Poland's 2011 online election campaign: new tools, new professionalism, new ways to win votes

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Abstract

This paper analyses the use of the online environment within the context of the Polish parliamentary election of 2011. Using traditional methods of content analysis we find that parties tend to adhere to a professionalised model of campaigning, adapting online tools to suit the objectives of the campaign. There also appears to be a recognition that their most likely visitors would be converts and so they attempt to mobilise supporters rather than convert browsers. New parties and candidates are more likely to target browsers; the latter offering a more personalised experience to online visitors. Importantly, when analysing the outcome of the contest we find that being online matters for candidates when controlling for all other variables. Equally the reach the candidate has, which may well influence their vote share, is dependent on offering a more personalised, representational image and having a frequently updated online presence that should encourage repeat visits. Cumulatively we suggest the future of online campaigning must not only focus on having a presence but using it in a way that appeals to a range of visitors, encouraging repeat visits, and that this strategy could have a positive impact on election outcomes.

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Professionalization and elections in Poland

The professionalization of political communication is an evolutionary process (Lilleker & Negrine, 2002), a process that sees political actors adapting to trends in communication in order to better engage and persuade the public and gather supporters and voters. One of the most interesting recent developments in communication has been the move towards social communication via the Internet. The Internet is argued to affect every area of public communication, from commercial advertising and public relations to education (Macnamara, 2010). Similarly the Internet is now embedded as a campaigning tool and digital interactive technologies have been adapted to the norms of political communication (Ward et al, 2008; Schweitzer, 2011; Lilleker & Jackson, 2011). Despite optimistic predictions that the Internet would reinvigorate democratic participation (Coleman & Blumler, 2009), technology is employed to meet campaign objectives and so party websites tend to offer limited interactivity (Kluver et al, 2007) and opportunities for co-production only under highly managed conditions (Lilleker, 2013).

Poland is interesting as a case study to extend analysis of the role the Internet plays in a campaign as the debates surrounding the impact of technology chime well with debates around the quality of democracy and civil society. Assessments of democratisation in Poland have centred around perspectives of civic life being 'half full' (Roberts, 2010), or 'half empty' (Mokrzycki et al, 2002; Ost, 2002; Pachulska, 2005): the former argues there is progress in democratic revival; the latter highlights the shortcomings of democracy in Poland. One deficit within the progress of democracy is that elections have become a 'promotional culture' spectacle (Wernick, 1991; Cwalina et al, 2011) as opposed to a time of civic engagement. Audits of election campaigning (e.g. Instytut Spraw Publicznych, 2011) reveals that political parties in Poland engage in online political communication and, on a surface level, this 'communicative' development can be interpreted as an attempt to shift the focus of the political parties' communication in Poland towards interaction and engagement with, and mobilisation of, the Polish electorate (Jakubowicz, 2009). Internet usage by political parties and organisations has been conceptualised by Polish academics as a

movement towards 'e-democracy' (Grodzka, 2009), yet this would entail more participatory and interactive behaviours being facilitated. Studies have shown that Polish parties lagged in this respect in the 2009 European parliamentary election (Lilleker et al, 2011), yet this was deemed to be a contest taken less seriously by campaigners (Maier et al, 2011).

Poland is fertile for more focus to be given to the online dimension of the election campaign. Trammell et al (2006) report that since 1996, Internet penetration has been steadily increasing and reached a moderate average, compared to other European nations. Recent data (Eurobarometer Autumn 2011)revealed that the overall web penetration rate in Poland is 59% and is slightly below the EU mean (64%). Trends in social networking mirror developments in Western Europe and the US. Social Bakers (2011) find the number of Poles using Facebook grew by 79% over a six month period with over 2.4 million new users creating profiles. There are over 5.5 million Polish profiles on Facebook at the moment, which makes it the seventh largest country in Europe on Facebook[1]. Alongside Facebook there are some 13.9 million Poles with profiles on the Polish social networking site Nasza Klasa.

Our paper focuses on the extent to which the Internet has a strategic role within the campaign through a content analysis of party and candidate websites at the 2011 general election. We explore how the Internet is used, who communication is aimed at and how it contributes to the election campaign communication and the contest's outcomes.

Professionalization and online campaigning

In the majority of advanced democracies, the Internet represents a fairly low cost way of reaching a significant amount of the population; therefore unsurprisingly it is now a feature of every election campaign. Early predictions that the nature of online communication, in particular that anyone can publish and interact with other users, could lead political communication away from an elite-centred broadcasting model were soon confounded. Margolis and Resnick (2000) produced the first study of political communication online and found that this represented what they and

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[1] The UK is first, with almost 29 million Facebook profiles, closely followed by Turkey with 26m and France with almost 21m. Data from www.SocialBakers.com

subsequent scholars have referred to as politics as usual. Offline inequalities are directly reflected online, and smaller parties are least likely to have a website and use less sophisticated Web 2.0 tools (Resnick, 1998; Xenos & Foot, 2005; Kluver et al., 2007). Furthermore, the online dimension of a campaign tends to be designed to inform and engage browsers, mobilise supporters but offers as few opportunities for participation as the offline campaign. Interaction is allowed within private spaces, via email or online forms, but not the public interaction many engage in peer-to-peer within social networks. Scholars suggest that such uses of the Internet are inappropriate (Kalnes, 2009). The argument is that the online users likely to visit political campaign sites are sophisticated browsers and enjoy participating (sharing and creating). Static, non-interactive sites will be unappealing and of limited interest. Low engagement on official party online presences does not mean that online conversations will not take place about the election, the general campaign or specific party campaigns. Due to the granularity of communication across online platforms, political communication exists within an ecosystem and the browsers experience of the campaign online will likely be co-created (Chadwick, 2012). However, parties and candidates can choose to 'harness the power of the crowd' and allow their online supporters to add to and enhance the campaign (Jenkins, 2006) if they wish. The question is whether developing an interactive strategy signals a new form of professionalism in campaigning (Howard, 2006), one which conforms to the norms of online culture and communication, or whether the norms of the controlled professionalism associated with media management (Gibson & Rommele, 2001) are transferred into online environments?

Literature on the professionalization of political communication argue that campaigns have become centralized strategically and have a sales oriented character, focused upon converting and persuading voters while also getting loyal supporters to the ballot box on election day. Campaign messages tend to be targeted, narrowcasted via mass media as well as direct channels of communication such as email, online forums and intranets (Norris, 2003). In addition, organizations adopted a more bifurcated strategy for their campaigning; while the central campaign command set out the core messages, communication is also the responsibility of local organizations, in particular the use of local email lists, intranets, forums (Gibson & Rommele, 2001; Katz & Mair, 2002; Norris, 2003). Local organizations are also deemed responsible

for using social networking and microblogging tools to reinforce and make locally relevant the national campaign messages. Professionalization has therefore necessitated a shift in organisational behaviour, one perhaps driven both by new communication technologies as well as broad social changes. Campaigns have clearly been adapted to a digital media landscape characterized by "abundance, ubiquity, reach and celerity" (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999: 213). However, it is argued that even in 2011, it is the 24/7 mass media that remains dominant for campaigns, even within the US, yet we find new ways of characterizing campaigning that are designed specifically for the integration of the online environment.

Arguably, political communication and election strategy must, in the age of online social communication, ensure any single item of content is designed for multiple forms of consumption and disseminated in ways that can be collected by journalists, supporters or web browsers alike at multiple communication junctions (Howard, 2006; Johnson, 2009). While there will be an informational component within communication, a range of interactive actions must be facilitated to reach the online political browser. Items created need to facilitate ease of sharing to permit messages going viral across the Internet (Boynton, 2009) and can be commented on and adapted within the campaigns' ecosystem. As Howard (2006: 2) argues in describing the core tenets of hypermedia campaigning, parties and candidates must allow for and expect the "decomposition and recomposition of messages". These communicative processes permit co-ownership of communication across a wider agora and for reach of messages to be multiplied across networks.

In order to meet campaign objectives it is argued, the hypermedia campaign strategist must harness the online and offline information elite simultaneously and create a synergistic communicative process between nodes within the network. Online actions by political actors (a post to Twitter for example) feed into communication by online and offline communicators (journalists and bloggers) and these draw hits to other online features such as a campaign website which generate further sharing or interaction, which in turn can create broader offline and online attention, or resources in the shape of volunteers of donations. The hypermedia campaign is thus the response to the 21st campaign communication environment, it recognizes that to be

successful one must both create a community as well as joining the communication ecosystem (see also Lilleker &Vedel, 2013).

The 2008 campaign for the US presidency by Barack Obama perhaps exemplified the shift from post-modern (Norris, 2003) to hypermedia campaign, post-modern campaigning focuses on targeted communication via all available media; the hypermedia campaign also receives data, in term of harvesting contact details but also feedback. Yet there appeared only superficial copying of the Obama model (Lilleker & Jackson, 2011; Lilleker et al, 2011), perhaps due to resource gaps but also due to caution around opening the campaign up to the online audience (Stromer-Galley, 2000) Despite the arguments for adopting a full hypermedia strategy we hypothesise, based on previous studies of 'web campaigning' (Xenos & Foot, 2005; Kluver et al, 2007; Ward et al, 2008; Lilleker & Jackson, 2011), and studies of election campaigning in Poland (Lilleker et al, 2011), that:

H1: Polish political parties and candidates will evidence a hypermedia strategy but will focus on delivering information though engaging communicational tools and attempt to mobilise their supporters through their websites, but interactivity will be private or highly limited and controlled.
H2: Within each category of communication style (informing, engagement, mobilisation, interaction) based on assessments of the opportunities potentiated for visitors, party and candidate websites will demonstrate widespread usage of a narrow range of features that focus on persuading and extending reach. Co-production, if permitted, will be highly controlled.

Within a professionalized, hypermedia age we would also expect parties to recognise who would be most likely to visit their sites and target those audiences specifically. Norris (2003) finds that party websites tend to 'preach to the converted', so attracting loyal supporters, members and existing activists. Subsequent research (Norris & Curtice, 2008) suggested the converted play the role of mediator, that campaigners could use the converted to share their communication and extend their reach within online networks. We suggest that there are a number of audiences that may be targeted during an election campaign and develop a coding scheme for detecting the extent to which sites are designed to be targeted or catch-all.

The first audience would be *random browsers* who may stumble across a site and would only stay if they are engaged by the content. High levels of eye-catching content and entertaining features at the front end of a website, as well as relevant and personally interesting content, will indicate browsers as a target audience (Spink et al, 2002; Marchionini, 2006). Secondly, *information seekers* who would visit for professional reasons, in particular journalists seeking position statements, news feeds or similar simple ways for finding information or having it delivered directly (Panagopoulos, 2009: 7-8; Erickson & Lilleker, 2012). The third group we refer to as *issue activists*, individuals who want specific policy information and perhaps wish to interrogate party members on their position regarding a specific area of policy. In the case of candidates these may be local political activists and campaigners, at a national level outside lobby groups who do not have direct access to senior politicians or advisors but that parties or candidates may attempt to recruit (Cober et al, 2004) using specific forms of informative and interactive communication (Stutzer & Frey, 2006). The fourth group are *supporters*, the converted, these would be targeted with persuasion geared to bringing them closer to the campaign and would possibly be the main group for whom interactive mechanisms are designed (Norris, 2003: 42; Gerodimos, 2008). The fifth and final group are *activists* to whom most tools that aim at mobilisation are targeted and who may be especially active during the campaign (Greer & Lapointe, 2004; Lilleker & Jackson, 2011). Based on the literature on campaigning, however we hypothesise that:

H3: Party and candidate websites will include features to appeal to each possible audience, however concentration will be within features most likely to supply information for journalists and campaign activists in order to extend the reach of the campaign.

Also consistent with professionalised campaigning is the concept of I-branding; the way that an organisation can communicate its brand personality through the use of communicational acts. We suggest that any online platform can have specific functions which relate to brand positioning and personality development (Jackson & Lilleker, 2013). We argue that there would be three main strategies. The first is a pure *sales* strategy which is designed to target browsers and supporters through the use of

engaging but persuasive devices (Rohrschneider, 2002; Neys & Jansz, 2010). The second is one of *personalisation* (Langer, 2007) which, for a party website, would focus on the leader or key figures within the party or movement, for a candidate it relates to self-presentation and perception management (Goffman, 1959; Jackson & Lilleker, 2011). The third strategy is one of *e-representation*. This focuses on governance and representative issues and links to communication that targets specific supporter groups or issue activists but concentrates on demonstrating a record of delivery (Coleman, 2007; Small, 2012). Given the literature on party campaigning and political marketing (Small, 2012) and the candidate campaign strategies (Lilleker, 2007) we hypothesise:

H4: Party websites will adhere to the key tenets of professionalization and concentrate on following a sales strategy within the online environment.

H5: Candidate websites will be highly personalised and offer insights into the character and background of the individual representative while mirroring the overall sales campaign of their respective party.

The research largely contributes to understandings of how the Internet is used within the context of an election campaign, however we also seek to determine if an impact on voter choice can be determined. Focusing only on the websites of candidates, as there is sufficient number to perform regression analysis, we test whether there are any differentials in vote share from having a website (which we use as a dummy variable for online performance) when controlling for visibility in both online and offline traditional media. We therefore test whether candidates who are proactive online also gain coverage in the traditional media (Negrine & Lilleker, 2003) and so gain higher visibility and a greater share of the votes. We also examine whether adherence to particular communication strategies, in particular those which support online community building, have any impact upon vote share. While this is best tested using real-time recording of voter interaction with citizens (Baines et al, 2011), this was not possible and studies have tended to focus on push communication such as television news as opposed to comparing these to the pull communication online. Our approach is to build a general measure for visibility online and offline to test for any relationship with election outcomes. Our analysis is informed by a working hypothesis:

H6: Candidates with a web presence, and who use the online environment to reach out to new voters and supporters, will gain greater support at the polls independent of the party they belong to or the visibility they gain in other media.

Analysing online political communication strategies

Our methodology draws on the longstanding and well-tested feature counting methods developed by Gibson and Ward (2000) with features added in order to accommodate the changing usages of the Internet. However, to understand the professionalization of online political campaigning it is necessary to move beyond simple categorisations in order to gain an understanding of the strategies which underpin website development. Like previous studies (Gibson & Ward, 2000; Foot & Schneider, 2006; Kluver et al, 2007) we divide features into providing information, being engaging, facilitating interaction and being aimed at mobilisation. However, when studying campaigning within a hypermedia era we need to go beyond these. We therefore focused on determining which of our features were most likely to be used to target specific types of website visitors; and which features best indicated adherence to our strategies of sales, personalisation and e-representation. We therefore focus on measuring strategic performance, building two new dimensions for the study of online election campaigning: targeting audiences and branding strategy.

Our data is developed from a content analysis of 172 candidate and 11 party websites. For our analysis we chose candidates from all eleven Polish political parties who were on the top of the regional lists, a total of 331 candidates of which 172 had websites. There are 41 electoral regions and 7 parties were present in all regions. We had to make a methodological choice which candidates should constitute a sample. Our sample design was driven by the assumption that those who topped their party lists would be the most active politicians and most likely to have an online presence due to their chances of being elected and their access to greater resources as well as being most representative of a highly professionalised communication strategy in Poland.

Content analysis was conducted one week before election day (1st-7th October), all websites were also archived[2]. All the updates (number of entries, number of friends and followers were counted within two days of the elections). The content analysis identified the presence or absence of 89 features. The websites were coded by three coders, all coders passed inter-coder reliability tests (Cohen's Kappa (.72) and Krippendorff's Alpha (.72)), any irregularities were checked and corrected.

Categorising features as potentiating experiences, in particular engagement, is complex. Any new layer of analytical complexity raises epistemological issues. Features in themselves are a priori in their ability to be communication events. The way that a feature is embedded by the creator determines how its use is intended; however actual usage, either as a perceptual or behavioural influence, is the responsibility of the individual visitor. Given our focus at the strategy or supply side, we propose that we can develop an understanding of what was intended based on study of the website as a series of communication events (Jackson & Lilleker, 2013). Some researchers argue that the only way to discover the strategic intentions of the creators of political communication is through in-depth interviews (Vaccari, 2008a). The danger here is that interview data can include a degree of post-hoc rationalisation based on outcomes, and strategists can play up or down their input and intentions based on failure or success (Lilleker, 2003). The true way for understanding the processes that underpin particular communication tactics is through observation, a highly time-consuming and complex procedure that depends upon gaining the trust of all those being observed. As Nielsen (2012) argues gaining access is difficult, in particular to meetings where decisions are actually made. We argue that the website as an artefact for research is a static instantiation of strategy (Xenos & Foot 2000). In other words by understanding what features are utilised through the analysis of design of a party of candidate's online presence, and how features play specific roles within shaping users' perceptions and experiences, we can gain significant insights into the strategic role of the Internet within a campaign and how this could contribute to higher civic engagement within the context of an election.

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[2] The data archives were downloaded to local computer at Sciences-Po, Paris. It was performed by TelePort Ultra provided by Tennyson Maxwell Information Systems, Inc.

The categorisation of features involved a series of discussions between the authors and other researchers involved in a range of projects (Lilleker & Jackson, 2011; Lilleker et al, 2010; Koc-Michalska & Lilleker forthcoming). We also conducted concept testing with web design specialists working within the Centre for Excellence in Media Practice at Bournemouth University. This delivered a categorisation strategy which permits us to understand how features can be read as indicators of specific strategies. The challenge is where features belong to multi categories, in particular when assigning these as targeting specific audience groups. However, through concept testing alongside data collection we determined that it was not a problem that not all features were discrete to specific categories and could apply to more than one targeting strategy.

In order to make direct comparisons between different parties we develop what we entitle an average online performance score (AOP), a commonplace tool in website analysis (Vaccari, 2008b). The AOP score was calculated by initially counting the number of features present for each category to create an overall mean, we then divided the mean score for each category by the maximum possible score. This technique allows us to compare performance within different categories of features (as each category contains a different number of features).

Measuring professionalization for online Polish election campaigns
The overall measures of performance (AOP) for parties and candidates (shown in Table 1) show two differing but compatible strategies at play within Internet usage during the 2011 Polish general election. Party sites offer a plethora of features and so a more sophisticated and aesthetically pleasing experience to visitors. Candidate sites are more basic, on average, with fewer features. Party sites also offer a richer range of experiences; there are a high number of opportunities for interaction and there is a clear focus on a strategy of mobilisation of supporters and activists. Information provision and engagement are balanced, suggesting that a significant amount of information was delivered using tools deemed as engaging, offering a rich, informative and persuasive experience with a range of opportunities to play a role in the campaign. Candidate websites tend to be informative; they also present information using engaging tools of communication and offer some opportunities for interaction. Candidates are less likely to engage with mobilisation strategies. The

complementary strategies are likely to be reflected in who we detect parties and candidates expect to be visitors to their websites.

Table 1: AOP for Polish Political parties and candidates

	Parties' AOP	*Candidates' AOP*
Information	.346	.326
Engagement	.294	.280
Mobilisation	.373	.157
Interaction	.413	.264

Polish party websites predominantly provide information on their programme and values as well as offering a regularly updated news feed. Candidate websites have similar news feeds backed by information about their careers, education and backgrounds. Therefore, information appears to focus on positioning the party and candidate and aiming to persuade. The persuasive strategy also informs how information is delivered through more engaging forms such as video, with 10 out of the 11 parties and 95 candidates having a YouTube channel. Other popular engaging features are links to Facebook and Twitter, embeds from social networking, and features that allow sharing of content. In terms of mobilisation, eight parties sought donations and six of those had an online campaign that supporters could join. Candidates mobilised their online visitors to communicate to them and for them only, relying on sharing via social networks. A similar difference can be found for the use of interactive features. All parties permitted contact through email or an online form, interactivity was then permitted through the use of social networks. Only two parties permitted visitors to make comments on their websites and so allowed debates to take place in public online within their own webspace. Candidates relied entirely on the free interactive spaces of Facebook used by 61%, YouTube by 55% and Twitter by 21%. The widespread use of free social networks by a total of 109 candidates and eight parties suggest that visibility is the prime driver, that both parties and candidates want to reach into the networks of as many online users as possible. Interactivity, for most candidates and parties in Poland, is an almost unavoidable by-product of having a presence in the spaces where people congregate.

The average online performances for targeting different audiences reinforces the notion of complementary but differing strategies and fits well to the overall strategic use of features by parties and candidates. As shown in Table 2, party websites do concentrate slightly more on issue activists and campaign activists, as well as general supporters, fitting with the focus on mobilisation. Issue activists tend to be served mostly through focused content provision; campaign activists through requests to act as well as spaces to go to receive material to share. Browsers are also well served, through the provision of front end sophistication such as videos and embedded materials from social networks, but mainly the targeting of browsers reflects the use of engaging ways for delivering persuasive information. Perhaps unsurprisingly a large number of features provide resources for professional information seekers. Information can be requested, via email, or found onsite. Regularly updated rolling news, with RSS feeds, was used by the larger parties in an attempt to lead the news agenda.

Candidates appear to design sites that will appeal to their potential constituents who might browse the Internet seeking material to aid their voter choice. Alongside the personal details, many candidates offered similar features to parties such as embedded Facebook profiles or Twitter feeds, videos from YouTube or mainstream media and links out to their social network profiles. Targeting general browsers may not be the best use of resources but candidates seem to focus on this group while also providing information, largely about themselves as individuals, for journalists and those seeking general information.

Table 2: AOP of audiences targeted by Political parties

	Party AOP	*Candidates' AOP*
Browsers	.383	.450
Information Seekers	.365	.324
Issue Activists	.428	.259
Supporters	.382	.297
Campaign Activists	.407	.260

The overall strategies of parties and candidates (table 3) partially support our hypotheses and again reflect divergent but complementary strategies. As predicted parties focus mostly on using persuasive communication, however e-representation does not lag far behind. The balance between persuasion and e-representation reflects the shift towards the use of features that permit interaction which share space with engaging information provision. Intuitively one may expect there to be different strategies by parties within the coalition government and those in opposition. Challengers tend to focus more on persuasion, often attacks on governing parties, while incumbents have to focus on their record. This was not the case in Poland. All parties offered a balance of persuasion and e-representation, but with a sales strategy predominating.

Table 3: AOP for overall strategies employed

	Parties' AOP	*Candidates'* AOP
Sales/Persuasion	.385	.340
Personalisation	.214	.451
E-representation	.381	.286

Candidates offer a more personalised identity than parties, while balancing this with personalised information with a persuasive spin. Candidates foreground details about their careers and education, so positioning themselves as being credible potential representatives, as well as their backgrounds, family life and hobbies. The latter aspects reflect what is referred to as the demotic turn in society that has filtered into politics (Turner, 2010) where personal characteristics are used as part of a sales strategy. Ordinariness is used metaphorically to suggest being in-touch, of the people; an elitist lifestyle, education or interests can be negatives (Pels, 2003). The personalisation is reinforced by aspects of a sales campaign that utilise the Internet to talk directly to voters. Prominent tools that permit a more direct, conversational style of communication were YouTube and the widespread use of social networking platforms.

The Polish Internet elections: making sense of web use and its impacts

As we predicted (H1), Polish political parties and candidates show evidence of a hypermedia strategy which focused on delivering information though engaging communicational tools matched with attempts to mobilise their supporters. However, due to the widespread use of social networking tools, interactivity is both private and controlled and public and controlled only through moderation of visitor's posts to their profiles. The use of social networking tools therefore lead to a shift from the top-down, politics as usual, communication style to one that potentiates a degree of participation. Similarly while the most commonly used features which deliver differing experiences (informing, engagement, mobilisation, interaction) are from a narrow range (H2), due to the use of social networking tools it is no longer possible to manage all possible forms of co-production. However, behaviours that are encouraged related more to extending reach through sharing rather than contributing to political debates.

In terms of targeting, party and candidate websites met expectations supplying features that appeal to the widest possible audience (H3), though, as hypothesised party strategists seemed to recognise the importance of mobilising supporters and activists. This strategy may reflect a more sophisticated approach to online campaigning, possibly one that has learned lessons from the Obama campaign. We suggest, therefore, that the Polish online campaign adhered to the central tenets of professionalization (H4) concentrating on a persuasive, sales strategy. The sales approach is matched on candidate websites (H5) which were highly personalised offering insights into the character and background of the individual representative. The fact that over half of the profiles went beyond the traditional career curriculum vitae to include personal interests and lifestyle information as well as a range of pictures depicting them as both political actors and ordinary people suggest they believe that personality politics matters. This belief may be erroneous given they are elected with a party list system, however, candidates may well see a value in creating sophisticated web presences to demonstrate their credentials to both potential voters and party officials on whom they depend for their position on the list and promotion within the party (Negrine & Lilleker, 2003).

Determining the impact of online campaign performance We attempt to explore the possible effect of different communication tools on two variables measuring the candidates success: vote share in elections (for all candidates in our sample, N=331) and community reach (in terms of number of supporters) earned by candidates on different social network sites (friends and followers on Facebook and Twitter, for those who have online presence N=171). A set of explanatory variables is used: personal (in order to control for personal characteristics of each candidate (age, gender, years of incumbency)); party characteristics (to control for characteristics relating to the parties that candidates belong to (size, political ideology, party years of existence)) and campaign characteristics. Campaign variables control for spending of the party for each candidates (as the individual spend is not published in Poland this is a proxy created from the general amount of money spent by party divided by the number of candidates that the party proposed), frequency of coverage in traditional media (both online and offline editions) on the national and regional level in press, radio and television during the most intense period of campaigning, the final two weeks before the election day. Finally we use two different variables for online communication: simple online presence of the candidate (having/not having a website) as this represents a simple measure of interest in communicating online with potential supporters in elections; and online strategies (e-representation, personalisation and sales/persuasion strategy) as we suggest these meta-strategies will determine how browsers or supporters are targeted online and so determine the size of the online community gained.

Using regression (Table 4) we find, as would be expected, that incumbency (being a majority party in the parliament) and number of terms for incumbency, are key predictors of election outcomes. Given that these are candidates at the top of the party lists any other outcome would be counter-intuitive. None of the personal, demographic characteristics have predictive power. Candidates representing the parties with the longest histories (some created even before WWII) as well as those representing more right wing oriented parties have lower potential to gain votes. The proxy for party spending per candidate has no statistically significant impact. Similarly there is no significant effect found for the level of coverage in the press or on radio. The only traditional media having any statistically significant impact on outcome is television, however there is a negative impact of coverage on national

television but a positive effect for gaining coverage on regional television. This finding may appear counter-intuitive but is understandable in the Polish context; politicians who appear on main national television programmes are presented as either celebrities or cronies, the latter suggests involvement in corruption, rather than hard working representatives. While controlling for all the above variables (also in multilevel regression) we find that having an online presence is consistently a strong predictor of gaining a greater share of votes. Having an online presence, we therefore suggest, is a factor of gaining wider visibility based upon a proactive communication strategy and that the Internet may well play a key role in being visible, if only due to the remediation of online material (Norris & Curtice, 2008) both by journalists and those within the online network of a candidate.

Table 4: Regression analysis for election outcomes and personal and party factors and being present online

	Vote share per candidate	
	Coef.	Std err
Personal characteristics		
Age	-.019	.019
Gender (men=0)	-.393	.502
Years of incumbency	**.622***	**.163**
Regional web penetration rate	.033	.043
Party characteristics		
Party size (major=1)	**7.412***	**.880**
Political id	**-.244***	**.071**
Party years of existence	**-.082**	**.036**
Campaign Characteristics		
Campaign spending	.000	.000
Press National	.010	.027
Press Regional	.026	.017
Radio National	.041	.039
Radio Regional	-.021	.021
TV National	**-.020**	**.007**
TV Regional	**.191**	**.069**
Online presence	**.861**	**.452**
Pseudo R2	.6639	

Note: OLS regression. Dependent variable: % of vote share in 2011 elections (continuous) for 331 candidates (list leaders). Independent variables: gender (dummy, 1=women, 0=men); age (in years); Years of incumbency (number of terms in Parliament, continuous, 0 to 7); Web penetration rate in the region where candidate is present; Size of the party that candidates belong to (major vs. minor, fringe as reference); Political ideology of the party that candidate belongs to ((1=left to 11=right); Party years of existence (continuous). Campaign spending (money spent by party during campaign divided by number of candidate presented); presence in the traditional media (continuous, data from PRESS-SERVICE Monitoring Mediow); Online presence (dummy, 1 = have website, 0 = do not have website). *p<.10. **p<.05 ***p<.01

We also find interesting relationships between the online strategies used, the stickiness (or frequency of updating) and the number of followers, friends or fans

accumulated. Firstly, exploring whether a proactive online communication strategy had value in earning reach, we tested for correlations between the frequency of updates and the number of followers, fans or friends earned on their social media platforms. Using Spearman's rho correlation we find that the relationship between update frequency on Nasza Klasa and the number of followers is ranked at .670 ($p<.000$) for candidates and .857 ($p<.000$) for parties [for Facebook this is .831 ($p<.000$) for candidates and .573 ($p<.000$) for parties]. Usage of Twitter shows an even stronger relationship of .914 ($p<.000$) for candidates and .859 ($p<.000$) for parties. This suggests that a highly proactive communication can result in accumulating a following, one which may also have an electoral dividend. The Pearson's correlation between vote share in 2011 and community size was: for Facebook .407 ($p<.000$) and .376 ($p<.000$) for Twitter (however there was no statistically significant relationship for Nasza Klasa).

We also ran regressions with online strategies as possible factors influencing number of supporters. These data indicated the internal relationships between the online communication strategy and the reach of potential network enjoyed by a candidate. Interestingly, alongside frequency of updates on social networks, we find a personalisation strategy has the highest dividend in terms of reach. We suggest that this is related to the fact that social networks are places for individuals to meet and that corporate style profiles do not engage the users of these platforms in the same way as one that is personalised. Similarly, where contact is permitted and conversations are allowed on policy issues or local politics, all of which fit with an e-representation strategy, there is a relationship with the reach gained. If a sales campaign predominates, the candidate does not gain as large a following on social networks. Beyond the variables relating to strategy, only party size and the size of electoral (which seems obvious) show clear predictive power. Again, the party size variable would be expected to have power as it may govern resources, so determining levels of proactivity a candidate can pursue.

Table 5: Explaining how reach is earned within the online network

	Model A		Model B	
	Coef.	Std err	Coef.	Std err
Online strategies				
E-representation	**.170***	**.098**	**.170****	**.075**
Personalisation	**.190****	**.062**	**.121****	**.048**
Sales	.007	.120	.031	.074
SN updating	**.004*****	**.001**	**.003****	**.002**
Personal characteristics				
Age			-.006	.027
Gender (men=0)			-.202	.337
Years of incumbency			.060	.131
Party characteristics				
Party size (major=1)			**.708***	**.375**
Political id			**-.097***	**.057**
Party years of existence			-.024	.032
Other characteristic				
Regional web penetration rate			.033	.037
Electoral size			**.0001*****	**.000**
Citation in traditional media			.000	.000
Pseudo R2			0.6503	

Note: Models are results of Poisson regression, robust. Dependent variable: community size (continuous, number of friends on Facebook + number of followers on Twitter + number of friends on Nasza Klasa). Independent variables: gender (dummy, 1=women, 0=men); age (in years); Years of incumbency (number of terms in Parliament, continuous, 0 to 7); Size of the party that candidates belong to (major and minor, fringe as reference); Political ideology of the party that candidate belongs to ((1=left to 11=right); Party years of existence (continuous); electorate size (number of voter to number of seats in the parliament per circumscription); Web penetration rate in the region where candidate is present. Online Strategies e-representation, personalisation marketing (as in Table 3); SN Updating (continuous) – sum of number of entries in month before elections (7th Sept. To 7th October 2011) on Facebook, Nasza Klasa and Twitter. Citation in traditional media (23rd September to 7th October; press, radio and television; continuous, data from PRESS-SERVICE Monitoring Mediów)
*p<.10. **p<.05 ***p<.01

The online campaign in Poland: indications why online matters

Our study of the use of the Internet during the 2011 Polish election indicates that Poland is catching up and election campaigning is becoming normalised and professionalised as with other Western democracies. Professionalism involves the adaptation of various platforms and tools to the norms of campaigning; however this results in a weakening in control over communication. Therefore adaptation is a two-way process. Parties and candidates have to some extent adapted to social uses of the Internet, migrating to social networking sites, microblogs and sharing sites, and by building blogtools into the architecture of their websites. These platforms also lead to adaptation, to the customs of communication on Facebook for example. To attract a following there is a requirement to relax control and create an open space for participation that can only be moderated (Kalnes, 2011). The requirement for giving attention to these profiles, for both frequent updating and moderation, puts parties and candidates with fewer resources at a disadvantage. Resources enable greater proactivity in their communication; and using platforms popular among Internet users necessitates more interactive modes of communication. Whether parties and

candidates will focus mostly on content creation, and relax attempts to moderate co-production, is a strategic issue. The embedding of social networking into political campaigning may lead to more interactive forms of electioneering, it appears still a little early to tell. The imbalances in the use of the online environment we detect suggest resources lead to evidence of the same inequalities witnessed in many more developed democracies.

The use of the Internet in the Polish election of 2011 arguably allowed a range of ways in which Internet users could access information, much of which was persuasive, but also ask questions publicly and privately of parties and candidates. Supporters, whether established activists or recent converts, were encouraged to play a role in the campaign; in particular the public display of support was encouraged. Mobilisation tactics focused more on receiving donations than enlisting volunteers, but the clicktivist activities that were requested (Share or Like) are public and may lead to stronger levels of engagement. Though sporadic, the use of weblogs can also lead to much stronger forms of engagement with issues, rather than more simplistic content such as public appearances which candidates may promote through sharing pictures or links to news stories. Weblogs, or any spaces to comment on policy, were limited. This reflects a widespread caution among political parties to open up public discussion too far and face demands to alter policy due to coming under attack from an online flashmob (Stromer-Galley, 2000; Lilleker et al, 2009). Thus, Poland evinces all the features of many democracies where parties and candidates are metaphorically 'dipping their toe' (Jackson, 2006) into online environments to gauge if there are benefits. The party tendency was to launch a sales campaign designed to appeal to activists and supporters, candidates follow similar strategies but aiming more at browsers. However, to win over voters it appears a more e-representational and personalised strategy, one which demonstrates a frequent presence online willing at least to keep their following informed not only about macro-policy issues but also the minutiae of the campaign. It seems social networks are best placed for such a strategy and so could be seen as positive for democracy, but wider usage for policy discussion with a greater number of Internet users is required prior to accolades and predictions of the birth or rebirth of a form of e-democracy. Being online may have a positive impact on voter choices between candidates but this may reflect that this is new, by the next contest the novelty may have worn off and it may not only be about being

online but interacting online. Poland evidences a professionalised political campaigning culture, one that is attempting to balance the potential and threat offered by the various tools offered by the Internet. The potential can be identified through reach to politically active groups, the threat arises when they want to start a public dialogue. These issues resonate across advanced democracies (Lilleker & Jackson, 2011), like their counterparts across the continent, political strategists in Poland are attempting to construct an understanding of what role the Internet can play in campaigning while academia dreams, perhaps, of the wider participatory potential.

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