on the use of email lists and search engine optimisation limit the extent to which parties can send unsolicited messages to members of the public or use their financial advantage to achieve web dominance. Given that the main parties are adopting both search engine optimisation and email strategies throughout the year in the UK, it is unclear whether and how such activity might be regulated, or even if this is desirable (which we doubt). Electronic communication is subject to the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Privacy and the Electronic Communications Regulations 2003. The Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) Regulations 2003 state that unsolicited electronic communications are not permitted without prior consent of the recipient.

We are unsure whether electoral regulations permitting the use of the Register of Electors for communications with constituents during the campaign are technically at odds with the Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) Regulations 2003. We believe that better guidance is needed with regard to campaign communication to explicitly state whether electronic communications from parties fall under these regulations.

Imprints

The Representation of the People Act 1983 states that campaign literature should contain information on who is responsible for its production, but this does not extend to websites. This appears anomalous and we consider that campaign websites should state who is responsible for their production and who authorised the content in line with other published materials.

Third parties

During the recent European parliamentary elections, third-party online campaigns were activated, and we can anticipate that they will play a role in the current general election. Given that third parties can exert undue influence on political campaigns, electoral regulators internationally are considering how to manage their online presence during future elections. Lessons from elsewhere suggest that stringent approaches are unpopular (e.g., New Zealand): third-party websites are an important part of the democratic landscape, providing citizens with an interest in the election that political parties often fail to generate. However, third parties are already regulated in terms of reporting and the limits placed on third party spending during election and referendum campaigns.

Better guidance for third parties is needed to include explicit mention of limits and reporting of spend on the internet. These guidelines should also be modified with regard to registration of third parties to explicitly state that online-based third parties fall under current regulations.

CONCLUSION

Styles of online campaigning used by parties, candidates, and citizen activists worldwide vary and need to be contextualised according to democratic context and the local regulatory environment. Digital media seems to be more significant as a campaigning tool in countries where large-scale campaigns can be built around individual political personalities more so than when they are focused on party structures (the US being the obvious example here). Coalescence around a personality-led brand provides a powerful means of mobilising support and raising funds that is lacking in party-oriented democracies. The 'cult of personality' can also powerfully serve to maintain voter interest between elections in contexts where political parties are relatively invisible between elections.¹²⁹

We have seen that internationally there is a perception that the internet is of greater benefit to parties in opposition and it is certainly the case that blogs seem more suited to oppositional politics. However, blogs can clearly be an important emergent campaigning tool for both the ruling parties and for the opposition. The same is true for Twitter, although the immediate and direct nature of this medium suggests that its influence is on a mediating political/digital class, not directly on the voter at large. Despite this and the evidence that the internet is having some effect on political campaigning, our research suggests that it has not, and will not in the foreseeable future, revolutionise political campaigning. Rather, the internet is best seen as an additional channel that will support but potentially enhance existing channels and methods of communication during the campaign.

Despite the strong party tradition in the UK, the internet is being used to create a perpetual campaign. Many representatives developed personality-led strategies to connect with constituents year-round, while candidates mobilised support well ahead of the election. Meanwhile, the Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties have variously developed an online presence to:

- appear (and be) election ready;
- broaden their reach; and
- mobilise supporters.

Online campaigns tend to have a slow build-up: in many of the case studies, political candidates and parties invested time and money in developing digital communication strategies ahead of elections (and in a number of cases, ahead of their parties), building communities of supporters who they could then mobilise during polls. Similar trends have been found in the UK: many candidates and representatives have developed a perpetual online

presence, as have political parties and supporters – harnessed at times of elections, rather than set up specifically for them.

The Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Labour parties each has a unique approach to online campaigning, with the Conservatives using a more traditional advertising and brand management approach, incorporating search engine optimisation and use of ‘keywords’, and the Labour Party developing targeted marketing of niche supporters. Despite the differences between the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat parties, there are common assumptions between them about the role of online campaigning: it is seen less as a way of raising funds than it is viewed as a means of raising awareness and mobilising support. Despite this, party and candidate websites offer visitors an opportunity to donate, should they wish to.

The UK has chosen to learn its lessons from abroad and UK political parties are largely followers not innovators. This reduces risk but is also appropriate given the local political landscape and in a setting where digital is important but unlikely to be result-changing. From a regulatory perspective, the UK is well positioned with sufficient rules in place to manage to the risks of online campaigning whilst not pursuing a course of over-regulation seen in some other countries.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Glossary of Terms

Internet/Mobile Platforms

Social Network	Such as, Facebook: a platform that enables individuals to set up personal profiles and to connect with like-minded individuals on the basis of leisure/political interests. Facebook in particular has become associated with citizen-led campaigning.
Video-Sharing	Such as, YouTube: a platform that enables users to upload and view video-content. In political/electoral contexts, YouTube and similar platforms have become increasingly associated with negative and viral campaigns. It has also been used to launch citizen campaigns.
Photo-Sharing	Such as, Flickr: a platform that enables users to upload and view photographic content. Used in a similar way to YouTube.
Blogging	The production of date-stamped information or commentary, presented in reverse chronological order, which enables site visitors to leave comments or to engage with the author(s). Often used in conjunction with social networks and video-sharing sites in political contexts.
Micro-Blogging	Such as, Twitter: a platform that enables individuals to write messages of 140 characters or less, often containing links to social networking and video-sharing sites. 'Followers' (i.e., those subscribing to a person's Twitter feed) are notified about updates.

Electoral Terms

Third Party	Any organisation, individual or group that campaigns for or against a candidate or political party, incurring costs of up to £500 during a general election in the UK. The amount that can be spent by third parties in other countries varies – as does the requirement that they register with electoral regulators.
Independent website	A website set up by individuals who are broadly supportive of a political party but who do not actively campaign on their behalf. Some independent websites may be considered to be third-party websites during election periods.
PPC	Prospective Parliamentary Candidate.

Appendix B – Suggested Reading

Regulation

Ewing, K and Issacharoff, S (eds), (2006). *Party Funding and Campaign Financing in International Perspective*, Hart Publishing.

Farrar, D., (2008)., 'NZ Government Gags Critics', *Policy*, 24(1), 3-4.

May, B.E., Chen, J.V., & Wen, K., (2004). 'The Difference of Regulatory Models and internet Regulation in the European Union and United States' in *Information and Communications Technology Law*, 13(3), 259-272.

Small, T.A., (2007). 'Canadian Cyberparties: Reflections on internet-Based Campaigning and Party Systems', *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 40, 639-657.

Takaaki, O., (2008). 'Fairness Versus Freedom: Constitutional Implications of internet Electioneering for Japan', *Social Science Japan Journal*, 11(1), 99-115.

Mediation of Politics

Hermes, J., (2006). 'Citizenship in the Age of the internet', in *European Journal of Communication*, 21(3), pp. 295-309.

Miller, D., & Dinan, W., (2007). *A century of Spin*. London, Pluto Press.

Wring, D., (2008). 'Reverse Spin? Brown and the Media', in M. Rush and Giddings, P. (eds) *When Gordon Took the Helm: The Palgrave Review of British Politics 2007-8*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Online Campaigning

Anstead, N., & Chadwick, A., (2009). 'Parties, Elections, Campaigning and the internet: Toward a Comparative Institutional Approach.' *Routledge Handbook of internet Politics*. New York and London, 56-71.

Bentivegna, S., (2006). 'Rethinking Politics in the World of ICTs', in *European Journal of Communication*, 21(2), 331-343

Chen, P., Gibson, R.K., & Geiselhart, K., (2006). 'Electronic Democracy? The Impact of New Communications Technologies on Australian Democracy', *Democratic Audit of Australia Report No. 6*, Canberra, Australia

Gueorguieva, V. (2008). 'Voters, MySpace, and YouTube: The Impact of Alternative Communication Channels on the 2006 Election Cycle and Beyond', in *Social Science Computer Review*, 26(3), pp. 288-300.

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Vaccari, C., (2008). 'From the Air to the Ground: The Internet in the 2004 US Presidential Election', *New Media and Society*, 10(4), 647-665.

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- 3 The findings of a series of MORI polls investigating "Public Trust in Professionals" suggest that newsreaders are a trusted source of information about the untrustworthiness of politicians. They are generally seen as more credible than tabloid press journalists, taking a more significant proportion of the audience share than their print media counterparts. The latest results from this annual poll can be found here: www.ipsos-mori.com/content/polls-07/doctors-still-top-the-poll-as-most-trusted-profess.ashx (retrieved June, 2009).
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- 5 Wring, D., (2008). 'Reverse Spin? Brown and the Media', in M. Rush and Giddings, P. (eds) *When Gordon Took the Helm: The Palgrave Review of British Politics 2007-8*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- 6 Jones, N., (2007). *Trading Information*. London, Methuen.
- 7 Hager, N. (2006). *The hollow men: A study in the politics of deception*. Nelson, NZ, Craig Potton.
- 8 Iyengar, S., & Simon, A.F., (2000). 'New Perspectives and Evidence on Political Communication Campaign Effects', *Annual Review Psychology*, 51, 149-169; Cloonan, M., & Street, J. (1997). 'Politics and popular music: From policing to packaging', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 50, 223-234; Swanson, D. L. (1997). 'The political-media complex at 50: Putting the 1996 Presidential campaign in context', in *American Behavioral Scientist*, 40, 1264-1282; Beck, U., (1994). 'The debate on the "individualization theory" in today's sociology in Germany', in *Sociologie*, 3, 191-200; Luhmann, N. (1975). *Macht [Power]*. Stuttgart, Germany: Enke Verlag.
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- 14 Ewing, K. and Issacharoff, S. (eds), (2006). *Party Funding and Campaign Financing in International Perspective*, Hart Publishing.

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- 16 Gueorguieva, op. cit.
- 17 According to web traffic metrics gathered from Alexa (www.alexa.com), this is certainly true of traffic to the sites of parties with parliamentary representation and their supporters. The British National Party (BNP), however, has consistently higher volumes of web traffic, often ranking within the top 40,000 most visited websites – a position only beaten by the parliamentary parties during the European elections in June, during which the BNP was within the top 10,000 most visited websites visited.
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- 21 Delli Carpini, M. X., (2000). *Gen.com: 'Youth, Civic Engagement, and the New Information Environment'*, *Political Communication* 17, 341–350.
- 22 Jackson, N., (2008). 'MPs and their e-newsletters: winning votes by promoting constituency service', *Journal of Legislative Studies*, 14(4), 488-499.
- 23 Bentivegna, S., (2006). 'Rethinking Politics in the World of ICTs', in *European Journal of Communication*, 21(2), 331-343; Ward, S., Gibson, R. K., & Lusoli, W., (2005) *Parties and the Virtual Campaign: The 2005 Election Online*, Elections, Parties and Opinion Polls (EPOP) Conference, University of Essex.
- 24 Bimber, B., & Davis, R., (2003). *Campaigning Online: The internet in U.S. Elections*, Oxford University Press.
- 25 Blumler & Kavanagh, op. cit.
- 26 Party organisers talk of the need to learn from the US, where the two year election period allows for a feeling of perpetual campaign – not least because as well as having Presidential elections every four years, there are mid-terms every two. But they acknowledge some significant differences between the UK and the US; the latter has an active culture of giving money/campaigning amongst citizens, and has a much longer (two year) run-up to elections (unlike the one month UK election period). And parties exist beyond elections in the UK, whereas they retreat from view in the US beyond campaigns.
- 27 At the moment, there's little information about what the external consultants – agencies like Blue State – are doing for Labour, other than advising on how to build profiles of activism from website visitors. From the interviews, it seems likely that more information about all of this will emerge in January 2010, ahead of the next UK general election.
- 28 This is partly a function of the fact that the Labour Party is in government and, therefore, has better access to the mainstream media than do the other parties.
- 29 These have been formally launched in the past year: Go Fourth is the official campaign site for a fourth Labour Government. Labour Space encourages grassroots activists to launch their own campaigns or bring them to the attention of the party leadership.
- 30 MembersNet has a clear disadvantage: it is closed off to non-members. However, it does allow mass mail-outs – Facebook limits group membership to 5,000. However, Facebook has the added advantage of letting group members discuss matters other than politics; as a result, MembersNet is used less frequently by activists than the party's Facebook channels.
- 31 One MP described how they benefited from online segmentation, which has helped to identify supporters who have particular knowledge and who can offer advice based on their expertise. It has also helped this MP to identify important voter concerns.
- 32 One interviewee mentioned the David Cameron page on Facebook in this regard; it was established by supporters, but the party has struggled to bring it under its control. Its aim has been to create as many electronic touchpoints as possible, and to drive up membership on its

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- various channels (which are advertised online, and promoted via search engine optimisation and the use of pay-per-click to boost visibility): on Facebook, it has over 13,000 supporters; it has over 2,500 followers on Twitter.
- 33 It is a truism commonly expressed by campaigners that people are more easily persuaded when they speak to someone they view as being similar; thus if someone talks positively about a political party to an undecided friend, that friend is more likely to become interested than they would if a stranger knocked on their door.
- 34 All parties rely, to an extent, on the online metrics provided by Google Analytics, YouTube Insight and Hitwise. This is then used to segment audiences or evaluate strategies.
- 35 This has been far from formulaic: the Conservative Party web strategists have innovated (WebCameron represented the first foray into online video by a leader of a political party). Their ability to innovate has, in part, been made easier by the fact that they are in opposition.
- 36 This is the thinking behind LabourSpace, which encourages visitors to set campaign agendas for the Labour Party ahead of the next election, potentially enabling them to inform the next manifesto.
- 37 In a notable example, the blogosphere focused on the role of former LabourList's editor, Derek Draper, in the 'Red Rag' scandal (involving plans to set up a website to 'bait' the Conservative Party), while the mainstream media focused more on the role of Damien McBride, the Special Advisor to the Prime Minister involved in the affair. The emphasis may have been different, but the story about the putative online plans of the Labour Party ran in both spheres for a number of weeks.
- 38 The Conservative Party is experimenting with a tiered membership structure, from friend to donor club member – the large cost of the latter is rewarded by access to the party leadership. The Labour Party is debating such a tiered membership structure, but there is reticence amongst its leadership about the potential alienation of existing members if there is an influx of netizens.
- 39 At present, ConservativeHome is funded by one person who pays the salaries and expenses of the two members of staff and for the running costs of the website. Other third-party sites are either funded through small donations by individuals, or through larger donations by organizations. (The Spectator now owns Labour Home and Labour List is funded by Unity). In addition, some use Message Space – an advertising service – to provide supplementary incomes. Though the technologies are relatively inexpensive, third-party sites are often run by dedicated staff, whose time is either salaried or voluntarily donated, who ensure that there is interesting content and interaction,.
- 40 Vaccari, *op. cit.*
- 41 Many, however, see the data-capture benefits of third-party sites; at the very least, they can identify demographic and attitudinal trends amongst users. There are rumours that the political parties are trying to procure information about the users of third-party sites supporting their opposition.
- 42 It also provides an example of the kinds of data capture deployed by political parties. Signatories are asked to leave contact details and then receive email requests asking them to forward the petition on to their friends.
- 43 Williamson, A. (2010). *Digital Citizens and democratic participation*. London, UK: Hansard Society.
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- 46 An advisory body has been established, with Lynne Featherstone at the helm, to ensure that there is a more coordinated and strategic approach across the party.
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62 Goldstein, J., (2007). 'The Role of Digital Networked Technologies in the Ukrainian Orange Revolution', in Berkman Centre for Internet and Society, *Research Publication 2007-14*. Harvard.

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66 Karan, K., Gimeno, J.D.M., & Tandoc. E., (2008). 'Internet and Social Networking Sites in Election Campaigns: Gabriela Women's Party in Philippines Wins the 2007 Elections,' Conference presentation to *Web 2.0: An International Conference*, Royal Holloway, April 2008.

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68 See: news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/7998457.stm. The kiosks allowed people to download information about the parties, including ring-tones and games.

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- Broadband statistics as at December 2008, www.oecd.org/document/54/0,3343,en_2649_34225_38690102_1_1_1_1,00.html
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- 79 Farrar, D., (2008). 'NZ Government Gags Critics', *Policy*, 24(1), 3-4.
- 80 *The New Zealand Herald*, January 9 2008
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- 83 Young, S., (2003). 'A century of Political Communication in Australia, 1901-2001,' *Journal of Australian Studies*, 78:97-110; Gibson, R. K., & Ward, S.J., (2002). 'Virtual Campaigning: Australian Parties and the Impact of the internet', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 37(10): 99-129.
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- 106 The legislative election, on the other hand, saw much less internet use by candidates: French MPs tend to rely on face-to-face meetings with constituents, rather than campaigning online.
- 107 The tendency for like-minded people to visit opinion-affirming sites can lead – in some cases – to the Balkanisation of the internet (Sunstein, 2001). Clusters form around central hubs of opinion, although, as we shall see later in this report, people do traduce ideological barriers online in ways that are uncommon offline.
- 108 This has resulted in a conflict between old, tried and tested members and new members whose pedigree is so far unknown. In the case of the PS, it was new members who voted for Royal as Presidential candidate, and who left the party after the election (having joined to select the Presidential candidate). This has created tensions for the old party members who tend to be male, older and less educated than the influx of new members.
- 109 Online membership drives in France had mixed results, boosting participation temporarily, but skewing the decision-making of the parties. In the case of the PS, many people joined just to support Royal's candidacy – only to leave the party after the election.
- 110 Barboni, T. & Mermat, D. (2007). 'Le goigt gans l'engrenage: De la réforme des modes d'adhésion partisan avec internet à ses effets organisationnels – Le cas de la campagne d'adhésion «les militants à 20 euros» du Parti Socialiste'. Paper presented at Les Usages Partisans de l'Internet (Partisan Uses of the internet), conference, Nancy, June 2007.
- 111 See: frenchelection2007.blogspot.com/2007/01/sarkozy-nominated.html.
- 112 See discussion in www.epolitics.com/2007/05/21/french-election-shows-the-limits-of-user-generated-content/
- 113 Greffet, F. op. cit: drawing on Journal du Net, July 2002 (accounts from the French Conseil Constitutionnel), and Commission des Comptes de Campagnes and Journal Officiel, July 27, 2007. Note: The figures are those declared to the Commission by the candidates.
- 114 Greffet, F. (2008). 'The Internet, a New Space of Struggle : The Case of French Political Parties.' Paper presented to 'Democracy and The Internet', workshop, Helsinki, June 30, 2008.
- 115 Between 13-18% of those emailed visited Sarkozy's website and, of those, 23% became members.
- 116 Vedel, T. (2007). *Comment Devient-on Président de la République? Les Stratégies des Candidats*. Paris: Robert Laffont.
- 117 So far, this approach has been used in municipal elections in Tokyo and Osaka. Police warnings were sent to those responsible for updating Wikipedia pages about candidates but so far no arrests have ever been made.
- 118 'Second Life' is a 3D-virtual world accessed via the internet.
- 119 Source of image and text: virtuallyblind.com/2007/07/16/suzuki-office-closed/
- 120 See news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/6739857.stm
- 121 Many consider that the ban has been put in place to protect the old order, and that concerns about excessive spending and the digital divide are simply bon-mots, used to keep out the internet generation who would more likely support the opposition. See:

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- www.newsweek.com/id/165774/page/1. See also discussion by Chris Hogg, 'Japan's Old Fashioned Campaigning,' BBC, 12 July 2007 (news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/6292602.stm) in which he describes how young people – i.e., those who are more likely to respond to online campaigns – are the least likely to vote in elections (although this does not mean that they are not interested in politics, as the increase in viral activity shows).
- 122 Takaaki, O., (2008). 'Fairness Versus Freedom: Constitutional Implications of internet Electioneering for Japan', *Social Science Japan Journal*, 11(1), 99-115.
- 123 Park, H-W, & Lee, Y-O, (2008). 'The Korean Presidential Election in 2008: Five Years on from the "Internet Election"', in *Journal of Contemporary Eastern Asia*, 7(1), 1-4.
- 124 A video later appeared on YouTube (electoral law banned its publication on domestic networks) in which Lee claimed that he had, in fact, embezzled money. The clip attracted 1 million visitors within seven days.
- 125 Park & Lee, op. cit.
- 126 Jackson, A. (2006). 'In South Korea, All Politics is National,' *Campaigns and Elections*, August.
- 127 Joyce, op. cit.
- 128 See: blogs.law.harvard.edu/idblog/2008/01/16/the-2007-korean-presidential-elections-and-internet-censorship/
- 129 Anstead, N., & Chadwick, A., (2009). 'Parties, Elections, Campaigning and the internet: Toward a Comparative Institutional Approach.' *Routledge Handbook of internet Politics*. New York and London, 56-71.