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PHD

How do political parties use Facebook and what does it offer to their campaigns

Hotham, Tristan

Award date:
2021

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HOW DO POLITICAL PARTIES USE FACEBOOK AND WHAT DOES IT OFFER TO THEIR CAMPAIGNS?

TRISTAN HOTHAM

E·S·R·C ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL
UNIVERSITY OF BATH

HOW DO POLITICAL PARTIES USE FACEBOOK AND WHAT DOES IT OFFER TO THEIR CAMPAIGNS?

Tristan Adam Hotham

University of Bath

Department of Politics, Languages and International Relations

October 2020

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This thesis examines the use of Facebook as a campaign tool by British political parties over the last decade. The thesis measures and conceptualises party approaches to Facebook, through examining extracted Facebook posts (n=49,551), hand-coded Facebook posts (code n=882, posts n=1481), Facebook Audience Insights and survey data. The thesis finds that the two major parties' campaigns are defined by a *traditional Facebook campaign*, alongside a subsidiary *new methods Facebook campaign*. This use of different pages for different audiences is defined as *Janus-faced campaigning*. Overall, the thesis argues that Facebook is centrally used for the digital recreation of a traditional offline campaign. Information provision is far more central than participation content, with participation content (if seen) focused on engagement, registering to vote and voting. Although Facebook is showing evolution rather than revolution for party campaigns, the platform offers enhanced abilities for recreating tried and tested traditional campaign methods. Facebook has abilities for superior campaign content such as video, while parties have generated larger more representative virtual memberships (than official memberships) that can be used to campaign to Facebook's broad audience base. Facebook has given political parties a powerful broadcast tool that bridges the digital and physical doorstep, where social context allows for enhanced message impact. Thus, it is in the mainstream use of Facebook that we likely see its potential electoral impacts. Although the central approach seen by parties is via recreation of a traditional campaign, satellite pages are also examined through the study of Momentum. Satellite campaigns are found to offer parties the ability to campaign in more adventurous ways without threatening their traditional Facebook campaign. Momentum during the 2017 General Election campaigned in a more radical way, including a very strong focus on participation, partisan viral content and using virtual members like official members. This approach offered Labour the best of both worlds. Finally, permanent campaigning is conceptualised and then examined through Momentum's content across 2018. The page shifted towards an internal campaign role showing how parties can use Facebook in a partisan marshalling role outside of elections.

Keywords: Campaigning; Political Communication; Social Media; Facebook

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List of Abbreviations

- API: Application Programming Interface
- CMS: Content Management System
- CPC: Cost Per Click
- CTR: Clickthrough Rate
- EU: European Union
- FB: Facebook
- IG: Instagram.
- ISP: Internet Service Provider
- MP: Member of Parliament
- P2P: Peer to Peer
- SEO: Search Engine Optimization
- SNP: Scottish National Party
- TOS: Terms of Service
- UI: User Interface
- UK: United Kingdom
- UKIP: United Kingdom Independence Party
- USA: United States of America
- WTM: Whotargets.me
- WWW: World Wide Web
- YT: YouTube

Introduction

1: Introduction

Why Facebook?

We are living through the first few decades of a colossal worldwide experiment. We are at the thin end of the wedge, as the internet is rapidly remoulding and changing society into its image. Such is the rapidity of change that this thesis's earliest studied date of 2010 saw worldwide internet penetration at 29%, today it is at 62%[1]. This phenomenal change in worldwide access to information and inter-connectivity is not immediately visible like other technological revolutions before. Outside of new wireless towers and many more screens, the internet's impact is physically invisible. Data can be hidden behind locked doors, advertising can be personally targeted, users can be anonymous or pseudonymous and information flow can be impossible to chart.

Given this esoteric nature the impacts of the internet are hard to examine. Studying the internet is difficult, as digital information and evidence can be easily hidden behind encrypted walls, while direct impacts are less easily measurable. As such the transformative effects of the internet can be veiled, making the internet both a fascinating but also dangerous political beast. Some impacts within the general population are seen in endpoint human behavioural variation. For example, in how we now gather or deliver political information, or how we interact with politics and politicians. While, when appreciating how the powerful (such as political parties) use the internet, we can see impacts through examining changes in tactics and approach. Thus, although impact is often hidden due to the complexity of the internet, we are not wholly blind. However, given the novelty of the internet, and the fact that methods and effects are often impenetrable, scholars have for the last two decades been playing catch-up.

This thesis is centrally interested in one important aspect of the internet's impact; political campaigns. Specifically, how British political parties are using the internet to campaign through social media via the largest and most important platform Facebook. Although a specific area of study this thesis speaks to a wider context; how new technology is used by politicians to win hearts and minds. For

[1] www.internetworldstats.com accessed 28/7/2020

political parties, social media may have upset pre-existing power relations, offering them a new powerful tool that changes the nature of campaigning and how democracy can operate. Social media may offer a levelling power, increasing the importance of public voices, smaller parties and diminishing the role of opinion leaders and traditional hierarchical communications. However, in contrast social media may merely replicate prior systems in a new environment, adjusting the function but not the nature of campaigning. This would mean social media is helping maintain the fundamental nature of party based democratic systems but in an online setting. Thus, this thesis' examination is a case-study that illuminates a far wider field, as the study of Facebook use by British parties offers insight into the worldwide impact of the internet on politics.

Examining social media is imperative, these platforms are crucial for political parties. Today, over 45% of the world's population are active social media users, with a person on average spending 2 hours and 22 minutes a day on social networking and messaging apps (GlobalWebIndex, 2019). Social media is now at the core of voter's information systems and how people communicate and gather information. This significant digital avenue can clearly offer parties a new opportunity for their campaigns. However, all the many social networks available today are not equally useful for political parties, as each has different capabilities and userbases. TikTok and Snapchat feature a younger userbase and are currently less political, Twitter is skewed to the politically active and open in network formation, Instagram is a social photo-visual platform and Reddit provides interest-based pseudonymous networking. Each network offers its own unique aspects that are pertinent for political campaigns and modern voter behaviour, however of all the social networks that currently exist, Facebook is without doubt the most important.

Facebook with its 2.5 billion users is the most popular social network in the world, the platform accounts for much of the growth in the global ad market[2], alongside over 40% of all internet traffic[3]. It is clear from political campaigner's actions, opinion polling and even from surprising election results, that Facebook is the most important social network for campaigns. Unlike most other social

[2] https://www.theguardian.com/media/2018/nov/29/google-facebook-uk-ad-print accessed 09/04/2019

[3] https://www.newsweek.com/facebook-google-internet-traffic-net-neutrality-monopoly-699286 accessed 09/04/2019

networks, the platform is broadly used with a vast array of applications from event planning to group creation. Facebook is utterly versatile, but most importantly its network formation is centrally friend and family based, meaning the platform at its core is recreating people's real offline lives online. This inherently makes Facebook an influential platform, unlike looser less-cohesive interest-based networks such as Twitter. Facebook is thus a powerful campaign tool, both as a levelling tool linking billions of ordinary users together, but also as a hierarchical tool where corporations or political parties have major presences. Groups like Black Lives Matter can gain a foothold, but so can President Trump. This grants Facebook an asymmetrical form. Facebook is as much a destabilising influence as it is a recreation of traditional power structures, thus the platform has capacities to reimagine politics and parties, but also an ability to recreate the offline world.

Facebook itself likes to highlight that it is defined by the 2.5 billion people that use the platform, professing its users to be its very character. However, with large global corporations, major political parties, celebrities, and news organisations so central to the platforms' information system; the character of the platform appears less bottom-up than we are led to believe. With its 33,000 employees from California to Kuala Lumpur, at its heart Facebook is a business, as such any democratic or electoral impacts will be shaped by this inherent nature. Despite the fundamental potential of Facebook to reform hierarchies, change parties and connect millions of users, have we instead seen offline life replicated online? Are parties thus centrally recreating traditional campaigns through a new online avenue? These questions feed into this thesis' central examination of British parties' use of the platform, as although Facebook is undoubtedly a platform of immense power and scale; as a political campaign tool it is also somewhat of an enigma.

Studies of Facebook have been far more limited than those of the arguably more inconsequential Twitter. This is partly due to Facebook's mixed history of data access and research cooperation. Studies have also generally focused on the United States, with European scholarship only developing more recently. Analyses are also often either very small-scale analyses of politician's content approaches, or macro-level studies of greater questions such as voting impact. Each of these avenues loses sight of the actual way Facebook is used as a campaign tool because of methodological limitations. Thus, this thesis fills this

disparity by examining major UK parties' use of Facebook longitudinally, while engaging a specific high definition study of the Conservative and Labour parties.

Overall, Facebook is changing political campaigns, however the nature and power of this impact is an unknown. On one side utopian visions have developed that argue the power of the internet and social media to truly reframe political parties and their campaigns. Work such as Margetts' ideas of the Cyber Party (2001) or later re-imaginings of the concept (see Chadwick, 2013; Gerbaudo, 2019), indicate the radical potentials of social networks for political campaigns and party politics. In contrast, others assert a 'political as usual', e-minimal effects position (Margolis, 2000) with the internet and social media centrally bringing offline systems online. Facebook thus offers to campaigns two competing abilities. It may offer a radical upgrade in parties' capabilities, as the platform allows sociological campaign practices in an interactive and audio-visually engrossing system. Offering parties features to reach new audiences, cultivate virtual memberships, and develop novel organisational avenues. However, in contrast Facebook may offer more limited impacts, usage may show restricted capacities for campaigning that centre on activating party loyalists and basic forms of campaign information. Content may not move past that seen in Party Election Broadcasts or leaflets, with parties using the platform as a traditional campaign tool. Finally, we may see a mix of the two impacts with Facebook an evolutionary tool but offering no revolution for party campaigns. This is the central debate upon which this thesis builds its analysis.

Research aims and findings

This thesis examines party approaches on Facebook, using coded data as well as other data sources, to evaluate in detail how parties are using the platform across a period from 2010-2019 as well as across the 2015 and 2017 General Elections. Several key terms are used throughout this thesis that should be clarified. Facebook is referred to as a *platform*, one of a group of social media *platforms* such as Twitter. In its use as political campaign tool, Facebook is referred to as a *campaign tool* as part of a wider *toolkit*, alongside other campaign tools such as leaflets or Snapchat. Finally, parties' tactics upon Facebook (as well as via other tools) are referred to as *approaches,* a variety of *approaches* can be

used within one tool, as well as an overall *approach* definable for each tool. *Feature/s* is a term used to define the potential approaches and abilities of a *tool* or *platform*. Alongside chapter-based specific questions, this thesis examines three central research questions that engage with three areas of political science literature; *campaigning, communications,* and *voter behaviour*.

Central Research Question: How are parties making use of Facebook in terms of the scale of communications, the dissemination of information and the encouragement of participation in the content they post?

This research question explores in terms of scale, information, and participation how Facebook is used by political parties. Scale defines the capacity of Facebook as an information medium. It concerns who receives messages, the pages used, the number of messages sent, and the subsequent engagement received. Information examines the nature of parties' posts, what they consist of, their character and nature. Finally, participation examines the use of participatory practices in content, from asking users to share to engaging with a poll. This participation theme also examines organisation and approaches to mobilisation. The question focuses on comparatively examining approaches to these areas across parties, page types and election periods.

The thesis finds important results; by the 2017 General Election all the studied parties were using Facebook's opportunities for an innovative scale of communications. Clear differences are seen across time periods, parties, page types and election years. All the parties have generated large virtual member audiences and can achieve impressive levels of engagement no matter the party size. Nevertheless, trends in virtual membership and engagement are clearly more beneficial for larger parties. In examining information and participation, the trends are more mixed, although parties on Facebook show a wide array of nuanced and creative approaches to content, the opportunities taken by parties are conservative. Instead, more novel approaches to information and participation are seen via satellite page Momentum, signalling clear differences of approach across page types. Overall, information was generally prioritised over participation, while organisation is even more selectively seen. Examining the party angle, across leader and party pages it is clear that Labour made more of

Facebook's features for information and participation than the Conservatives. However, across these two page types, both parties underutilised Facebook's novel information and participation capacities for their central campaigns. Instead, these novel features were used selectively from specific page sources such as Labour's satellite campaign Momentum. Thus, parties are not necessarily averse to more adventurous approaches to information and participation, but use is clearly tied to audience and aims. This evolutionary approach to scale, information and participation clearly shows parties view the opportunities of Facebook centrally lie in its abilities to be a broadcast tool. This shows that parties believe Facebook is offering them genuine capacities to speak through virtual members to the broader public. Given the potential electoral importance from this strategic approach, a broad mainstream campaign use of Facebook will continue to influence how parties' use Facebook's features in future. Thus, although novel features are being developed to unleash alternative features of the platform, party usage of Facebook content speaks as much to Margolis & Resnick's vision of 'politics as usual' (2000), as to the utopian vision of the cyber-party (Margetts, 2001).

How does the content posted on Facebook by parties retain the features of traditional campaign material?

This question seeks to appreciate and theorise parties' use of Facebook within a wider understanding of traditional campaign practices. Facebook offers to parties a whole new body of content forms and the freedom to radically alter their communications approach. Parties can send meme's featuring huge amounts of multi-layered policy detail, train activists through Facebook Live video or post eye-catching short-form video content that breaks tradition. However, just because something is possible does not mean that it will be used. In the case of Facebook content, we may see that parties are creating Facebook content that retains the features of more traditional mainstream campaign tools such as leaflets or PEBs. This is because of the core goals parties have in their political campaigns have not altered in the Facebook era, including the importance of speaking to the broad public, promoting messages that can be understood by as many people as possible and a focus on key goals such as voting. This dynamic

may mean that parties are being cautious in how they are using Facebook, focusing on recreating traditional style campaign content online rather than developing something new. Facebook's use as a campaign tool may therefore not start from zero, its use may follow the model seen in how parties use these other tools. To answer the question the Facebook content data gathered is conceptualised and then contrasted with understandings of traditional campaigning content, such as in audience and core goals. Secondly, where possible Facebook content is directly compared to other campaign tool content across viable parameters including topic, sentiment and use of leadership.

This thesis finds that Facebook is used dualistically, via what is termed *Janus-faced campaigning*. The concept defines that through Facebook parties are *using different pages with different approaches to reach different audiences, thus presenting different faces of the same political party to the public*. Centrally, party approach occurs via what is use is termed the *traditional Facebook campaign.* Through this approach parties take some of the most important as well as mundane aspects of traditional campaigning and recreate them online. Parties are retaining many key tried and tested features of traditional campaigning through Facebook. For example, through leader and party pages we see parties engaging in broadcast mainstream campaigns on the platform, with content designed to be as broad and accessible as possible. Forms that would not speak to a mass audience are seen minimally such as identity based content, minority issues or novel content forms such as memes. Instead, inclusive content forms akin to those seen in traditional campaign materials are chosen to enhance party communications, such as posters that feature leadership personalisation, policy detail and public representation. However, the content seen on Facebook does not solely retain the features of traditional campaign material. Labour's satellite page Momentum approached content in a different way. Termed the *new methods campaign,* during the 2017 General Election Momentum engaged in more adventurous in information and participation approaches, including a focus on younger people, memes, humour, and live video. Thus, Labour were supporting their central *traditional Facebook campaign* with the *new methods campaign,* allowing the party to match messaging more effectively with audience. Overall, the content parties send on Facebook maintains the core features of traditional campaign material, especially a focus on speaking efficiently too as

many as possible. However, as we saw via Momentum, parties are also interested in speaking more selectively to certain groups and developing new campaign approaches that are outside the features seen in traditional campaign material. Although at the moment a subsidiary approach, evidently the relationship between the traditional and novel Facebook campaign will evolve over time, with the possibility that Facebook use will develop to be a form not so directly comparable with traditional campaign material.

What are the likely longer term implications of parties' use of Facebook, in terms of broader campaigning practices?

This question seeks to outline the likely longer term impacts Facebook is having on party campaigns through reviewing how the parties are making use of the platforms different features. Facebook offers a wide array of new abilities that offer current and likely future change to who parties can speak to, how their campaigns can be delivered, how participation is developed and how campaigns (and campaigners) are organised. It is found that the platform presents new implications for parties campaigns across both the *traditional Facebook campaign* and the *new methods campaign.*

Firstly, the platform provides evolved traditional campaign capacities within a powerful online-based sociological network, parties can harness everyday users as campaigners, a radical evolution upon the traditional one-way forms of older campaign tools. Secondarily, the novel approaches seen via what is termed the *new methods campaign* point the likely direction of overall campaign evolution. Parties are engaging in ever more Janus-faced campaign approaches because of the benefits of fitting message to audience, with barriers between official and virtual members being broken down and new fluid organisational practices being developed. Finally, the platform also has capabilities to blend novel and traditional styles, showing the platform to be a universal and flexible tool. This flexibility is the unique power of Facebook, and the key character that will continue to influence how parties use the tool in future. Although the likely long term trend is towards more novelty through increasing use of satellite campaigns, given the huge scale and breadth of the Facebook audience, the traditional Facebook campaign will continue to have utility. Parties will continue to appreciate the

electoral importance of Facebook as a broadcast tool, while also developing new ways to communicate to and activate different groups. This slow evolution means that despite Facebook's radical abilities to reform political parties' organisation and campaigns, potentially making parties more representative and responsive to the public, we will instead see long term implications being likely more limited. Overall, Facebook is a revolutionary tool not necessarily used in a revolutionary way, but for the near future the platform presents the greatest single campaign tool available to political parties. The tool allows for parties to engage in effective applications of new, improved or replicated campaign capacities, including delivering campaign information, generating participation, and organising supporters. Facebook's impact therefore occurs not from its radical possibilities, but from its pluralistic catch-all abilities, with its utility meaning it will be a central core of parties campaigns for many years.

Empirical focus, generalisability and why this study matters

This thesis examines major UK political parties, with a special focus on Labour and the Conservatives. Given that Facebook is not just a peer-to-peer network, but in fact is potentially offering parties more than it is offering laypersons, it is vital we understand important actors on the platform. British political parties on Facebook are an under examined group worthy of greater study. Time and again our political parties are shown to be using advanced methods on the platform, both through targeted advertising and the novel development of organic communications. It is the UK that saw Corbyn arise on Facebook well before Bernie Sanders took the US by storm. While UKIP's organic engagement helped prime our later Brexit vote, a factor that was mirrored in the Trump victory of 2016. Facebook in the UK has been at the centre of many important political developments over the last decade, with analysis long overdue. Thus, although a local story, the British context highlights far wider political trends than those solely within our own shores.

This thesis due to its longitudinal nature from 2010-2020 has a varied party-political context, four General Elections plus three UK-based referendums stand in the background. It is important to outline this history in order to appreciate why British parties are an important example for the study of Facebook

campaigning. A full outline of the use of Facebook by these parties across the last decade's elections can be seen in Appendix 1. Although we know that all the UK's major parties are using Facebook, we do not know the specifics of how they use Facebook as a campaign tool and how it fits into their wider campaigns. Thus, this thesis focuses upon the tactics and presences British political parties have on Facebook. Examining in detail their campaigning content approaches, across electoral and permanent campaigns, as well as across the different page types parties' use on the platform.

This thesis explores all the major UK parties, allowing for a wider level of analysis, as well as more refined specific study focussing on Labour and the Conservatives. The focus on all major UK political parties is because of an ability to draw from the analysis a wider appreciation of how different types of parties campaign, including smaller parties and those with specific goals outside of government. This offers the thesis the ability to gather a wide understanding of how Facebook is used by parties within a nation, across party size and goal. The thesis places greater focus upon the two major UK parties of government; Labour and the Conservatives, because of methodological expediency as well as intellectual value. This thesis would not be able to undertake a detailed content analysis for all the UK parties because of the time-consuming nature of the process. As such, a smaller sample of parties is chosen to be examined in greater detail, including the analysis of different page types. Labour and the Conservatives offer the greatest source of insight into how parties campaign on Facebook in the UK because they feature increased engagement, have a higher usage rate of Facebook, fully utilise both leader and party pages and campaign to win elections rather than to push for other goals. They also lead the other UK parties in how Facebook is used, meaning they offer insight for how smaller parties campaigns will develop over time.

Within Labour, Momentum is examined because it is a powerful case study of how satellite campaigns operate within wider party Facebook campaigns. The Labour Party, as a broad tent organisation that works hard to innovate its campaigning practices, provides the clearest example of the satellite campaign phenomenon within the UK. Other political parties also have pressure groups and campaign organisations affiliated to their associated parties, but the case study of Momentum is particularly pertinent given their focus as a campaigning

organisation both permanently and during election time. They are also pertinent due to their position as a left-wing radical organisation that promotes social media to be a central part of its identity.

In the specific political sources chosen, the empirical focus of this study also focuses on specific page presences on Facebook across party, leader, and satellite pages. Outside of the specific Momentum case study, throughout this thesis party and leader pages are carefully examined. This focus is chosen because these are the central presence political parties have on Facebook, a pattern seen worldwide. These pages also tend to be controlled via central offices rather than candidate or regional offices, this dynamic allows for a direct analysis of the central core of party campaigns, where the greatest amount of time, effort and money is placed by parties. Although regional campaigns on Facebook are of importance, this thesis had to choose its subjects carefully, with a study of candidate or regional Facebook pages of too large a scope for this research.

Given the UK focus and the unique characteristics of British democracy, culture, parties and political behaviour, generalisability is understandably limited. This thesis nevertheless offers insights for the understanding of other nations parties use of Facebook. This is because of this thesis' focus on the structural elements of Facebook use such as page type. Given the ubiquitous usage of party and leader page forms across the globe and across the political spectrum, this thesis bring insight in the interplay between these two sources, as well as the interplay between these page types and satellite pages. Equally, this thesis' broad study of different types of parties means it offers insight into how goal based parties, smaller parties, or parties of government may use Facebook. The thesis also charts the campaign relationship between party and voter, a relationship seen worldwide across nations and cultures. This thesis operates a detailed content analysis that goes beyond local factors, instead it also examines approaches to communications that are universal, such as the use of emotion, rhetoric, the general public's voice, or identity depiction. This gives this thesis' findings greater insight into understanding how social media is being used by parties worldwide, because many of key factors at the heart of political communication are universal. Thus, although generalisability is constrained due to political national circumstances structurally this study offers valuable internationally pertinent insights.

This study matters because social media is changing how we interact with politics and politicians, with this thesis charting a key part of this new relationship; how parties are using Facebook to communicate with the public. This thesis examines key aspects that determine how this new relationship operates. Social media is both offering new avenues that are upsetting the old systems of campaigning, but also recreating old systems online. Firstly, key factors are changing the relationship between parties and the public. We see the rise of virtual membership challenging the traditional notions of party organisation, digital engagement offering parties huge levels of reach online, and a growing dynamism in how parties are presenting themselves online. These factors may over time change how voters view parties and interact with them. Secondly, the thesis charts the vitality of traditional but evolved approaches to Facebook. Parties are taking the best elements of how they campaigned before social media and utilising them online. This matters because social media is now ubiquitous meaning that parties must reach different audiences in the most appropriate ways. For Facebook, given its older userbase, this means parties using the language of the past on a platform that allows for so much more. This thesis thus matters, because it shows the nuanced complex story of how a social network is used to campaign. It illustrates that overt narratives of change heralding a utopia or dystopia, as so often seen within the media, are not reflective of the multifaceted realities seen in the data.

Structure of the thesis

Table 1. Chapter plan, research questions examined, and methods used

Chapter	Research Questions	Sub areas examined	Methods used
4: Facebook demographics	Q1 & 3	Scale, virtual members across pages and parties	Dataset 1. Descriptive statistics
5: Facebook content and engagement	Q1 & 3	Scale, engagement, technology, popularity, interactivity, party leader pages	Dataset 1. Descriptive statistics
6: 2015 and 2017 General Election	Q1, 2 & 3	Information and content forms, participatory practises, personalisation, leadership	Datasets 2 and 3. Quantitative content analysis, typology
7: Momentum	Q1, 2 & 3	Organisation, satellite campaigns, Janus-faced campaigns, information, participation, and organisation	Datasets 2 and 3. Quantitative content analysis, typology

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Through the communications, campaigning and voter behaviour literature, the thesis outlines why parties are using social media alongside the potential effects. Literature fields such as; voter behaviour, e-campaigning, communications flow, network formation and social network studies are explored to understand the mechanics of how social media campaigning works. Alongside this theoretical layer, a large amount of literature concerning Facebook's use as a campaign tool by parties and movements is outlined. This includes studies of engagement, rhetoric, content approaches, framing, media use and participation.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Quantitative content analysis and the formulation of a comprehensive typology is chosen as the optimal method. This is because the potential level of detail is purely down to time limitations, with the method offering an important gateway to understanding how and why parties are using Facebook to campaign.

This allows the examination of campaigning to be both in high definition but also of a pertinent scale, rather than the either overtly macro or micro-cosmic methods seen from many other studies.

Chapter 4: Facebook demographics, virtual members and cyber party ramifications

To understand Facebook campaigning today, one must comprehend who uses the platform. Through examining the demographics of who uses Facebook, alongside exploring the concept of 'virtual membership', this chapter examines parties' Facebook audience demographics in comparison to their official memberships. The unique benefits of Facebook are made clear, as all the parties have amassed vast numbers of younger and more female virtual members. Facebook offers a unique more representative population to campaign to and organise, with significant implications for cyber party politics. However, the benefits are not equal for all parties, as offline issues are reflected online.

Chapter 5: Facebook content and engagement, a new avenue for campaigns?

Through the analysis of 49,551 official party page and party leader page Facebook posts sent from 2010–2017, this chapter examines the content approaches and engagement levels of the parties. The chapter explains the development of Facebook as an engagement tool highlighting the role of technology, party politics and leadership in changing patterns of engagement and approach. Through conceptualising the importance of different types of pages, there are marked differences found in party and party leader page engagement and content approach. Examining the potential reach of Facebook against other campaign tools, Facebook offers something new to political parties' campaigns via novel information approaches and huge reach via engagement. However, Facebook is clearly a very volatile tool, where engagement is not mindless clicktivism: parties can achieve or fail dependant on how they activate their virtual members. Finally, engagement and content are examined both electorally and through the permanent campaign, with the platform found to be offering greater potential to larger parties.

Chapter 6: The 2015 and 2017 General Elections: The 'traditional' Facebook campaign?

This chapter examines the Labour and Conservative parties' party and leader pages' approaches on Facebook across information and participation, via a coded dataset of 1,208 posts examined across 826 variables. The chapter determines how parties are campaigning across the 2015 and 2017 General Elections. Approach is then compared to other online and offline tools such as targeted adverts and leaflets. It is found that the parties approached Facebook differently over time with approach reflecting party political and technological changes. Information is found to be used more than participation, highlighting the rise of what is termed the 'traditional' Facebook campaign. Although Facebook is clearly vital to party campaigns; the two parties were not prepared to risk the benefits of virtual member led engagement by utilising overtly novel content approaches.

Chapter 7: Momentum: Satellite, Janus-faced and permanent campaigning?

This chapter examines 153 Momentum posts from the 2017 General Election alongside a random 120 post sample of 2018 posts, coded across 830 variables. The 2017 Momentum data is compared to 2017 Labour party and leader page data, while Momentum's 2018 data is compared to their 2017 data. The chapter conceptualises satellite campaigns, offering a comprehensive typology of the phenomenon. Examining the 2017 General Election, it is found that Momentum uses a much more interactive and less traditional content approach than the other Labour pages, with participation content as integral as information. The use of Facebook as an organisational tool is visible via many offline calls to action, online activities, and events. In terms of approach, Momentum clearly benefits from an absence of structural hindrances, because the group was focused on a different audience to the other Labour pages. This ability for Labour to campaign in a Janus-faced way is theorised as a clear benefit for the 2017 Labour campaign. The party was able to reach out to both younger and more middle-aged voters using language and policy that connected. This ability presents a fundamental shift in how Facebook is used as a campaign tool,

with this accelerating as more satellite campaigns are formed. In permanent campaigning, Momentum is shown to become an internal campaigning organisation that moves focus away from the wider public towards virtual members.

Conclusion

The conclusion brings together the results of the four chapters and answers the research questions, alongside an analysis of this thesis' title. Finally, a future research and data access agenda is discussed, while the lessons learnt from this thesis are reflected upon.

Original Contribution

This thesis makes several contributions to the fields of political communication and campaigning. The contributions are three-fold. *Methodologically* generating new measures, as well as improving existing measures used to examine online campaigning. New procedures are created that are not seen within the literature, with other pre-existing measures improved upon. It does this by generating a content analysis scheme relevant for modern digital campaigns that feature large amounts of video content. The typology was also created with a deliberate future focus to promote re-use and comparative study. The study also uses underutilised sources, such as Facebook Audience Insights and the Wayback Machine, which should be promoted to the academic community given a lack of direct access to data. The analysis also contributes to the debates around data access on Facebook, highlighting the democratic need for tools such as Netvizz. However, the work also emphasises the methodological flaws apparent in academic work on Facebook given issues with API access, data quality and Facebook's ever-changing data policies.

Theoretically the thesis contributes by proposing an important looser definition of engagement as part of a cascade of participation, arguing that online engagement and virtual membership should not be dismissed as second order slacktivism. Further, through re-examining the sociological model of voting behaviour for the Facebook era, the thesis asserts the importance of content

engagement and virtual membership in Facebook's impact as a campaign tool. Facebook merges offline worlds with online capacities, offering a more volatile digital avenue for party campaigns that allows parties' virtual members to deliver content to their subsequent networks. Although this system is also seen via other networks, Facebook's broader userbase and more genuine friend-based network allows for sociological pressures to operate more effectively. The analysis also contributes to theories surrounding the changing nature of the political party, showing that virtual members are clearly important to political parties in different ways, depending on page type and goal. We see differences in how virtual members are used across the traditional and new methods campaigns. The thesis conceptualises how this new group, used in a more complex way by satellite campaigns, can potentially alter the nature of the campaigning party into a more fluid entity. The thesis also addresses the theoretical issues associated with conceptualising the campaign usage of social media, analysing with a wide lens how parties are using the platform. Facebook use is shown to be defined by Janus-faced campaigning, through the *traditional* Facebook campaign and *new methods* campaign. Within the new methods campaign, satellite campaigns are outlined and conceptualised, with this thesis providing a clear theoretical grounding of why parties' presences on the platform are changing. Finally, permanent campaigning is conceptualised and examined, with permanent campaign approach clearly dependent on internal party position and goals.

Empirically, through the creation of a comprehensive typology and detailed longitudinal quantitative content analysis, this thesis offers future research a superior framework for the comparative analysis of content and engagement. Challenging the lack of a joined-up approach within the literature, by focussing on maximal detail and reproducibility, the thesis offers the broadest and most detailed typology available. The subsequent party, party leader and satellite page longitudinal datasets are the most detailed ever undertaken. The level of detail offered means that the thesis has had the ability to conceptualise deeper understandings of how parties use Facebook to campaign, including the importance of party leader pages and satellite campaigns, the use of humour, memes, permanent campaigning, negative personalisation and other content forms. The thesis thus provides comprehensive evidence of what occurred on Facebook in the UK from 2010 to 2018.

Literature Review

2: Literature Review

2.1: Introduction

This review focuses upon modern literature inquiring into social media's effects upon parties' campaigns, alongside traditional campaigning, e-campaigning, and communication literature. This chapter provides a theoretical and research framework through which the usage of Facebook can be understood, within the context of wider campaigning approaches. The focus is the United Kingdom's political parties, but this review also examines international academic enquiry upon campaigning and social media. The review illuminates current evidence for why parties are using Facebook, how they use the tool, where it fits within the campaign, potential benefits and what factors influence usage.

Through the Columbia and Michigan models of voting behaviour the importance of Facebook for campaigns is examined theoretically, with the platform offering parties new capacities to socialise, persuade & mobilise voters. Conceptually Facebook is theorised as requiring a new simpler frame of analysis via scale, information, participation, and organisation. These elements represent the core logic of use, with each offering considerations for how Facebook may offer parties something new to their campaigns. Wider ideas of impact are examined via the concepts of virtual members and the cyber party. Finally, across the communication and campaigning literature, the evidence of Facebook's use as a political tool is examined. Large gaps in knowledge are found especially in real-world studies of campaign content.

2.2: Voting behaviour models and communications in the era of social networks

Although this thesis is not specifically examining election outcomes or voting behaviour in relation to Facebook use; electoral effects and the nature of voting behaviour will still influence why and how parties use Facebook. This is because social media has interposed into the traditional understandings of voter

behaviour through altering the nature of how the models can operate and how communications flow.

Sociological models of voter behaviour

Facebook is an online social network that recreates many social aspects seen offline. Users are part of online versions of offline communities with the central difference being interaction mechanisms. Given this nature, the Columbia sociological model can offer an insight as to the potential power of Facebook as a campaign tool. Three works developed the Columbia sociological model; '*The People's Choice'* (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1944), '*Voting'* (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee, 1954) and '*Personal Influence'* (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). '*The People's Choice'* examined 600 individual supporters of the Democrats and Republicans. Importantly, the study undermined its own central thesis; that voting stands as an individual act, affected mainly by the personality of the voter and their exposure to the media. Instead, the study ascertained that media and campaign effects were minimal, and that the major factor influencing vote choice was the social groups an individual voter belonged to and their partisan identification. Following these findings, Lazarsfeld et al. asserted that "social characteristics determine political preference" (1968, p.27). Identity is key in the Columbia model's vision of politics, with this a system accurately recreated on Facebook, albeit with some changed dynamics. Facebook operates a real name policy and users are avatars of themselves. Although there is some online network formation through a user's interest's, user's online networks are commonly recreations of their offline networks. Thus, Facebook offers parties a gateway to the power of identity within a new more fluid medium.

Lazarsfeld et al. also detailed that 'party changers'[4] were shown to be winnable votes, but mainly via powerful effects apparent from social transmission, not base party outreach or campaigning. As they affirm, "…the group which campaigns are most eager to reach, (the undecided) is the very group which is less likely to listen to propaganda" (Lazarsfeld et al., 1968, p.124). Thus, sociological pressures associated with the groups to which an individual belongs

[4] i.e. voters who had yet to decide their vote choice in the late stages of the campaign.

are argued to be the crucial factor influencing voting behaviour and vote choice. The capacities of Facebook to merge the power of social group affirmation with fluid communications offers parties something very new. Identity is key, with the rise in identity politics coinciding with how people represent themselves online. Thus, through Facebook there are new potentials for sociological characteristics to be hyper-charged, allowing parties to reach out to (and through) new groups.

Individuals who have differentiated personal views to the candidates, or who are outside the standard classifications of their social grouping, are said to be under "cross-pressure" (Berelson et al., 1954, p.27). This concept asserts that as people have several contending social affiliations, these pressures often lead to intrapersonal conflict arising when decision motives are incompatible. Voters suffering from 'cross-pressures' are not influenced by the proposals of a candidate, but instead by the forces exerted upon them via their associated social groups (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee, 1954). This influence leads to these individuals having difficulty reaching a decision, thus delaying their decision making until late in the campaign or abstaining altogether (Nilson, 2002). Later research has supported this assertion of cross pressures having effects on participation and voting (Hillygus & Shields, 2008; Andina-Díaz et al., 2009)[5]. Facebook is thus a new dynamic environment where cross-pressures can operate, offering parties new avenues to exert social pressure on wavering voters.

Sociological campaign effects have been argued to operate via the "activation of the indifferent, strengthening the link to the political party and conversion of the undecided"; with "the influence of social groups to which the individual belongs crucial for results, since it is identified as the mediation process" (Antunes, 2010, p.148). Thus, across campaign processes undertaken via both permanent and election period timescales, as Lazarsfeld et al. assert "people vote, not only with their social group, but also for it" (1968, p.147). What this means for parties is that Facebook may offer potentials in solidifying the cohesiveness of party supporters around proposals, alongside wider social identity influence.

Clearly social influence is of paramount importance to the operation of Facebook, but factors of identity are only part of the picture, psychological factors

[5] Although others have challenged the evidence (Leighley, 1996) or argued it can decrease participation (Mutz, 2002).

are also of importance. These factors are explained by a second model, the Michigan social psychological model. The ideas were published in '*The People Elect a President'* by Campbell and Kahn (1952) with further analysis presented in '*The Voter Decides*' by Campbell, Gurin and Miller (1954), and '*The American Voter'*, by Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes (1960). The model highlights the importance of psychological inputs such as environmental affinity in campaign effects. The central offering is the notion of 'partisanship' shaped by the concept of reference groups, this adds a key psychological dimension to voting processes and political choice. Partisanship is acquired through a socialization process, influenced by the values and attitudes of family, colleagues and peers. Similar to anticipatory socialization (Merton & Kitt, 1950), individuals can select a reference group which they do not belong to, and then begin to act to (what they perceive) are the rules of that grouping. The partisanship process means emotional bonds can be created between a voter and chosen political party, with different strengths and levels of involvement. Partisanship is therefore seen to be a genuine form of social identification, as "citizens have an enduring sense of what sorts of people belong to various parties and whether they identify with these social groups" (Green, Palmquist, & Schickler, 2002, p.9). Partisanship is therefore a psychological filter whereby parties can benefit from socialising within communities, but also restrains huge dramatic shifts in political allegiances. Partisanship is a foundation that can be built upon as well as broken down via Facebook.

Facebook presents parties with a new tool to generate partisanship, maintain a closer-knit support base and use this group to campaign for them. The platform offers parties a powerful avenue for anticipatory socialisation. Allowing parties to generate bonds with users, with these users in turn creating further flows of partisanship. Nevertheless, it is important to note that "the relationship between social-psychological factors and partisanship is challenged by researchers who believe that the Michigan model overestimates the role of long-term partisan loyalties (Dalton, Flanagan, & Beck, 1984; Dalton, 2000)" (Antunes, 2010, p.157). Nevertheless, the dynamic power of partisanship will play out via Facebook, as such parties must work to maintain/build relationships and communities.

Overall, both models offer insight into how Facebook can be used as a campaign tool and the new powers the platform offers parties to socialise voters, engender partisanship and to activate ordinary users to campaign to each other. However, it is important to note that these models offer relative stability in campaign power. Given, the Columbia and Michigan models promote social factors as key, they thus do not generally model for voters to radically change. This rigidity is however not the whole picture of British politics, as recently we have seen huge voting shifts from Brexit to the 'Red Wall' turning blue. As such, this research maintains the continuing importance of spatial and temporal factors alongside sociological factors. Given a more volatile electorate, Facebook offers parties novel sociological impacts, allowing for the utilisation of traditional concepts of voter behaviour in a more fluid way. Through Facebook parties can harness social and psychological aspects of the two voting models, while utilising new capacities in how parties can reach out to people via engaging socially located content forms such as video and memes.

Campaign learning and priming

In the traditional campaign literature, parties are found to send voters information to develop campaign learning, prime voters and persuade them to vote in a certain way. 'Campaign learning' is the process by which voters in an electoral setting have their knowledge of candidates or issues increased via an information-rich campaign environment. Political campaigns can disseminate authoritative and persuasive information to the voting public, with resultant campaign learning able to influence election outcomes (Lenz, 2009). Traditional campaigners use communication mediums such as the media, leaflets, or face to face contact, to prime individuals on what issues they should evaluate the candidates. This information is argued to increase voters' knowledge of issues surrounding an election (Seldon & Snowdon, 2005; Fridkin & Kenney, 2011); shaping how voters make up their minds (Popkin, 1995) and impacting upon voters issue saliency (Iyengar & Simon, 1993; Togeby, 2007). Thus, as a campaign progresses, campaign learning causes voters to have uncertainty about a candidate's policy positions and ideology reduced (Bartels, 1993;

Alvarez, 1998; Fridkin & Kenney, 2011). This is important as voters are averse to voting for unfamiliar candidates (Jacobson, 2013).

The campaign learning process helps to decrease incumbency advantage (Bartels, 1993; Holbrook, 1999) and increase issue voting (Kahn & Kenney, 1999). This process is argued to create an informed voting public (Delli, Carpini & Keeter, 1996), helping voters make decisions that mirror their predispositions (Gelman & King, 1993). The general learning process is well evidenced, however there is debate over which mediums (Table 2) are most effective for information dissemination. Further study is required because evidence of social media campaign learning is not yet clear (Bode, 2015), while emerging trends of permanent campaigning have altered potential impacts.

Table 2. Campaign tools across traditional, e-campaign and social media themes

Traditional		**E-campaign**		**Social media**	
Party controlled	*Not party controlled*	*Party controlled*	*Not party controlled*	*Party controlled*	*Not party controlled*
Leaflets	TV debates	Websites	Online news coverage	Organic communications, via video, images, words & memes	Social media news coverage
Canvassing	Local debates	Blogs	Online coverage	Targeted communications via video, images, words & memes	Social media coverage
Hustings	Newspaper coverage	Online advertising		Social media advertising	
TV advertisements	News coverage	Early campaign organisation software		Campaign organisation software	
Posters		Email		Private messaging networks	
Telephone		SMS			
Events/rally's					

Priming, which is heavily related to agenda setting, is where a political campaign formulates a specific issue into a salient factor for voters, by changing the values voters attach to different political issues (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Campaign teams can, by specifically drawing attention to certain issues and ignoring others, shape the narrative by which political candidates are tested by voters (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Druckman, 2004). Evidence of priming effects have been gathered by both observational and experimental studies (Iyengar, 1987; Krosnick & Kinder, 1990; Mendelberg, 2001).

A selection of parameters can be activated by campaigns, including; party identification (Berelson, Lazarsfeld & McPhee, 1954; McClurg & Holbrook, 2005), ideology (Gelman & King, 1993), economic evaluations (Vavreck, 2009), policy issues (Johnston et al., 1992), race (Mendelberg, 2001), gender (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991), candidate image (Druckman, Jacobs, & Ostermeier, 2004) and emotion (Brader, 2006). What remains unclear within the literature, is which of these parameters are most effective. The cognitive processes behind how voters weigh these different competing factors are not well understood (Miller & Peterson, 2004). It has been argued that campaigns mainly 'bring home' wayward voters, through reinforcing partisan attachments and prompting voters to recall why they affiliate with a party (Berelson et al., 1954; Finkel, 1993; Kramer, 1970). However, research has found that ideology or issues are more likely to be activated than partisanship (Achen & Bartels, 2006; Gelman & King, 1993; Hillygus & Shields, 2008), meaning that parties may struggle to draw back voters who see the parties as ideologically different to themselves. Given the high volatility of modern electorates including in the UK, declining partisan identification is a new factor for campaigners and researchers to contend with.

A central consideration in how political parties utilise Facebook for campaign learning and priming, are the topic and issue choices they engage in. Messaging and issue choice are known to follow certain rules, with there being an established rhetorical angle, such as an interest in repetition (Claibourn, 2008) or hyperbole (Bostdorff, 2017). Equally there is a voting behaviour angle, depending on the view taken of how the issue agenda operates alongside party competition. There is disagreement over how parties and voters approach the issue agenda, whether via a classical 'Downsian model' (Downs, 1957), 'dominance principle' (Riker, 1993), 'saliency theory' (Budge, 1993) or 'issue

ownership theory' (Budge & Farlie, 1983; Petrocik, 1996; Petrocik et al., 2003). Running through all these models is the innate importance of voters weighing up '*ideology vs. competency'* (Green & Hobolt, 2008). With this important relationship being altered by both the partisan and ideological natures of the voting public and the parties themselves. Green and Hobolt found that up until 2008 UK "parties were becoming more converged ideologically" (p.460), with other academics also noting the trend in Labour, the Conservatives (Deacon & Wring, 2002) and even the press (Brandenburg, 2006). With this there was also a rise in voters' evaluations of competence rather than ideological positions. However, since the Great Recession this trend has reduced or reversed. We have seen the return of greater ideological separation and the slow recurrence of ideology across the voting population (Temple & Grasso, 2018) and in what the two main parties offer voters (Schmitt & Loughran, 2017). How parties are presenting themselves on Facebook, including how they position themselves ideologically and how issues of competency are addressed requires examination.

Overall, despite the uncertainty in today's political environment, campaigns judiciously design messages for dissemination no matter the medium. Empirical research on traditional information dissemination shows that voting behaviour can be affected by awareness of political parties or candidates and their associated causes (Schmitt-Beck, 2004). This system will logically be replicable on Facebook, but processes may potentially operate differently. Table 3 shows the current landscape and development of different types of campaigns. It includes a formulation called 'Janus-faced campaigning', a concept that describes the nuanced manner in which parties use Facebook as a campaign tool, including abilities to use different Facebook pages, to speak to different audiences in different ways.

Table 3. Different types of political campaigns based on Norris (2000), Gibson & Rommele (2001) and Vergeer et al. (2011); last column added by author.

	Premodern	Modern	Professional	Personal	Janus-faced campaigning
Tools	Print media, rallies, meetings, foot soldiers	Broadcast television news, news ads, polls	Internet direct mail	Weblogs, micro-blogs, social networks	Organisational social media, specified social media use, data led, semi-hybrid online environment
Mode/ style	Labour intensive, interpersonal amateur	Capital intensive, mediated, indirect	Capital intensive, marketed, targeted, continuous	Low-cost, computer mediated, personalised, amateur	Low cost – organic / targeted advertising, personalised, amateur, and professionalised
Orientation to voter	Mobilising, voters = loyal partisans	Converting and mobilising, voters = loyal partisans and floating voters	Interactive, voters = consumers	Hyper interactive, voters = interested, personal	Broadcast to hyper personalised, voters are audience, participants and creators, very low barriers to engagement
Internal power – local/national?	Both	Local-centric	National centric	Local/national centric, bifurcation: more offline than online	Local-/national centric, dividing line blended, offline and online blended

A personalised network, the flow of communications and opinion leaders

A key element that makes Facebook a unique campaign tool, but also very difficult to analyse, is the personalised and individualised nature of each user's Facebook network. No two networks are the same as every user's ego-network is personalised according to their own content algorithm. Facebook pages present semi-public semi-private spaces for self-representation with borders

between offline and online mediated relations indistinct (Enli & Thumin, 2012). Facebook also lacks traditional gatekeepers (Polat, 2005) and offers users instantaneous response, as such campaigners must maximise these powerful capacities (Svensson, 2011; Marichal, 2013). For users, Facebook use has been argued to be driven by expressive motivations (Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008; Rosenberg & Egbert, 2011). User actions, interactions or reactions are argued to be devices of self-presentation (Zhao et al., 2008). Political campaigners must therefore appreciate that for their content to be read or disseminated by voters, it must fit within the user's political identity and intended ego-network (Svensson, 2011). Parties in a similar manner to shaping their messages for mass media redistribution (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999; Strömbäck, 2008), must do the same for public redistribution.

Facebook's network formation and users' networks have been understudied due to the impossibility of accessing appropriate Facebook data or user algorithms. Not only is the algorithm a closely guarded secret, but every single user's algorithm is personally unique. Thus, although we cannot understand an individual's network or why they see which content, we can at least understand that Facebook use is a personalised experience. This knowledge is vital for understanding how parties should use the platform. The nature of the Facebook network suggests the vitality of sociological personalised connections, with the strongest power likely to occur from trusted sources within smaller homophilic networks. Given a lack of campaign network studies we cannot certify this as fact, nevertheless we can appreciate the flow of communications through the platform and how parties sculpt their content. For example, we may see political campaigners using socio-demographic depiction in content to enhance impact (what Kreiss et al. call 'political identity ownership', 2020) or using certain pages for specific audiences.

Although this thesis is not specifically examining the flow of communications upon Facebook, the nature of communication flow on the platform will inform how parties use the tool and its potential reach. This is because successful organic communications on the platform require individuals to share the content sent by parties, with the make-up and nature of the primary audience informing who subsequently receives the messages. This is important

as Facebook has potentials for both expansive viral communications via multiple-flows, alongside microcosmic echo chambered one-step communications.

Three key theories contest how communications can flow on Facebook and social media; the one-step, two-step, and multi-step flow models. Lasswell (1938) asserted a communications model of one-step communication flow, also labelled the 'magic bullet theory model' (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). The thesis evolved during the rise of radio and cinema, with state control and propaganda a new hegemonic entity within Europe (Bennett, 1982). Taking these ideas Bennett and Manheim (2006) conceptualised a contemporary one-step flow of information within today's highly differentiated media landscape. They defined modern capacities for the targeting of messages directly to individuals rather than Lasswell's mass-audience flow. Within this system "opinion leaders are increasingly less likely to lead", because the "mass media in the one-step flow are increasingly fragmented and differentiated" (Bennett & Manheim, 2006, p.1). The direct communication paradigm (one-step flow), has thus been revived and seen in hyper-mediated communication practices such as Facebook targeted election campaigns[6] (Moore, 2016; Lilleker & Pack, 2016).

The largest body of work upon communications flow and voter behaviour, asserts a traditional but modified two-step flow model (Lotan et al., 2011; Choi, 2015; Hong, 2016; Pang & Ng, 2017; Lui et al., 2017). This system describes how messages originate from larger more important sources such as news websites, with this content then rebroadcast by smaller pages and users. Empirical studies have observed clear evidence of the two-step flow of communications, in political Twitter networks (Wu et al., 2011; Choi, 2014, 2015), Arab Spring campaigning on Facebook (Nisbet & Kotcher, 2009; Lotan et al., 2011) and during the 2005 UK General Election via websites (Norris & Curtice, 2008). The model has been re-emphasised in the social media age, because increasing numbers of people receive their news directly from social networks (Mitchell et al., 2011). This new communications structure propels information forward to individuals, mediated via powerful pages, individuals, or other amplifying opinion leaders. However, unlike the past, through social media networks ''socially-located opinion leaders spread information to many kinds of people, including citizens with little interest in news

[6] For example, the Conservatives 2015, 2017 & 2019 Facebook campaigns.

to begin with'' (Thorson & Wells, 2012, p.13). Therefore, parties have a new opportunity as campaign information may have become unavoidable.

It is also argued that social media offers something more complex than one- or two-step communications flow. The internet age has advanced the idea of multi-step flows via networked structures as originated by Weimann (1982). Multistep-flow specifies a process in which messages are distributed via a multitude of intermediary channels (Harik, 1971; Robinson, 1976; Iyengar, 1994; Park, 2013). Individuals now have control of the networked groups of which they are a part. For example, they will be members of small personal groups on WhatsApp or Facebook messenger, larger groups via Facebook pages and even larger bodies via Twitter and Facebook news feeds. The new capacity for average online social media users to use a myriad of channels to rebroadcast information, has been argued to give a new level of fluidity to communications, including large spill over effects (Choi, 2014; Hilbert et al., 2017). When users share content, this content will be further shared and rebroadcast by others, it may also be taken up by larger forces once again, meaning messages can be repeatedly fed into the online realm. Recently there has been a dominance of multi-step models given their flexibility in explaining use of both one- and two-step flows, alongside more complex communication strategies (Wright & Hinson, 2010).

Although communications may spill-over, communications do not flow equally as some people have more power than others. Parties can also take advantage of this hierarchical system via opinion leaders. The 2015, 2017 & 2019 UK general election campaigns saw the major parties' use multiple-step information flows from party or supporter pages to individuals, often via opinion leaders, alongside post virality and user engagement[7]. Within network studies and voter behaviour, the concept of opinion leadership concerns who powerful influencers are and what impact they have within communications networks. Both ideas are important, however given its supply side focus this thesis is more concerned with understanding who opinion leaders are. Researchers have tried a range of different analyses to identify opinion leaders online using a combination of variables (Lee et al., 2010; González et al., 2013). However, as there are multiple ways to operationalise influence, clear results are sparse (Dubois, 2014).

[7] Alongside their party pages, in 2017 Labour benefitted from pages created in support of Corbyn and opinion leaders such as Stormzy.

Describing someone as an ‘influencer’ (Rogers, 2010) or an ‘opinion leader’ can be problematic because it is difficult to identify traceable practices, specific tools or strategies, or even structures that are exclusive to influencers. Nevertheless, we know that parties have always used influential people such as celebrities or religious leaders to deliver their messages. These individuals act as opinion leaders for certain groups and are chosen for their characteristics including nationality, gender, ethnicity, or age.

In network studies and voting behaviour, opinion leaders are examined as a key element of information flow. Social media has arguably changed the nature of how opinion leaders can be used. Their ability to reach and influence certain groups may have been either amplified or diminished. Platforms such as Facebook have made it easier for parties to use or reach opinion leaders. However, as the public can not only consume information but also create it (Chadwick, 2011), candidates can now “preach *through* the converted” (Vissers, 2009), potentially reducing any need for traditional style opinion leaders. Although opinion leaders are clearly still targeted by political campaigns on social media. Academics disagree as to whether we have seen an increase or reduction in the power of traditional opinion leaders, or if there has been a radical change in their character[8].

Some find that the traditional view that opinion leaders are characterised by higher social status, sociability and more social contacts (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944) do not hold true in today’s online environment. Chang and Ghim (2011) discerned that on Twitter social status is not a powerful concept, instead expertise is prized. With opinion leaders “with more knowledge resources more engaged in producing content than other users” (Park, 2013, p.2). Thus, it is argued opinion leaders still exist online (Hwang & Shim, 2010) and have important roles, but their character and power has undoubtedly changed. Social networks also feature more leaders, as although a few opinion leaders will have supreme positions within these networks, other individuals’ power has also increased (Sun, Youn, Wu, & Kuntaraporn, 2006; Park, 2012). Overall, online opinion leaders are partly self-selected by action, rather than the traditional concept of leadership operating via reference groups (Lazarsfeld, 1944). Although social media opinion leaders

[8] There is however difficulty in delineating ‘opinion leaders’ (Gilkerson & Southwell, 2016).

still tend to play traditional roles as agenda or news disseminators, they are not as easily defined by their social, economic, or political standing. This has clear implications for political campaigning, as now anyone can become a leader, including those outside of traditional power systems[9]. The powers of anonymity granted by certain websites and discussion networks, means opinion leaders are potentially not chosen via ascribed socio-cultural-demographics, but instead their content. Although Facebook runs a real name policy[10], there is clearly much greater fluidity in how parties can use opinion leaders or how they develop.

More research is needed to understand opinion leadership more fully upon Facebook, with network architecture still under-appreciated (Bossetta, 2018). However, Facebook arguably offers parties the best of both worlds. Today's expanding online space, delimited via various means such as websites network construction or position, has led to the role of opinion leaders being a more fragmentary construct than before. Alongside the continuing but changed role of opinion leaders is the capacity for everyone to be an influencer (Bakshy, 2011). Nevertheless, both avenues are affected by the traditional sociological and expertise characteristics that previously defined opinion leaders. Clearly party campaigns must be smart in how they generate or use opinion leaders.

A 'social' network?

Facebook has created a network that recreates many social elements of people's worlds; people share online networks with their offline work colleagues, family, and friends. Thus, the sociological model offers a pertinent gateway for appreciating the platform, offering important considerations for voting and other key campaigning practices, especially persuasion, socialisation & mobilisation. Facebook offers parties the ability to reach undecided voters, the maintenance of party members and the assembly of an activatable body of online followers. The platform consequently has enormous potentials as a campaign tool. Facebook offers parties a new avenue for campaign learning and priming, however success is intermediated by the users of the network. Although Facebook offers parties

[9] For example @Rachael_Swindon on Twitter or Another Angry Voice on Facebook.
[10] Whilst other networks such as Twitter do not.

new technological capacities there are high stakes, as parties must understand their online audience and how to effectively communicate to different groups.

The widest application can see parties socialise or promote emotional bonds with large numbers through organic content, secondary virality or advertisements. However, Facebook's key is that it allows for the socialisation of interested users who will in turn act as socialisers of their wider networks via rebroadcasting content to friends and family. This socialisation process may have electoral consequences, but even at a smaller level Facebook can have impacts on the generation and maintenance of a core support group. This online virtual membership no longer needs to be an official membership, as Facebook offers a more fluid drop in/out framework that suits a possibly de/re-aligning populace. As such, this offers parties the ability to generate a more fluid partisanship than was previously possible. The platform provides parties a replacement of the church or bowling league, offering parties a new location to reach out to both partisan and de-aligned voters, with the capacities seen in the traditional sociological model now capable across a new medium. Facebook therefore offers political parties a powerful supplementary arena for organisation, socialisation, and network building. This is a lifeline in an era of declining social capital and the slow breakdown of offline community (Putnam, 2000).

Facebook is however not a perfect replacement as it operates via a different system with dissimilar pressures. We understand little about users' online social networks given each is unique, while the nature of the Facebook network is also opaque due to the secrecy of its algorithms. The current uncertainty of what sort of social network Facebook recreates presents a dilemma for the parties. Facebook may offer parties a stable recreation of users' offline networks giving parties a new gateway towards influencing voter behaviour in a traditional way. In this situation identifying the church or opinion leader equivalents on Facebook will be imperative. In contrast, due to differentiated network structure, and a basis in interests and activity, the platform could offer a sociologically based but more volatile campaign environment. Given the growing body of voters who feature weak party ties (Dalton, 2004), the potentials and pitfalls of this system will be greater. This more chaotic sociological system could mean that parties can reach out to new voter groups and more powerfully influence vote choice. However, there may be a greater chance for

communications to enter echo chambers or be dismissed due to lower emotive connections. Finally, Facebook may be an ineffectual system, socialisation may be arbitrary and fleeting, with users' online recreation of offline institutions not as powerful as those seen offline. If this were the case, then its use as a tool would be constrained towards partisan activity.

Facebook may be a volatile tool for an unpredictable age. We have recently seen greater volatility in voting patterns within the UK. Symptomatic examples of greater volatility are seen in the collapse of the Red Wall alongside the rise of Brexit politics. The BES has found that the last three elections 2015, 2017 and 2019 saw an incredible rate of voter movement, far beyond the level of volatility seen over the last few decades. This new volatile landscape has occurred within the context of the rise of social media. It may be no mere coincidence that both are concurrent as through social media new voting populations could be rationally updating their positions, or potentially taking up new less solid political positions that can be in flux. As such, social media may be acting as an accelerant of volatility, or as a catalyst for wider voter behaviour changes. Although we are seeing an electoral landscape in flux, this volatility doesn't mean Facebook is not effective as a campaign tool, as it is the platforms' persuasive capacities that may be adding to this fluid landscape.

Finally, given it is the focus of this thesis, it is important to highlight the vitality of organic campaigning. Facebook is both a personalised algorithmically based network, where information flows across steps and is socially based, but also a one-step direct communication tool via targeted advertisements. Parties now spend vast sums reaching voters directly without specific focus on organic message dissemination, perhaps exhibiting a loss of faith in the role of opinion leaders and organic reach. Most academic and media focus is currently on targeted advertising; however, the unclear power of targeted advertisements in academic evidence alongside declining UK Facebook advertising spends (Hotham, 2020) suggests restricted capacities. Targeted advertising is not a magic bullet, with organic campaigning given its sociological nature more important. Research highlights this fact, as Bond et al. in their study of 61 million Facebook users found, "the effect of social transmission on real-world voting was greater than the direct effect of the messages themselves" (2012, p.295). Facebook even takes this fact into consideration for their targeted advertising.

The platform adds ‘social leads’ through linking the advert to users’ friends, arguing that social placement improves performance. Having users see that their friends follow a political page that is sending the advert increases the messages power, clear evidence that shows targeted advertising succeeds when it mirrors organic campaigning. The evidence accumulated over the last decade shows the vitality of organic campaigning, however given a lack of evidence on dark posts, where the transformative political power lies in the use of social media is a continuing debate that requires further examination. Nevertheless, a sociological understanding of Facebook as a ‘social network’ that appreciates its capacities for multiple-steps of information flow is the most precise model for understanding Facebook’s power.

2.3: Facebook as an information dissemination tool

Studies of scale; adoption, engagement and reach

Many different areas relevant to an understanding of scale have been examined by researchers. A large focus of the literature is the study of usage as adoption. The study is important as “social media adoption by politicians is far from homogenous” (Quilan et al., 2018, p.2). However, the field has little to add to this study given that Facebook usage has become normalised across Britain. A less popular area are studies that focus on party Facebook engagement, or the number who are reached online. Only a handful of studies examine this area purely, instead most focus on engagement and approach, or engagement and participation, areas examined later. Larsson and Kalsnes studied Facebook campaign engagement in Norway and Sweden, they uncovered evidence of both an “election effect” and the “permanence of political campaigns” (2014, p.292). Later Larsson found ‘likes’ the most common engagement form for Norwegian party leaders, and that sizable parties receive the greatest engagement (2015). In Turkey, Sobaci & Hatipoglu discovered engagement levels of party content to be low and struggled to flow across audiences (2017). In contrast, Santana & Camaj found during the 2012 US Presidential election that messages were popular and spread towards greater audiences via engagement (2015). Studying the new reaction buttons in relation to Facebook news pages, Larsson & Kalsnes

ascertained that their use was unpopular compared to ‘like’ or ‘share’ interactions (2017). Gerbaudo et al., examined user engagement and emotive messaging of Facebook posts during the 2017 UK General Election campaign, the study found high Labour engagement, but used very limited codes gathered through text analysis (2019). Finally, a growing body of work looks at engagement with election results. Bene found that candidates Facebook pages share counts are associated with the electoral outcome (2018), while Lin identified a similar trend in Taiwan across all engagement forms (2017). Overall, we can appreciate millions of voters globally are engaging with parties on Facebook, however engagement is an under-examined area with many important questions still not fully understood. These include the role of different pages, temporal qualities such as permanent campaigns and the importance of internal/external events.

Studies of content approaches

An area of attention are studies of usage as approach, examining candidate or party use of content, language, and rhetoric. The field is generally focussed on candidates’ pages rather than party or leader pages despite lower followership.

Rhetoric

The use of populist rhetoric has received attention. Zulianello, Albertini & Ceccobeli examined “eighty-three political leaders from twenty-six Western and Latin American countries” finding little evidence of a populist communications strategy (2018, p.439). Koc-Michalska et al. studied 117 parties across 14 countries during the 2014 European Parliamentary election. They ascertained that populism occurred in content or in style within 1/3 of the communications made. Finally, Lilleker et al. (2018) examined the content forms of Facebook posts, they found logical patterns of populist rhetoric in Facebook use. Outside of populism, gender and rhetoric has also been examined. Yarchi & Samuel-Azran (2018) observed that female and male Israeli 2015 candidates used similar rhetoric, whilst Aristolian rhetoric has been found popular in Israeli politicians (Samuel-Azran et al., 2015). Clearly parties are using rhetoric to campaign via

the platform to maximise their content's impact, with the rhetoric strategies used requiring further study beyond those seen[11].

Content topic

A select but growing group of studies examine content topic differences between pages during an election. In examining US users and parties' Facebook content. David et al. (2016) found that left wing parties and voters were more likely to mention "protest" in their Facebook posts, whilst right-leaning parties and voters mostly mentioned religion (this finding is also supported by Vaccari et al., 2016). Alashri et al. (2016) examined post sentiment during the 2016 Presidential Election via 9,700 posts across five candidates (Clinton, Trump, Sanders, Cruz, and Kasich). Their conclusions assert "that Republican candidates were more likely to share information on controversial events… whilst Democratic candidates focussed on social policy issues" (Alashri et al., 2016, p.231). Stier et al. (2018) discovered that 2013 German Federal Election candidates used Facebook and Twitter differently, with parties using different topics than those the mass audience cared about. Gerbaudo et al., (2019) examined textual topic choice of 2017 UK election posts, Brexit featured greatly. However, the study did not examine the non-textual content of the posts, a key failure given the nature of modern communications. Overall, there are many gaps in understanding topic approaches; coding schemes are partial with limited longitudinal study, while topic choice modelling focuses on text thus failing to appreciate video or images.

Content forms and quality

Video has arisen recently as the content form of choice. However, the number of studies that specifically examine content approaches, especially forms such as video or photo is limited. Content analyses upon the Obama campaign ascertained that Obama's Facebook page used only a few text-only messages during the 2012 campaign (Gerodimos & Justinussen, 2015), with partisan aligned media resources used by both parties in crafting Facebook responses to

[11] Most rhetoric studies, studies of topic or content form examine content approaches in conjunction with engagement, these are seen later.

the debates (Edgerly et al., 2016). A new field examines user generated content, such as memes and humorous user made videos, these have been found to be important for carrying information (Edgerly et al., 2016). This growing area is important as parties diversify their communications approaches. Content quality is of vital importance as voter awareness has been found to be significantly related to the quality of traditional campaign material. Conroy et al. (2012) found that a probable reason for Facebook groups having limited impact on political knowledge or participation was poor quality content. As the Facebook information space has become larger and more competitive, content quality has also increased, leading to a continuing arms race and battle for engagement. Overall, Facebook has allowed parties to use a new range of content mediums such as interactive video and photo, yet evidence of how parties have employed these forms is limited.

Personalisation of politics

Although personalised content approaches are apparent across a myriad of media sources; the most important element of personalisation is the modern focus on politicians and party leaders, not parties themselves. This is likely driven by what some academics argue is our political systems 'presidentialization' (Mughan, 2000; Poguntke & Webb, 2005), or wider 'mediatization'[12] (Rintel et al., 2016). As McAllister (2007) asserts, there is 'substantial evidence' that during campaigns leaders have become increasingly visible in the media at the expense of parties (Plasser & Lengauer, 2008), this has been a deliberate party campaign approach such as with New Labour (Street, 2012). There is a large body of research upon personalisation, however its focus is generally upon the traditional media not social media campaigning. Twitter has received the greatest body of examination (e.g. Samuel-Azran et al., 2015; Kruikemeier et al., 2016; Loader et al., 2016; McGregor et al., 2017), while Facebook is seeing a smaller but growing research body. Facebook appears to exhibit high levels of personalised content from not only the media, but also from party and party leader Facebook pages.

[12] Mediatization argues that the media shapes and frames the processes of political communication, thus shaping society.

Firstly, some studies have found personalisation, even if not the specific goal of the research (see Gunn & Skogerbø, 2013; Klinger & Svensson, 2015; Gerodimos & Justinussen, 2015). Of studies specifically testing for personalisation, Macnamara & Kenning (2011) examined the 2010 Australian General Election, they found that Julia Gillard and party leaders dominated Facebook content. This is supported in evidence from Taiwan, where Wen compared web 1.0 (candidate messages) and 2.0 messages (candidate messages highlighted by "friends"), finding "that while the 1.0 messages emphasized policy more than character, the 2.0 messages emphasized character over policy" (Wen, 2014, p.19). In Europe, Gunn & Skogerbø (2013) observed the 2009 Norwegian General Election to be heavily personalised, with Facebook viewed as an important campaign tool. Obama's 2012 Facebook campaign has also shown evidence of being heavily personalised via his usage of family imagery (Gerodimos & Justinussen, 2015). Recently Metz et al., examined personalised communications finding that emotive content is well used and yields greater engagement (2019). Overall, it is vital to appreciate whether British parties are using Facebook in a way that "has become increasingly focused on personalities and personal traits of politicians" (Gunn & Skogerbø, 2013, p.758 referring to Hjarvard, 2008). Facebook may present a clear example of the radical shift in how politics is being communicated using leaders above party brands.

Attack advertising/negative campaigning

Although empirical studies of attack advertising on Facebook are limited, campaign content targeted at political opponents and their policies is well evidenced on social media (e.g., Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008; Druckman et al., 2010; Ceron & d'Adda, 2016). Deemed an alternative practice to information dissemination; negative campaigning is an age-old phenomenon. Some scholars have asserted the form to be growing in use in the social media age (Fridkin & Kenney, 2012; Walter et al., 2014; Ceron & d'Adda, 2016; Borah, 2016). This is because social media has fewer gatekeepers alongside less stringent codes for factuality/formality. One only needs to view the Conservative or Momentum campaign on Facebook to see that parties clearly love to engage in negative campaigning, the question is why? There "is practically a mantra among political

practitioners (Kamber, 1997) that it (electorally) works", which "has reverberated throughout the scholarly literature" (Lau & Rovner, 2009, p.295). It is theorised that as vote choice operates on candidate evaluations, attacks can lower opinions of those targeted creating a logic for effectiveness. However, there is a potential backlash threat if attacks appear meanspirited (Garramone, 1984; Kahn & Kenney, 1999). Nevertheless, if one can attack and still achieve a net gain from the act, then logically campaigners will engage in the practice despite potential negative effects. Despite this; empirical studies have found a lack of evidence of campaign effects from negative campaigning. Lau et al. (2007) examined 43 studies finding little evidence of vote choice effect, but that negative attack ads can stimulate knowledge.

So, if the effects are minimal why are parties still using the form? One idea that is continuously asserted is the demobilisation hypothesis (Ansolabehere et al. 1994; Ansolabehere & Iyengar 1995). In the original study Ansolabehere et al. found that participants exposed to a negative ad were 5% less likely to intend to vote[13]. Demobilisation of opposition groups is potentially a clear reason for use, but attack advertising also offers partisan mobilisation abilities. Negative campaigning can help energise party members and certain voter groups. It has been said that "negative campaigning fits better with an offensive campaign (rather than a defensive one). This is because the first is aimed at volatile voters and the opponent's adherents, but the latter is aimed at mobilising a party's own adherents' (Walter, 2014, p. 45). This is potentially why we see the form so much on Facebook given the potential to activate volatile groups. Nevertheless, attack advertising on the platform may be more related to activating partisans than floating voters. Overall, negative attack advertising is common. However, as well as little evidence of any effect on vote choice, there is also a lack of Facebook specific study of prevalence, implementation, or engagement.

Targeted advertising

Paid-for elements on Facebook, including a myriad of options for micro-targeting intended voters, have presented themselves as invaluable to certain

[13] Although later study has disputed these findings (Farrell & Schmitt-Beck, 2002).

parties as important voters can now be directly reached. Parties have always targeted voters, especially on a local basis as seen in UK leaflets (Shephard, 2007), however the ability to target has radically improved in the social media age. As Farrell (2006) asserts, campaigns in the digital age 'differ in fundamental ways from those of a mere ten or twenty years before' as new capabilities are helping parties 'find out what the public wants to hear and market the product accordingly' (Farrell, 2006, p.125). Targeted campaigning is observable in campaign content targeted at specific voter segments or interests (e.g., Hooghe & Vissers, 2008; Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008; Bimber, 2014), with content developed in conjunction with party data, consumer data and other data sources. Facebook itself can deliver targeted advertising through its own highly detailed data on users, allowing even laypersons to send bespoke hyper-targeted messages to users. This new toolkit for hyper-personalised campaigning constitutes an important form of personalisation at the disposal of parties' campaign teams. The ability for content to be targeted specifically to recipients is a radical increase in the level of detail available to parties.

The more 'one size fits all' logic that dominated the pre-internet era has thus shifted to more segmented approaches. However, it is important to appreciate that use is more limited than many imagine, with a focus on broad targeting seen in 2019 for example (Hotham, 2020). Evidence of effectiveness is also very limited in part due to data access issues. In the best current study on Facebook adverts available, Hager finds "tentative support that online ads positively affect vote choice" (2019, p.1091). Much more in-depth analysis needs to be undertaken as direct campaign effects are still a relative unknown. However, targeted advertising has uses outside of pure campaigning to voters, for example it is extensively used for A/B testing (Hotham, 2019). Parties today have a powerful avenue to test messages via clickthroughs and engagement, no longer having to rely on focus groups. As such, parties have a new tool to increase the effectiveness of their online and offline messages.

What is being sent via targeted advertisements in the UK is also an unknown. A study by Anstead et al., (2018) examined whotargetsme.com Facebook advertising from the 2017 General Election, they found 60% of 1,376 Labour ads attacked the Conservatives. However, the work only examined the text elements of the posts and used poor quality data. The best current analysis

of content of targeted advertising is seen in recent work on the 2017/2019 General Election[14] (Hotham, 2019). There was a heavy focus on the EU and leadership, with targeted adverts of a different form to organic posts. Overall, targeted advertising is underexplored requiring ground up investigation.

Content and interaction analyses

The largest body of studies are those that have examined Facebook engagement in conjunction with political content. These examinations have tried to ascertain what content types users are more likely to engage with. The general findings are that personalised, negative and humorous forms of content spark the greatest engagement. Study in the US has focused on Presidential campaigns. Woolley et al., (2010) found Obama to be more popular in terms of interactions and portrayed more positively. Gerodimos & Justinussen (2015) found Obama's most popular posts contained personalised pictures of his two daughters. Personalised communications are clearly popular with audiences. More recently, Xenos et al., found for US party Facebook pages, that "variations in the tone, timing and content of posts (distinct from contextual factors) are significantly related to how users respond through likes and comments" (2017, p.826). Examinations in the US show that parties engage in considered content approaches with audience engagement discerning. This importance of content approach is also seen outside the US. Muniz et al. found that across Spain and Mexico "differences in citizen engagement derive from the different engagement activities deployed by political actors on Facebook" (2019, p.112). Efforts made by parties have effects, with one of the approaches commonly seen being negative campaigning. This has been shown to be effective in gathering increased Facebook engagement in Israel (Samuel-Azran, Yarchi & Wolfsfeld, 2017) and Europe (Larsson & Kalsnes, 2014).

In the most comprehensive analysis available Bene examined Hungarian electoral candidates' political content. His results demonstrate that citizens are highly reactive to "negative emotion-filled, text-using, personal, and activity-

[14]https://www.psa.ac.uk/psa/news/general-election-2019-what-are-parties-telling-us-their-targeted-adverts and https://www.psa.ac.uk/psa/news/digital-campaign-targeted-advertising-2019-general-election accessed 07/02/2010

demanding posts" (Bene, 2017, p.514). The study also showed that virality was especially enabled by memes, videos, negative content, mobilizing posts and posts containing calls for sharing. Bene (2017) later examined the top 25 most viral posts during the 2014 Hungarian General Election campaign, finding negativity to be most vital for high engagement. As for large multi-case analysis Lilleker et al. (2016) provide the strongest study. They examined 28 nations' parties' content during the 2014 European elections. Examining total relationships between content and engagement, they found videos and photos more viral than other forms. They also ascertained that followership positively influenced interactions, this suggests some architectural elements to online success outside of content choice[15].

In the UK only one study has examined party Facebook content with engagement thoroughly, Lee & Campbell examined 'posters' sent by parties on their Facebook pages between 2013 and the General Election of 2015. They found that; "*despite a clear emphasis on sharing images, few received widespread attention, arguably limiting their persuasive role, however prevalence suggests a role for parties trying to maintain relationships… by displaying virtual presence, credibility, and belonging, paralleling traditional window posters*" (Lee & Campbell, 2016, p.313). This is interesting as it follows the idea that campaigning on social media mirrors campaigning practices offline. However, the study only comparatively examined posters by total engagement, failing to examine the content or subsequent engagement in more detail.

In contrast to the studies seen above, not all assert the importance of content approaches. Steka, Surowiec & Mazak found that in Czechia and Poland the "level of support for a party status is largely independent of the content of the message in both countries" (2018, p.1) with policy related subjects gathering the greatest negativity. Equally, Silva et al., established that news content engagement was related to the importance of events not the content form (2018). Finally, Lilleker et al. found the importance of content frequency and timing rather than content form on engagement (2016). There is also a potential link between audiences, engagement and page approach. Fenoll & Cano-Oron (2017) found that audiences of pages over the 2015 Spanish election differ, with newer or

[15] There is also limited evidence of the impact of content tone on engagement, with negative content breeding negative engagement (see Appendix 1).

traditional parties' audiences engaging with content in different ways. Thus, there is some debate around whether engagement is a form of mindless clicktivism, or if content approaches inform engagement. This thesis stands with the body of work that supports the latter; even party members do not just mindlessly consume political content they do not find engaging. Although some nuance is required, parties spend millions in developing engaging content for a reason.

Overall, in the United Kingdom, Facebook based quantitative content analysis remains an underexplored area. Gaps exist in the literature across how parties craft Facebook content and the impact it has on their online audience. However, there is also the question of what we learn about Facebook from content/engagement analyses. Engagement is useful for appreciating success and reach online. However, as this thesis is more interested in the potentials of Facebook as a campaign tool in terms of approach, this thesis uses engagement to solely appreciate scale and participation. This research is therefore interested in examining the gaps that exist with the classification of Facebook approach as related to a typology, rather than simply what messages are the most engaged with.

Information dissemination on Facebook

Social media and e-campaigning have given parties new opportunities to create and disseminate exciting visual communication information. However clear evidence of the effects of this new informational tool are limited. Bode in one of the few studies on campaign learning, asserts that "the potential for users to learn political information from social media exists, but is not always realized within the general population" (Bode, 2016, p.24). Although social media can "influence perceptions of candidate traits" (Bystrom & Dimitrova, 2014, p.1568). Evidence of overall learning effects is slim, except for in younger people (Edgerly et al., 2018). Given the complexity of the modern media environment and the "idiosyncrasies across individuals in the rate and mode through which they encounter political information" (Edgerly citing Thorson & Wells, 2016), it is understandable that direct effects have not materialised. Nevertheless, despite these considerations Facebook is a central core of parties' campaigns, meaning they clearly believe the tool can deliver campaign learning, frame events and prime issues. The lack

of evidential clarity can therefore be addressed from the supply side, by examining how parties are using Facebook as an information tool. Although this approach fails to show a direct causal relationship on learning, we can still show how parties are using Facebook to try to generate campaign learning.

Although Facebook is a unique system for the delivery of information, there is a lack of study of the approaches used (Ceron & d'Adda, 2015) and how these fit with the sociological dimensions Facebook affords. Theoretically, information provision may fit into ideas of the sociological model of voting behaviour. Parties may play the system via appropriating opinion leaders and developing interactive representative content that is more likely to be shared. Equally important, is the technological improvements that Facebook offers, with its capabilities in audio-visual communication vastly superior to other tools. Parties now effectively have their own cable-TV channels, as well as the ability to deliver a myriad of other content forms from posters to memes. Previous evidence has found that information dissemination is highly standardised (Lilleker et al., 2011). However, as well as the landscape changing fast, e-campaigning mediums and social media have been found to provide parties greater autonomy to determine what, when and how campaign information is disseminated (Gibson & Ward, 2000a, 2000b; Foot & Schneider, 2006). Consequently, more research needs to be undertaken to show whether Facebook has enabled parties to innovate their campaign information and sustain voters' interests.

The weaknesses of traditional mediums for information dissemination and priming, such as their broadcast nature or lack of social placement and interactivity, signal Facebooks specific benefits. Although academic findings present a mixed picture and usage appears overwhelmingly conservative, many avenues of impact and approach are still not addressed. Key underexamined aspects that may be central to information dissemination include; comparative longitudinal examination across parties and page types, the study of different temporal campaign periods such as the permanent campaign, and how novel aspects are used such as multiple topics.

2.4: Facebook as a tool for participation

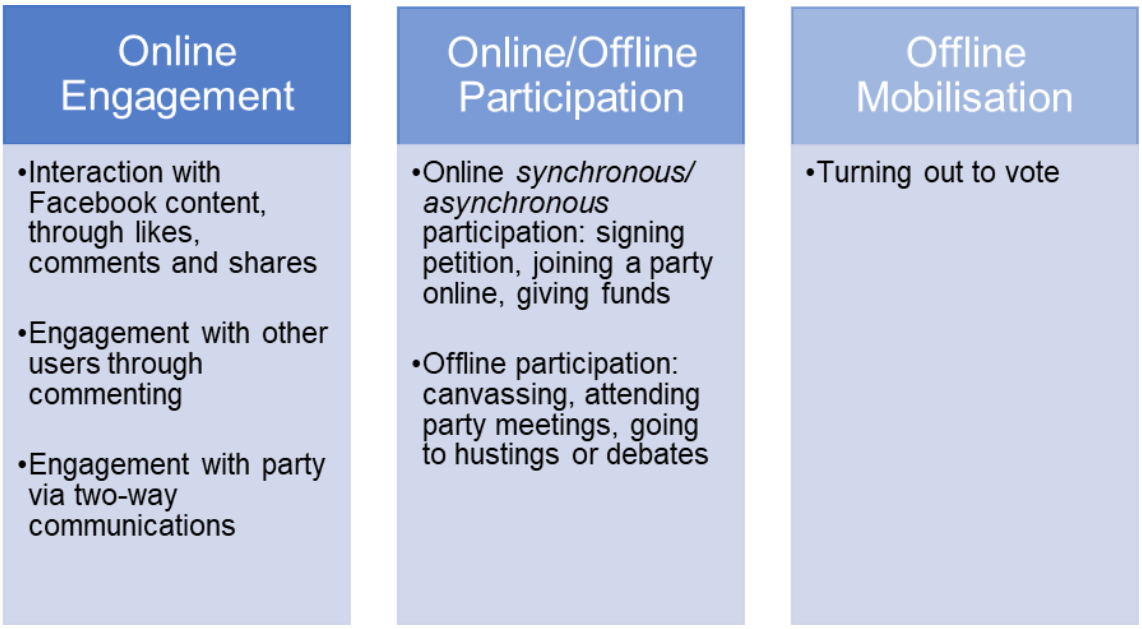
Participation in the Facebook era

This thesis is interested in the supply side approaches taken by parties to engender engagement, participation and mobilisation. Content can push for direct action, asking the viewer to vote, visit a page, join a party or attend a rally. Most academic study is interested in the direct causal effects of different campaign mediums on different forms of participation. This area of research is outside the direct remit of this thesis given a supply side focus. However, a firm understanding of the capacities of campaigning for participation is required as it defines a core logic of Facebook use.

In the traditional and e-campaign literature mobilisation and participation are the main studied effects. Examinations focus on tools used and overall effects such as voting. Mobilisation in the traditional literature is normally defined as get out the vote operations, with the goal to push party supporters to vote on Election Day. Participation is viewed as other forms of action such as attending a rally, joining a party or canvassing. However, as more participation tools evolved the definition of political participation has become wider (Christensen, 2011; Van Deth, 2014). This has blurred the margins between political and civic participation, reducing clarity between participation and mobilisation. Scholars now study a vast array of forms of action from voting to online political discussion as 'participation' without using the term mobilisation (Kenski & Stroud, 2006; Dalton, 2008; Fowler et al., 2008; Kavanaugh et al., 2008). Some literature even uses the terms mobilisation or participation interchangeably (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993, p.25). While other studies use the term participation as a broad definition, and mobilisation as an organisational voting concept (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008; Bennett & Segerberg 2013; Theocharis et al. 2015). To clear up this confusion, within this thesis participation is seen as the broad definition of all online/offline action including offline mobilisation, online/offline participation and participation via engagement. This thesis views three levels of participation under one umbrella term. This thesis also places a difference between online and offline participation as per Gibson & Cantijoch (2013). The conceptualisation (Figure 1) is generated

to clearly demarcate what parties are intending as the outcome of their content approaches.

Figure 1. Participation in three themes



This thesis has decided to investigate a wider interpretation of participation because Facebook's nature is one in which there is a cascade of participation. From the lowest level of engagement, towards participation online or offline and then electoral mobilisation. The potential breadth of impact from Facebook means it is important to use a wide definition for understanding participation on the platform. This thesis thus supports the extended spill-over model of participation as asserted by Cantijoch, Cutts and Gibson (2016). This position is against researchers who negate the importance of engagement as an effective form of participation and a starter action towards greater activities. These proponents instead assert engagement to be slacktivism or clicktivism (Carpentier, 2011).

Direct/indirect mobilisation and participation in the traditional and e-campaigning literature

Mobilisation like many other aspects of campaigns is hard to measure because of the difference between direct and indirect mobilisation. Studies must fight against endogeneity and self-selection; often this is an impossible task due to the diffuse way information can travel. Direct mobilisation is where a party contacts a voter directly and this contact leads to the voter's electoral mobilisation. In contrast, indirect mobilisation defines the subsequent information cascades that occur after direct contact, as the voter may motivate voting amongst their social circle (McClurg, 2004). It is important to note that there is also the potential for direct and indirect participation, where social contact prompts a friend to attend an event. The concept of direct and indirect effects has many similarities to the flow of communications previously examined. The key difference is a focus on the impact these activities have on participation rather than on other effects such as learning.

Traditional campaigns have been found to exert a direct mobilisation effect, via experimental studies (Gerber & Green, 2000; Lassen, 2005), large-scale comparative analyses (Karp & Banducci; 2007) and several individual country studies (Carty & Eagles, 1999; Hillygus & Shields, 2008). Within the UK, a variety of indicators both at the individual and aggregate levels, show that intense campaigning at district level delivers electoral payoffs (Clarke et al., 2004, 2009; Fieldhouse & Cutts, 2009; Fisher et al., 2011; Whiteley et al., 2013). However, traditional campaign evidence of indirect campaign effects is more mixed. McClurg found "the primary social consequence of party contacts is to alter the substance, but not the volume, of politically oriented conversations (indirect) that occur in social networks. These conversations increase the salience of the campaign in the electorate but have only a mild effect on levels of campaign involvement" (2004, p. 406). Indirect mobilisation effects therefore matter, but these are not as cut and dry as direct campaign effects and are more limited. Examining wider forms of participation, traditional communication approaches have been found to have a direct effect on some behaviours. Traditional media had been found to be related to higher levels of direct civic participation (Shah et al., 2001), while gains in political knowledge have also been discovered via

indirect effects (McLeod et al., 1999). Overall, despite difficulties in analysis, there is evidence that traditional campaign activity can mobilise and engender participation.

When the internet entered the campaign toolkit, e-campaign mediums were thought by optimists to offer new avenues for boosting mobilisation and participation. This would occur by these new tools' lowering costs and creating new pluralistic political networks (Ward et al., 2003). Early on, studies found websites to be an important part of a winning election strategy (Gibson & McAllister, 2006; D'Alessio, 1997) especially studies of the Howard Dean campaign (Hindman, 2005; Rainie, Cornfield, & Horrigan, 2005). Equally, email was found to be 'plausibly effective' in boosting turnout in the US (Nickerson, 2007). However, web 1.0 methods, due to pre-modern capabilities and the low usage of the internet by voter bases worldwide, led many researchers to find evidence of 'politics as usual' across direct and indirect mobilisation (Margolis & Resnick, 2000; Greer & LaPointe, 2004).

E-campaign tools show even clearer results when examining participation. Norris found that websites "function as pluralistic forums by facilitating oppositional challengers and increasing the visibility of minor and fringe parties… facilitating interactive links between citizens and parties" (2003, p.21). Blogs were used successfully to organise people during the Howard Dean campaign (Hindman, 2005; Rainie, Cornfield, & Horrigan, 2005) and email was found to have an important role in building up a solid contactable support base (McCarthy & Saxton, 2001; Jackson, 2001, 2004). Internet use has thus been found to be related to direct political participation (Shah et al., 2002), with online interaction supplementing indirect interpersonal relations, leading to greater voluntary association membership and political participation (Wellman et al., 2001, 2003). These studies display the abilities of digital campaign tools to engender some direct and indirect participation, however revolutionary capacities were elusive.

With increased study and application development, the relative academic consensus of an 'e-minimal effects' thesis, has changed to one where web 2.0 e-campaigning mediums are now recognised as important tools. However, web 2.0 tools such as websites are today not viewed as a game changer for direct or indirect mobilisation or participation, but as a key element of a wider toolkit. With the rise of social media, it is this avenue that has now taken over most research

and dominated the narrative of change. There is a lesson from this body of research; it is difficult to study something given a lack of data access. With it clear that over time evidence becomes stronger, as researchers' abilities to examine the phenomenon increases.

Direct/Indirect mobilisation and participation in the social media literature

A medium for direct/indirect electoral mobilisation

Social media can develop direct voter mobilisation through party-political messages, calls to contribute and outreach operations (Gibson & McAllister, 2008; Bimber, 2014). Facebook use by voters has been linked with increased voting turnout via apolitical GOTV 'I'm voting' messages (Haenschen, 2016). However, as Boulianne highlights, "although metadata offer a broad picture of increasing effect size… we cannot address whether the relationship between online political information and voting is increasing in the United States" (2018, p.18). Equally, evidence of direct mobilisation is less compelling than that seen for indirect mobilisation. Bond et al. in their study of 61 million Facebook users exposed to voter participation information during the 2010 US congressional elections, found that "the effect of social transmission on real-world voting was greater than the direct effect of the messages themselves" (2012, p.295). Thus, it appears the indirect capacities of social media may be where the power lies, while direct effects are less pronounced. This mirrors studies that have found social media enlarges people's social networks, thus increasing users' exposure to mobilizing information (Gil de Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012; Tang & Lee, 2013). Parties appreciate Facebook as it is a fusion offering both direct and indirect avenues of influence. Content can be sent directly to activate voters via organic and targeted advertising, with this content in turn potentially propelled further by viewers rebroadcasting the content.

Examining parties' approaches to mobilisation via Facebook content, outside the UK in Switzerland Klinger found "only 6% of party postings were aimed at engaging voting" (Klinger, 2013, p.719). Magin et al. found similar interest with only 10% of party posts in Germany and Austria pushing viewers to vote (2017). The surprisingly small fraction of content seen across these studies suggest

alternative uses for Facebook content. The sole UK study on party approaches to mobilisation content is Lee & Campbell's study of 2015 Facebook party posters. The study found 19.5% of party content pushed users to vote, however there was "some significant variation between the parties, suggesting different strategies possibly at work" (2016, p.337). Even though only focusing on poster content, the study highlights the potential wide divergence in tactics seen between parties. Overall, mobilisation appears to be an important supply side approach and potential effect, with the growing number of studies finding positive electoral results highlighting the importance of comparative examination.

A medium for direct/indirect participation

Participation relates to the potential of Facebook pages to deliver direct offline or online effects, such as making people partake in campaign meetings, join in canvassing or discuss politics online with their friends (Conway et al., 2013; Graham et al., 2013). These forms of activation of the voter base can spill over from both the online and offline. However, social media is unique in its abilities to allow mobilizing information to travel so seamlessly through users' networks or be micro-targeted to specific voter groups. Facebook has been side-lined for studies which examine Twitter (see Appendix 2 for a literature review). While much of the focus has been upon youth participation online and civil activism, not political campaign participation.

Early on, business as usual e-minimal effects results were returned akin to those seen for web 1/2.0 tools (Boulianne, 2012). Overall evidence of the effects of social media on political participation was mixed, however evidence is evolving rapidly. Boulianne's excellent series of meta-analyses have found effects to be growing; "contemporary research has shown a substantial positive coefficient. These results provide some reason to be optimistic about the significance of digital media in citizen's participation" (2018, p.18). However, as she adds "the dramatic increases do not align with the cycle for U.S. presidential elections" (2018, p.18) meaning that increased engagement and participation is often happening outside of electoral periods. This suggests not only the impact social media can have on participation online and offline, but fascinating potentials in permanent campaigning that must be examined further. Boulianne suggests that

the greater evidential clarity is due to “diffusion of technology across the masses and changes in the types of use, particularly the rise of social networking sites and tools for online political participation” (2018, p.1). This rise coincides with the greater capacities of social media for direct and indirect influence on participation. An explanation not posited by Boulianne for growing effects is that parties are getting better at using social media. Parties have changed their content on Facebook and other social media, this may have helped alter participation effects. The use of video and larger followership may add to greater direct and indirect participation. Parties have also generated better permanent campaign avenues for participation via hybrid modes of offline/online participation. As Boulianne asserts “further research might want to re-evaluate the separation of online and offline activities implicit in this body of research, opting to study hybridity in media use (Chadwick, 2014) and mixing modes of participation, blurring boundaries between online and offline activities” (2018, p.1).

The limited number of Facebook studies on participation approach in content have found an innate conservatism mirroring mobilisation content. Klinger found “only 11% of Swiss party postings aimed at engaging participation” (2013, p.719), while Magin et al. found similarly low rates as only 6% of Austrian parties’ posts pushed for event participation (2017). UK studies that have looked at parties’ Facebook participatory content approaches is still limited to Lee & Campbell’s study (2016). They found 64% of studied content featured mobilising elements such as asking to share (40%) or visit a website (15%). Results show an interest in generating participation over mobilisation, with British party interest potentially far higher than that seen in other European countries. This potential interest is increased as a study by Bossetta, Segesten & Trenz studying the Brexit campaign, found a “general spill-over effect from media pages to campaign pages suggesting a positive correlation between political interest and online participation on Facebook” (2017, p.173). On Facebook there is a whole new ecosystem of participation that can be harnessed by parties. Although parties are showing conservatism, evidence is slowly growing to show clear impacts.

A medium to develop two-way relationships

This thesis is interested in parties' use of Facebook content to develop relationships as well as action. The interactive capabilities of the internet did lead some scholars to believe it may be a 'magic elixir' that would solve the problems facing modern democracies (Stromer-Galley, 2000). It was argued it could do this by facilitating direct methods of communication between politicians and citizens. Social media and e-campaign tools allow voters the 'chance to enter into real online dialogues with representatives' (Baumgartner et al., 2010, p.23), developing voter engagement, campaign feedback and building relationships (Bechmann & Lomborg, 2013; Briones et al., 2011).

However, despite possibilities it has been commonly found that parties generally avoid genuine voter dialogue. Oelsner & Heimrich examined German MP use of Facebook across 2012, they found little politician enthusiasm for dialogue with users (2015). Similarly, Ross et al. (2014) examined 1148 wall posts of New Zealand MPs before the 2011 General Election, they also found that most politicians did not invite dialogue with readers. Within the UK, a study on Scotland during the 2010 UK General Election found that Facebook "was adopted by a significant number of parties and candidates but was used primarily for one-way flow of information to known associates and party activists" (Baxter, Marcella & Varfis, 2011, p.464)[16]. Even recent studies have seen similar results, Magin et al. found that Facebook is used only as a mass communication tool by parties with little interest shown in forming real voter/party relationships (2017), with this also supported by Heiss, Schmuck & Matthes (2019). This top down one-way approach to communications by politicians is well demonstrated in the evidence. Studies show that Facebook content is not designed to initiate dialogue, with usage not presenting the democratic revolution envisaged. Facebook appears to not be used for two-way communications. Instead, as Bronstein et al. assert, parties are using the platform "to disseminate their ideas, plans and strategies, politicians focus their interactions with the audience on the creation and maintenance of affective alliances" (2018, p.551). Given the higher rates of interest shown by British parties in participatory content (Lee & Campbell, 2016),

[16] This finding has been challenged by empirical (Lilleker, 2014) and descriptive UK studies (Lilleker & Jackson, 2016; Moore, 2016).

it is possible UK parties may be different. Therefore, the idea must be retested with a focus on communications via avenues such as discussion orientated language or links within posts.

Facebook engagement as participation not slacktivism

Research undertaken has repeatedly emphasised engagement as a key characteristic of online political communications. Engagement offers an important new avenue for participation in politics (Jackson & Lilleker, 2009; Vromen et al., 2016; Xenos et al., 2017). However, at the same time as an optimist vision was forming so was a slacktivist critique. This position argues that social media engagement operates in isolation from other participation forms, with interactivity a one-way online only relationship, unrelated to other online or offline participation forms (Jurgenson, 2011). Mirroring the research on the use of two-way communications, critics associate little importance to the bonded engagements of party-political content and users' likes, shares and comments. However, I believe that this slacktivist thesis fails to account for the reality of contemporary campaigning.

Engagement has been conceptualised poorly within the literature, with engagement in studies of social media operationalised and defined through divergent conceptions. A large focus is on supply-side studies examining parties approaches to developing and instigating public interaction (in the hope of democratic renewal), and the development of two-step flows of information. With the bar set so high, these studies overwhelmingly find top-down one-way communications (Lee & Shin, 2012; Lilleker & Koc-Michalska, 2013; Ross & Bürger, 2014; McQuail, 2015a). They assert business as usual communications, because "politicians ignore the reactions from their voters" (Bene, 2017, p.2), contending that Facebook engagement only offers a spectacle of interactivity (Theocharis et al., 2015, p.7). This position, taken alongside evidence of parties making little effort to promote two-way interactions (Karlsson, Clerwall, & Buskqvist, 2013), means that some academics disregard the millions of social media engagements that parties receive weekly. Consequently, although many content analyses and studies show huge numbers of users interacting and engaging in the content created (e.g. Lilleker et al.'s 28 EU nation study of

Facebook party pages, 2009 & 2015), social media has been found to be a one-way street of communications[17]. In contrast, a much smaller body of work examines the question of interactivity from the demand side, with some studies appreciating Facebook engagement as two-way interaction with the propensity to cause multi-step flows of information (Vaccari & Nielsen, 2013; Hilbert, Vásquez, & Halpern, 2017; Bene, 2017; Gil de Zúñiga, Homero & Liu, 2017).

Although politicians are arguably failing to utilise online tools for true dialogue relations, those academics who assert a continuation of campaign practices and one-way flow of communications, fail to consider the unique nature of Facebook. As Neumayer & Svensson emphasise; different "forms of online political engagement must be considered when studying online activism, as there are difficulties in how one defines or assigns values upon interaction and interactivity" (2014, p. 131). In analysis of the literature from this understanding, one can argue that those studies that find engagement lacking (Larsson, 2013; Magin et al., 2016), are viewing Facebook through conventional interactivity concepts, "from the lens of traditional, 'dutiful' conceptions of citizenship and political engagement" (Vromen et al., 2016, p.513). As Marton Bene asserts; "…*these (concepts) are used in a context where the participants and the audience of the interaction are bounded, whereas participants of Facebook engagement perform themselves in front of different audiences*" (Bene, 2017, p.4).

Engagement on Facebook is not designed only for the parties themselves, or the interactors, but for the interactor's ego-network, which is based on their offline relationships (Boyd & Elisson, 2008). Thus, one can caveat that when a user engages with political content, they are interacting as much for their personalised communication network, as they are for the party itself. Thus, concepts behind participation and engagement are highly intricate, questioning the value of studies that consider Facebook and social media to replicate offline effects. Instead interactivity on Facebook is a new entity with new rules for political campaigning, albeit one in which many traditional ideas of voting behaviour still carry great weight. Barriers to participation are now much lower, with offline and online participation operating within a cycle where engagement is continually important. Engagement for Facebook is the gamified lifeblood of how and why

[17] Although see Sorensen's study of Danish MP's having a "high degree of engagement in conversations with citizens on Facebook" (2016, p.664).

any of these actions take place, with the scale of engagement on the platform refuting potential unimportance. The slacktivism position fails to capture the unique capabilities of the medium as a campaign tool and how it operates. Facebook allows users to feel ownership of the content they interact with, unlike almost every other campaign tool in existence. Facebook's nature is still one where engagement is at the core of user experience and it remains an interactive platform with interactivity key for message reach and campaign success. Thus, although one may assert the internet has been featuring merely a 'façade' of interaction for political parties (Stromer-Galley & Baker, 2006); engagement really matters for users, parties and Facebook's informational ecosystem.

Although parties are invariably wary of two-way interactivity, Facebook arguably does remain largely a two-way medium, as user-based engagement seen on the platform via reactions (likes, shares and comments), offers two-way or multi-level flows of participation. What appears is a system where, because user responses can be ignored by parties, some academics have conceptualised this lack of dialogue as a traditional conception of one-way communications. However, Facebook arguably offers a split two-way system, as almost every piece of content is reacted to, with that content if shared, then further reacted to on a potentially infinite chain. The step of engaging via likes, comments or shares, is one step beyond merely viewing the content, and thus constitutes something akin to participation in the traditional sense. Parties thus design their content to develop user engagement as this generates greater message reach with resultant statistics considered in developing content. Engagement is therefore important and is worthy of inclusion as a form of participation as it means a lot, especially given a "growing number of studies showing relationships between user engagement and vote share" (Xenos, 2015, p.2).

Overall, the literature on Facebook engagement can currently be split into supply (politicians use only) and demand side (user engagement only) studies. The field requires more studies that utilise a joined-up approach as seen in a few articles (Nielsen & Vaccari, 2013a, 2013b; Xenos, 2015, Magin et al., 2017; Bene, 2017). Current academic focus on whether social media can spur different forms of traditional participation online and off, without consideration of the first form of participation – engagement, is not an effective approach. This is because it

weakens the clarity of research, fails to delineate how parties are campaigning and undermines a unique potentiality of Facebook.

2.5: Facebook as a tool for party organisation

Social media offers parties new avenues for activism and organisation, potentially revolutionising the idea of the party and how it can campaign. As Montero Sanchez asserts, “Obama showed how the Internet could be used for new forms of collaboration… and replace the traditional membership and meeting based model practised in many democracies” (2009, p.28). New avenues for participation and mobilizing information exist via Facebook, this corresponds with arguments in the wider literature about; moves towards ‘multispeed’ models of membership via a new class of ‘virtually members’ (Bartlett, 2013), Margetts’ (2001) concept of the “cyber party” and Chadwick’s ideas of organisational hybridity (2017).

The cyber campaign party? Virtual members and organisation

In traditional campaigning, parties’ support mobilisation typically focusses on assuring that pre-identified supporters have voted (Denver & Hands, 2002). Today, Facebook has enabled parties to lessen these challenges in support mobilisation (Ward et al., 2008; Gibson, 2012). This is because social media has enabled parties to build online communities, more fluid organisational structures and support activities (Gibson, 2012). Online campaign activities can push users into other mediums of participation such as canvassing, or the spreading of campaign information through online tools. This has been found in the UK, as the rise of ‘citizen-initiated campaigning’ (Gibson, 2015). Facebook has thus enabled political parties to interact and engage with a wider group of voters, particularly those who may be disengaged with traditional voter interaction mediums, namely television and radio[18] (Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). This has allowed “supporters to

[18] Or as a fascinating example of reaching outside the box, the Obama 2008 campaigns advertising on the computer game ‘Second Life’.

play more than a spectator role in the campaign" (Owen, 2008, p.98), alleviating the requirements of parties to engage in large GOTV operations.

Two core theories speak to what we are witnessing via social media and the internet. Margetts' (2001) concept of the "cyber party" foresaw what we are now seeing on Facebook. Her theory was based on changing circumstances emerging for European parties, including a decline in membership, growth in single issue political activity and rise of symbolic actions via campaigns rather than mass mobilisation. Cyber parties are characterised by "technologically-aided relationships between party and voters rather than formal membership" (2001, p.1). The cyber party model allows: *"ICTs to expand parties at the grassroots level by facilitating an informal definition of membership, whereby individuals could sign up to a supporter network, send money… leading to a new integrated form of relationship that would provide supporters with a similar level of inclusion reserved previously for full members"* (Gibson, 2016, p. 89, citing Margetts, 2001). Later this idea was further developed by Heidar and Saglie (2003) with their idea of a "network party", they asserted that actually a cyber-party is still dominated by the parliamentary leadership "but they maintain and value mass membership as a source of policy ideas and leader recruitment" (Heidar & Saglie, 2003, via Gibson, 2016, p.90).

Chadwick's idea of media hybridity is also of importance. He contends that in contrast to the decline of parties thesis, that parties are not dying but are "going through a process of adaptation to post-material political culture… shaped by interactions between the organizations, norms and rules of electoral politics; post-material attitudes toward political engagement; and the affordances and uses of digital media" (Chadwick & Stromer-Galley, 2016, p.283). Chadwick argues that "digital media foster cultures of organizational experimentation and a party-as-movement mentality that enable many to reject norms of hierarchical discipline and habitual partisan loyalty" (Chadwick & Stromer-Galley, 2016, p.283). Alongside the structural changes brought by social media, Chadwick contends that social media and traditional methods are now existing within a hybrid media system via merged online/offline approaches with complex resultant effects. Chadwick asserts that the hybrid logic of communications whether via news or political campaigns is only partly changing campaigns, as he argues effectiveness and change to be truly powered by effective merging of online and offline methods

(Chadwick, 2017). With hybridisation, we have seen social media become important for regeneration, as Chadwick asserts, “parties are being renewed from the outside in, as digitally enabled citizens breathe new life into an old form by partly remaking it in their own participatory image” (Chadwick & Stromer-Galley, 2016).

Behind any potential cyber party organisational hybridity, is the importance of understanding the new body of online support parties have generated on Facebook. *Virtual members* are theorised as followers of parties online but not official members (see ‘virtually members’, Bartlett, 2013), with this group offering a new potentially important resource for parties. Webb, Poletti & Bale (2017) examining campaign activism across members and ‘supporters’ on Facebook and Twitter found differences in engagement between the groups, with supporters rather than party members making up a huge segment of activity online. There are thus potential capabilities via virtual members, with the tacit changes seen in parties’ make-up and moves towards organisational cyber-activism needing to be further examined. This important new political group requires further conceptualisation and examination.

The new relationship seen between party and users may even be more fluid than the concept of virtual members. In empirical research using online surveys conducted in Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom. Vaccari and Valeriani found that “party members engage in a wider variety of party-related activities than average respondents, but the same can also be said of non-party members who informally discuss politics on social media” (2016, p.294). This ultra-informal group are thus potentially also of importance to parties, as “the strength of the relationship between party membership and engagement decreases as the intensity of political discussion on social media increases… suggesting that political discussions on social media can narrow the divide in party-related engagement between members and non-members, and to some extent flatten rather than reinforce existing political hierarchies” (2016, p.294). These findings speak to the power of social media to offer parties a new fluid activatable group beyond even the looser idea of virtual membership.

Finally, targeted advertisements may have also undermined the need for traditional membership or even virtual membership. The modern popularity of Facebook’s paid for opportunities allow for reach without an engaged audience.

As such adverts are popular because not only are they likely to reach desired audiences, but the information does not rely on organic popularity for reach. Thus, for parties with inactive or smaller online support such as the Conservative Party; paid for advertising presents a necessary tool. Targeted advertising may also have major implications for organisation and party politics more generally, given how adverts are used for fundraising, voter registration and membership calls (Hotham, 2019).

Facebook's unique abilities for organisation; permanent and Janus-faced campaigns

Related to the change Facebook offers in organisation is the role of the permanent campaign. As Vergeer, Hermans and Sams (2011) suggest, "with the advent of the Internet, permanent campaigning to build public support becomes easier" (2011, p.485). Ceccobelli identified through studying 18 election campaigns on Facebook that there are "qualitative and quantitative differences between campaign and peace-time periods" (2017, p.122). With greater posting frequency, negative rhetorical strategy and personalisation during elections but less use of policy issues (Ceccobelli, 2017). Continuous Facebook campaigning by politicians is on the rise (Klinger, 2013; Tenscher, 2013; Enli & Skogerbø, 2013; Strandberg, 2013; Hermans & Vergeer, 2013) with each campaign period used for different purposes. Thus, alongside the questions of party change, the nature of permanent campaigning is also becoming an important feature of Facebook to examine. The permanent campaign offers new opportunities for parties to reach out to, socialise and organise both official members and the growing body of virtual members. In depth examination of the phenomenon is needed to appreciate what parties are trying to do across each campaign type.

Facebook also offers parties multifaceted campaign approaches. Theorised as Janus-faced campaigning, this concept sees parties tactically present different faces to different audiences, using different avenues to maximum advantage. This is because audiences, even within a single social media network like Facebook, are distinct and split. As such, we are seeing the fragmentation of campaign messaging online as audiences are becoming compartmentalised. Parties are having to become smarter at reaching audiences

in the right way, across multiple social networks and even within single large networks such as Facebook. The 'traditional' one size fits all social media campaign is now being superseded by an approach that appreciates the power of matching content to audience. The concept is thus related to the idea of offline/online hybridity asserted by Chadwick, however rather than the nature of modern campaigns as online and offline hybrids, we are now seeing parties online campaigns becoming hybrids of novel and traditional *online* methods. A full explanation of the idea is available in Chapter 7 through the examination of Momentum.

2.6: Hypothesis generation

Outside of the research questions that this thesis examines, from this literature review several pertinent predications can be tested through this thesis' chapters. Based upon the four sections of the literature review, four iterative hypotheses have been generated. These hypotheses are examined in the conclusion using all gathered evidence.

Voting behaviour models and communications in the era of social networks

Hypothesis 1 – Facebook will offer political parties the ability to generate and campaign through virtual members.

Facebook as an information dissemination tool

Hypothesis 2 – Parties will make use of Facebook's capacities for a high frequency of content, improved content forms and content engagement, but their information dissemination will focus on maximising reach and impact through keeping content simple and focused.

Facebook as a tool for participation

Hypothesis 3 – Parties will focus their participation content on prompting traditional voting efforts such as registering potential voters, rather than on trying to activate and utilise virtual members as they would official party members, such as organising "just-turn-up" doorstep campaigning sessions.

Facebook as a tool for party organisation

Hypothesis 4 – Parties will use the ability to operate multiple different pages on Facebook to organise their campaigns in novel ways, for example through the development of 'satellite' campaign pages that operate in distinct ways from core party pages.

2.7: Conclusion

It has been asserted that there is minimal deviation across elements of what we might term the 'ground war', with campaigns in target seats "conducted along similar lines" (Lilleker & Pack, 2016, p.42). The one exception is e-campaigning (Koc-Michalska et al. 2014), an arena where parties have far greater scope for experimentation. Of the new e-campaign tools available Facebook is clearly of major importance, however it is only one of many tools open to parties. Successful campaigns will thus use each available campaign tool for its most effective audience. This heightened campaign complexity has destabilised the once solid foundations of political science. Where once posters, canvassing and television were the central campaign forms, with mass populations reached through mass communications. Instead, a new fluid campaign landscape led by the Facebook catalyst is visible. This new landscape is volatile, defined by novel content capacities, new positional and valence issues, public mistrust, media diversification, fake news, and hyper-personalised campaign tools.

It is apparent there are large gaps in understanding Facebook content approaches. With those that attempt to appreciate impact hindered by the fact that approach has not been effectively defined. Studies have also not clearly

examined the development and change in Facebook use that has occurred over the last 10 years. As Lee & Campbell assert; “in evaluating the shift from traditional to online campaigning techniques, the use of social media’s increasingly visual capabilities has been comparatively neglected in research” (2016, p.313). Studies on Facebook content have operated at relatively low detail, without consideration of; how participation is engaged, how content is formulated, comparative analysis between parties over election years, the importance of party, leader and satellite pages and the differences between them, how virtual members are organised, the permanent vs. campaign period or the general type of approach evident. This research landscape has informed the research questions explained in the introduction and the methodology used.

Table 4. Research questions, data and methods used

	Research Question	**Method & data source used overall**
Primary research question	**RQ1** - How are parties making use of Facebook in terms of the scale of communications, the dissemination of information and the encouragement of participation in the content they post?	Quantitative content analysis of datasets 1, 2 and 3. Secondary sources
Supplementary research questions	**RQ2** - How does the content posted on Facebook by parties retain the features of traditional campaign material?	Quantitative content analysis of datasets 1, 2 & 3, typology of usage of datasets 2 and 3. Secondary sources examining other campaign tools
	RQ3 - What are the likely longer term implications of parties’ use of Facebook, in terms of broader campaigning practices?	Quantitative content analysis of datasets 1, 2 and 3

Overall, this chapter sought to explain and summarise relevant literature fields, identify where the thesis fits and finally develop core concepts and frames to help operationalise the research questions and hypotheses. A large body of research exists upon Facebook, however interest in examining effects far outstrips interest in usage. Thus, this thesis’ research questions are designed to promote the detailed comparative examination of use, offering an enhancement of the Facebook literature theoretically, empirically, and methodologically.

Methodology

3: Methodology

3.1: Introduction

Due to the embryonic nature of social media studies, no specific established methodological approach has been created to study Facebook. The literature developed over the last 15 years can be split into four key methodological approaches; quantitative studies using real-time extracted Facebook data, quantitative data the researcher has created themselves via experiment, quantitative study of survey data and qualitative study. Similarly, no specific established methodological approach has been delineated for examining campaigning. Some scholars have created a broad set of measures with regards to e-campaigning (see 'citizen-initiated campaigning', Gibson, 2015) and politicians' social media influence on wider social environments (Effing et al., 2016). These distinct approaches have informed this thesis' approach. A major issue is that the literature is still unsure of what constitutes a Facebook campaign; this thesis' approach mitigates these questions via setting out how parties are using the platform as a tool. Providing this foundation means that later studies will have a greater understanding of where effects may originate from. Although, challenges exist in pinning down "effects" of campaigning as conceptualising uses is difficult (Choi, 2015), this landscape gives this thesis opportunity to develop a novel methodology for the appreciation of Facebook campaigning.

Methodological approach is designed around the questions the researcher wishes to answer. However, for the study of Facebook, approach is heavily dependent upon the feasibility of data access. Thus, the research questions within this thesis were based around viability, as Facebook data is naturally limited to providing evidence for platform phenomena. This issue of data is also seen in the literature because of Facebook's continuous changes. Access to data has been restricted or opened, with new methods for data extraction or analysis created. Consequently, the different methodologies and measures used to examine Facebook over time means much of the literature is incomparable. In future more stable research access is required to avoid this. Nevertheless, despite imperfections Facebook data is the best resource to examine the parties' approaches on Facebook. In terms of approach, following some of the best

studies in the field (Bene, 2017; Magin et al., 2017; Metz et al., 2019), quantitative content analysis (Krippendorf, 2018) and typology is used. This allows for the clarity needed to understand approach as pure engagement data, content analysis or microcosmic qualitative study each have limited horizons.

3.2: Data created or used

Created datasets

While some studies have manually extracted Facebook data (e.g. Williams & Gulati, 2013), this study utilised automated collection of basic Facebook data. Automated approaches are useful but have certain drawbacks such as the lack of detail within the data. Data collection was performed via Netvizz (Rieder, 2013), which allowed for the extraction of basic Facebook public-page activity. Other extraction tools are available such as Facepager, however Netvizz extracts data more quickly and effectively. To provide a neutral extraction point, a new Facebook account was created, it followed the pages the data was extracted from following recommendations by Netvizz[19]. The posts sent by a page and the associated engagement data (likes, comments and shares over a specified time) were gathered. All base data used for the 7-year dataset and one-month 2015/2017 General Election dataset was collected over 2 weeks from 1/01/2018 to the 14/01/2018, the Momentum 2017 and 2018 datasets were collected on 29/02/2019. The coding occurred over a period of 8 months undertaken by the author. Excel was used for the coding of the data; data was examined via Excel, SPSS or R dependant on the analysis undertaken.

It is important to note that the number of posts extractable from Facebook is limited. Netvizz, which like all other legitimate harvesters is constrained by Facebook's API[20]. As Facebook outline on their developer's site, "the API will return a maximum of 600 ranked, published posts per year" (Facebook, 2018), these top 600 posts are understood to be the posts sent by the page that are the most engaged with in the year. This arbitrary limitation inherently leads to some degree of data exclusion. For example, a voter cannot find all the public posts

[19] https://apps.facebook.com/netvizz/?ref=br_rs accessed 11/11/2018
[20] https://developers.facebook.com/docs/graph-api/reference/v2.12/page/feed accessed 15/07/2019

made by the Labour Party in 2015. Even via the in-platform search function, only the 600 “top posts” are shown, this is less than half the posts published by Labour that year. These 600 top posts are also the only posts you can view if you search the actual Facebook page, which as Netvizz explains means “endpoints now show the same posts the logged user would see on the page surface”[21]. A solution some recommend is for “social scientists to use real-time manual collection” (Villegas, 2016, p.161). Given this study’s interest in historic data this was not possible. It is important to note that almost all studies on Facebook content do not make clear Facebook’s 600 post restriction, with ramifications for analysis not appreciated within the literature. Consequently, all analysis of posts within this work operates within this natural limitation, with the data available still offering a large quality sample. As the ‘top posts’, they are the content with the most value for political analysis, given they are the most engaged with posts for each page. The data is also as complete as possible, having checked the datasets versus 2020 Crowdtangle data, the data used within this thesis is more complete than Facebook’s own resource.

Dataset one. Background study January 1st, 2010 – December 31st, 2017

To understand the rise of Facebook, the scale of engagement with parties on the platform, the role of different pages in engagement, the permanent campaign vs. election campaign and wider technologically driven approaches to content form, a broad approach is required. Analysing base extracted Facebook data is perfect for this task. Dataset one is a 7-year dataset containing all the public posts sent by a political FB page alongside the posts associated engagement (likes, shares and comments) from the 1st of January 2010 to the 31st of December 2017. There was a total of 49,230 posts, the total number of posts for each party page is displayed below. The data contains the engagement metrics of each post across likes, shares and comments, and the basic structural form coded across photo, video, status update, link, event and note.

[21] https://apps.facebook.com/107036545989762/?ref=br_rs accessed 15/07/2019

Table 5. Dataset one: pages examined, number of posts extracted and followers

Page	Number of Extracted Posts	Number of Followers as of 12/03/2018
Conservative Party	2,654	652,116
Theresa May	291	457,711
David Cameron	1,502	1,218,540
Labour Party	4,477	1,016,836
Momentum	1,467	189,303
Jeremy Corbyn	1,700	1,386,549
Ed Miliband	1,495	149,329
JeremyCorbyn4PM	1,774	330,369
United Kingdom Independence Party	4,052	587,084
Nigel Farage	3,710	786,957
Green Party	4,105	305,808
Caroline Lucas	3,787	92,815
Natalie Bennett	3,155	55,472
Scottish National Party	4,713	287,818
Alex Salmond	1,151	173,730
Nicola Sturgeon	1,452	299,872
Liberal Democrats	3,177	186,339
Nick Clegg	767	95,432
Vince Cable	1,161	11,962
Tim Farron	2,640	35,338
Total	**49,230**	**8,319,380**

Dataset two. One-month General Election campaign study; 9th April to 7th May 2015 & 4th May to 8th June 2017.

To examine how parties are using Facebook in detail during an election across content form, participatory and organisational practices, we need to code Facebook data. Dataset two focusses on two election periods, the 2015 & 2017 General Elections. The data set is generated via hand coding using a comprehensive scheme of 882 codes, these are outlined in Appendix 3. The coding occurs on top of the basic data Netvizz provides, such as engagement numbers and date of posting. This allows the coded data to be clearly linked with

the original Netvizz data. Hand coding provides greater data quality appreciating all the aspects of a post, such as video or image elements, rather than just the text as seen in studies that use automated approaches (e.g. Gerbaudo et al., 2019). The dataset features relatively stable numbers of posts across election years (641 – 2015 / 567 – 2017) but there is a skew towards the Labour Party of 266 posts, and a skew towards party pages of 388.

Table 6. Dataset two: pages and number of posts extracted

Party	Page	Date of posts	Number of posts
Labour	Labour Party Page	8th April to 6th May 2015	237
	Ed Miliband Page	8th April to 6th May 2015	78
	Labour Party Page	3rd May to 7th June 2017	278
	Jeremy Corbyn Page	3rd May to 7th June 2017	144
	Total Labour posts		**737**
Conservatives	Conservative Party Page	8th April to 6th May 2015	188
	David Cameron Page	8th April to 6th May 2015	138
	Conservative Party Page	3rd May to 7th June 2017	95
	Theresa May Page	3rd May to 7th June 2017	50
	Total Conservative posts		**471**
	Total		**1,208**

Dataset three. Momentum General Election and 2018-year case study: 4th May to 8th June 2017 and 1st January to 31st December 2018.

Given the hypothesis of the growing importance of satellite campaigns (Dommett & Temple, 2018), this dataset examines Momentum across 2017 and 2018. This dataset used data collected from one month before the 2017 General Election, from the 3rd May to 7th June 2017 alongside a randomised sample of posts from 2018. A random number generator was used to select 10 posts from each month from an extracted total year dataset of all posts sent by the page. The dataset's variables whether independent, dependent or control were all the same as dataset 2. The analysis of this dataset followed the same operation as dataset 2 via quantitative content analysis and typology.

Table 7. Momentum posts

Year	Number of posts
2017	153
2018	120
Total	**273**

Secondary sources and survey data

Given the horizon of Facebook data, and its ability to only illuminate what is happening on the platform not the wider campaign, secondary sources are used to broaden this thesis' examination. The British Election Study and the Electoral Agent Survey offer large electorally representative datasets collected over election and non-election periods. BES and EAS datasets were examined via exploratory statistical analysis to provide supportive or triangulated evidence in relation to Facebook data. These data sources allow for the grounding of the research undertaken upon Facebook within evidence of traditional and e-campaigning tools such as leaflets and email. These sources are nevertheless limited as they are not designed to examine social media content form approaches, however the resources offer several key areas of pertinence both from the supply side (EAS) and the demand side (BES) of campaigning. Consequently, they are used to examine the reach and adoption of Facebook, alongside other traditional and e-campaign tools. Sources used are:

- **Wave 12** of the 2014-2018 British Election Study Internet Panel for the 2017 General Election.
- **Wave 5** of the 2014-2018 British Election Study Internet Panel for the 2015 General Election.
- **Survey of election agents** for study of constituency campaigning at the 2017 British General Election.
- **Survey of election agents** for study of constituency campaigning at the 2015 British General Election.

Other demographic secondary sources are used. Facebook audience data from Facebook Audience Insights[22] allows anyone to examine the socio-demographic statistics of all Facebook users across many parameters. This data was analysed in comparison with the British Election Study, Party Members Project data, and WeAreFlint polling data. This was to test Facebook's representativeness and examine the make-up of the party's online supporters in comparison to official membership.

To examine Facebook information approaches in comparison to other tools, novel secondary sources were utilised to provide comparison. These resources offered a small direct gateway into understanding where Facebook fits as a content tool in comparison to targeted advertisements and leaflets, allowing for the consideration of Facebook as a differently used tool. Unfortunately, content analysis data for offline posters, newspaper adverts, emails or other campaign tools were unavailable for this study's examined periods.

- **Leaflets**. Milazzo et al., (2017) engaged in a comprehensive analysis of 2015/2017 General Election leaflets, comparable codes were examined against datasets 2 and 3 including – use of party leader, topic issue choice and the mentioning of opponents.
- **Targeted advertisements**. Tambini and Anstead et al., (2018) coded 750 targeted Facebook advertisements (412 from Labour and the Conservatives) from the 2017 General Election via Whotargets.me. Comparable codes with datasets 2 and 3 include topic choice and use of party leader.

3.3: Measuring Facebook. Creating a coded dataset for quantitative content analysis and typology

Through liking, sharing or commenting on content, users can engage with parties on Facebook. Engagement is the lifeblood of the platform, as engagement acts as the appreciation matrix. As numerical count data these forms of engagement act the Facebook dataset's dependent variables, as each post has these engagement numbers related to them. Engagement is also used as a

[22] See https://www.facebook.com/ads/audience-insights/ accessed 29/05/2019

measure of reach and scale, as engagement metrics signal how far a page's messages are spreading through Facebook's ego-network. As such, as well as being a dependent variable to understand the success of information approaches, engagement is also used as a variable in and of itself. Explanations of what likes, shares and comments are can be found in Section 5.1. Engagement is however only one side of the relationship; the independent variables are therefore the coded content elements of individual posts.

Creating a coding scheme

Quantitative content analysis is used to examine the features of posts and describes what content approaches are undertaken. It is the only flexible effective way of examining Facebook political content approaches given the nature of the medium, the data available and how information is consumed and created on the platform. It offers the capacity to examine longitudinally, large quantities of naturally occurring data. Analysis can also cover both content and form, this is important as "both content and form characteristics ought to be considered… given form characteristics are often extremely important mediators of the content elements" (Neuendorf, 2002, p.24). Although there is a myriad of strengths to content analysis; potential level of detail, explanatory power, conceptual capabilities and ability to link data with other elements, there are also weaknesses. Firstly, developing a coding scheme involves some degree of interpretation, there is the propensity for bias akin to other qualitative methods (Insch et al. 1997). As such this thesis operates intercoder reliability tests. Secondarily, the level of abstraction of coded content removed from its original context can potentially cause a loss of meaning. As Shoemaker and Reese argue "reducing large amounts of text to quantitative data… does not provide a complete picture of meaning and contextual codes, since texts may contain many other forms of emphasis besides sheer repetition" (1996, p.32). To counter this, the coding scheme focussed as clearly as possible on dichotomous factors that are clear to interpret, as well as on maximising detail on content form. Finally, content analysis can lead to interpretations of content that ignore key aspects, a coding scheme can miss as much as it captures. This thesis consequently focusses on

breadth (882 codes) and offers its dataset and the text of the post as a comparable checkpoint against what is coded.

This thesis follows two literature fields in its quantitative content analysis coding approach. Firstly, in terms of developing an implementable scheme to quantify how parties campaign via content forms, content focussed approaches seen in Alashri et al. (2016), Lee & Campbell (2016) and Bene (2017) are followed. Taking elements of their methods but operating in greater detail, unlike those studies this thesis focusses more upon the content analysis and less upon relationships between content and engagement. This is because we know little about how parties are using Facebook, with there a large gap in elucidating approach rather than engagement. Secondarily, the coding scheme simplifies major themes seen in wider campaign studies such as in Gibson (2015) and Foot & Schneider's (2006) features analysis. Their approaches are only partly comparable to Facebook, thus this thesis' development upon these studies themes is outlined in Table 8/9. The coding scheme operates via four core themes; scale, information, participation and organisation.

Content is becoming more complex, and as such a coding scheme that can appreciate this complexity was developed. The coding approach taken allows posts to be part of all the given categories and does not exclude each post into one set form, instead most of the variables are treated as potentially existing within each post. It is important to appreciate that some related codes can potentially exist at the same time within only one post. For example, in some codes approach is deliberately non-dichotomous, a post may feature the positive use of a celebrity alongside the negative use of a celebrity, or positive tone and negative tone. This approach has an upside as well as a downside. The upside is that the data this scheme generates is superior to other binary approaches, allowing it to capture the rise of video more accurately. A coding scheme must be able to demarcate the modern media landscape, with today's video heavy approach particularly three dimensional. No longer are political messages static posters or leaflets that were much more likely to convey only one tone, today a video can begin with a joke and then hammer the opposition negatively. Currently, other coding schemes fail to adequately represent the modern communications parties are sending. This research pushes forward a scheme that allows for the conceptualisation of multivariate content approaches, as well as dichotomous

binary coding. The downside of this approach is that it can create issues of double counting within the data, with the use of combined totals for some similar codes limited as they may represent fewer cases than the total describes. As such combined totals of these areas are avoided or if used are caveated, while for key areas of content dichotomous codes were also used to generate incidence. Finally, in terms of analysis, the longitudinal nature of the data and the use of multiple types of pages across different parties, warrants descriptive statistics in the vein of Larsson (2016).

Some important conceptual developments are found within this thesis' coding scheme that are an original development of social media content analysis. Firstly, content via Facebook is understood to be potentially aimed at core members or external core members, membership here defines those who follow the page or receive the message. Within this wider membership, two distinct categories are theorised, with core members being viewed as party members and external core members being viewed as interested virtual members but not official support. This distinction is important as content may be used differently to influence these two groups, for example messages asking external core members to join the party, or official members to help doorstep campaign. There is also the potential for the blurring of these lines between official and virtual. Secondarily, information is examined across visual and textual content separately. This is because Facebook content can deliver more than one message, with flaws in previous studies visible in the lack of codes used to define the technological and material nature of social media content. Similarly, in content topic modelling, given the rise of video Facebook has the capacity to deliver more than one message, whether this is the case can be examined for the first time within this thesis, due to the implementation of a triplicate coding system. Finally, as per Gibson (2015) online and offline participation are split as these two types of participation need to be conceptually understood as different. This thesis also enhances analysis through a detailed sub-theme format making its analysis more refined.

Table 8. Typological features analysis approach across studies

Foot & Schneider (2006)	Gibson (2015)	This thesis
n/a	n/a	**Scale**
Informing	Message production	**Information**
Connecting	Community building	
Involving	Resource generation	**Participation and**
Mobilizing	Voter mobilisation	**organisation**

Overall, via 882 codes across data sets two and three, there were 1,199,610 data permutations. The process created a detailed dataset that allows for longitudinal cross comparison across pages and election years. This dataset can examine content approaches and engagement levels in detail, including the role of leaders, satellite pages, usage of minority and female politicians, negative advertising, the role of policy areas and content form's, the rise of personalisation and parties' news sources.

Table 9. Conceptualisation of scale, information and participation

Scale	Information	Participation	Organisation
Interested audience members of page	Content topic	Engagement	Pages used to send messages
Engagement (likes, shares, comments)	Content form	Internal core online participation	Systems of content used across different types of pages
Video views	Personalisation	Internal core offline participation	Use of leader/party/satellite pages
	Targeting	External core online participation	Post-modern information forms
	Framing	External core offline participation	Systems of organisation
	Trust building	Mobilisation (calls to vote)	Internal core systems, participatory systems online/offline
			External core systems, participatory systems online/offline
			Virtual members

Examining scale

Scale is conceptualised as the capacity of Facebook as an information medium. It concerns who receives messages, the number of and content form of messages sent, and the subsequent engagement the messages receive. The examination of scale operates via analysis of dataset one and Facebook Audience Insights. To appreciate the reach of Facebook, virtual members via Facebook Audience Insights are examined against Party Members Project data. The examination of scale also covers analysis of engagement and video views from 2010-2017 in dataset 1, 6 major parties are examined: Labour, Conservatives, Liberal Democrats, UKIP, Green Party and the SNP. The different pages engagement metrics, likes, shares and comments are examined longitudinally, specific hypotheses in areas such as the permanent campaign and the use of party leader pages are tested. The general findings upon the reach of Facebook pages is discussed in comparison to the reach of other tools using the BES/EAS datasets and other secondary sources.

Examining information

Information examines the nature of parties' posts, what they consist of, their character and nature. Not much is known about what parties send or how this has developed, parties may have honed their content to a clearer professionalised form. Content possibilities have radically increased from the options of early Facebook, where images, website links and text only posts were the norm. This thesis engages in a comprehensive study of information across six themes outlined in Table 9. The study of information uses datasets one, two and three. Dataset one examines structural content form (video, link, note, photo & status) across a large pool of parties, but detailed study in datasets 2 and 3 examines Labour, Conservatives and Momentum.

Examining participation

Participation examines the use of participatory practices engaged by parties' content forms, from asking users to share to engaging with a poll.

Facebook is used to generate participation, but the systems of use are not well understood. Using a simplified model of participation datasets two and three are examined. The participatory practises engaged for core party members and external party supporters are charted via both online and offline participation. Mobilisation practises are defined as approaches to GOTV and voting operations. Finally, engagement is examined as a new form of participatory practice. Approaches to generating these forms are then comparatively examined across election years, parties and page types.

Examining organisation

Facebook is theorised as a system that allows for a new more fluid online/offline system of party organisation, via virtual membership and online to offline activity. Organisation is studied under the umbrella of participation. This research examines organisation through the way parties organise their online supporters via content, such as asking non-members to join the party, or asking virtual members to help doorstep campaigns. The basic conceptualisation of the coding scheme is seen in Table 10. The examination of Facebook as an organisation tool follows a more theoretical approach. Consequently, BES/EAS data are not used within the discussion section. Instead secondary sources and Margetts' and Chadwick's theoretical work is used to examine how the medium is potentially altering how parties can organise and campaign.

A conceptual typology of usage

Quantitative content analysis can get lost in detail, with so many codes used it can be hard to see the overall picture, thus the development of a typology from the data is important to answer the larger elements of the research questions. This more interpretivist approach to the dataset allows for wider conceptualisation of party approach to Facebook by "forming and refining concepts, drawing out underlying dimensions and sorting cases" (Collier, 2012, p.217). The typology is developed from the quantitative content data, with scholarly work informing approach. Gibson's index of citizen-initiated campaigning (2015) categorises e-campaigns across multiple tools, especially

websites, not Facebook specifically. Her work, a development upon previous work on ‘features analysis’ (Schneider & Foot, 2004) used indices to “measure the amount of a particular activity or function (i.e. information provision or networking) that is performed on a website” (Gibson, 2015, p.188). Gibson’s CIC index examines across four areas; community building, resource generation, voter mobilisation and message production. This thematic approach provides a mode of analysis that goes beyond the specific content approaches of messages and infers reasons for use and intended outcomes, a system this thesis replicates. Gibson’s approach, akin to most typologies of web campaigning, examines only the presence or absence of certain features, with the focus of analysis on adoption as usage. This thesis uses the conceptual core of Gibson’s features analysis whilst going further in detail, reframing Gibson’s CIC index towards Facebook use.

This thesis’ typological approach creates dichotomous labels that explain the basic key elements of the parties’ use of Facebook. This is useful as the scheme broadens the analysis of approach towards greater potential cleavages, making differentiation easier. Overleaf in Table 10 an outline of the typology can be seen, with a party receiving the label if it follows one element more than the other. Although the data is still quantitative, analysis follows a more qualitative interpretivist scheme. This typology is used to illuminate how Facebook is used overall, with key divergences and themes made clear.

Table 10. Conceptual typology of approach to Facebook

Descriptor	Information Disseminators	Participators	Organisers
Primary Label	Will focus on delivery of information	Will focus on online and offline participatory practises and engagement	Will focus on the utilization of virtual members as an active core for campaigning
2nd	Topic builders, topic introducers or topic avoiders	Interactivity seekers or one-way traditionalists	Internal core organisers or external core organisers
3rd	Content traditionalists or content modernists	Internal linkers or External linkers	Virtual members or traditional structures?
4th	Popular depicters or elitists	Partisan preachers or public engagers	Data gatherers or free organisers
5th	Problem solvers or problem identifiers	Social media or website linkers	Organisational traditionalist or free flowing organisers?
6th	Positive orienteers or negative orienteers	Offline activators or online activators	
7th	Leader focus or party focus	Professional participators or free participators	
8th	Expertise users or celebrity engagers		
9th	Detail merchants or depicters		
10th	Negative personalisers or positive personalisers		

The thesis also uses the data it generates across the typology and content analysis datasets to develop theory describing how campaigns on Facebook operate. Using the model of Grounded Theory, the thesis sets out to construct ideas from the data it obtains and analyses. As Walsh et al. assert “Grounded Theory is simply the discovery of emerging patterns in data… the generation of theories from data (2015, p.12). The thesis thus uses its data in a flexible manner to maximise its value. Through summarising the quantitative and qualitative insights generated, this methodological approach allows the thesis to maximise its conceptual power and develop wider insights into how parties are using Facebook to campaign.

Checking the datasets

A key issue for this study is data quality. This thesis uses a retroactive approach, with analysis of Facebook after an election having positives and negatives. A Facebook page is a museum of interactions frozen in time, and thus is arguably a more solid evaluation foundation as it can reduce bias, because engagement is a stable number. However, the ability to analyse or examine people in the context of an election via experimental approaches is lost, meaning that there is no ability to link social media usage to specific vote choice, e-participation or direct participation offline. Facebook data is also subject to some change over time, for example, some posts are deleted by the parties after posting. Engagement metrics are not 100% stable over time, while as semi self-reported social data there is also the potential for the data to be inaccurate. This social angle to Facebook data is an important consideration and why the data was checked carefully.

The data was cleaned, missing data checked for and incomplete data removed. For dataset one, given that no large-scale coding was undertaken, to test reliability a separate Facebook profile was created, the same data range was then extracted via the new profile through Netvizz. The number of posts extracted was the same, thus showing that the dataset was as complete as possible. To test the quality of the coding of the other datasets Krippendorf’s alpha intra-coder (α) was used. A paid coder was hired to re-code a set of posts according to the coding scheme. Dataset two was used for the test, with 10% of 1,208 posts (121

posts) sent to be recoded. All binary nominal variables excluding topic issue choice were examined, topic choice was not examined due to the triplicate system. The result for dataset two was an α of 0.81 which is considered a good result as "it is customary to require α ≥ .8, while where tentative conclusions are still acceptable, α ≥ .67 is the lowest conceivable limit" (Krippendorf, 2004, p.241). The results of the testing show a high level of reproducibility via the coding scheme; however, some elements of the coding scheme were more reproducible than others. Information variables received an α of .*86*, Framing .*74*, Mobilisation .*84* and Personalisation .*72* (full results are in Appendix 4). It is clear the less explicit elements of the coding scheme produce more variable results, but that the coding scheme is reliable and represents Facebook communications accurately. Some codes are clearly weaker than others with there a need to appreciate the inherent subjectivity in some elements of Facebook content.

Overall, this thesis' methodology offers a new level of detail upon previous studies, utilising a comprehensive approach that is more appropriate for understanding Facebook use by political parties. This is the first ever study that has measured UK parties approaches to Facebook in high detail. The methodology considers present and future longitudinal and comparative analysis, achieved through the creation of a comprehensive typology and coding system, alongside the novel use of underutilised data sources, tools and supportive datasets.

All under the algorithm

What a user sees on Facebook is dependent on the Facebook algorithm. No two networks are the same as each user's experience is personalised according to their own content algorithm. As Facebook explain "the Facebook algorithm ranks all available posts that can display on a user's News Feed based on how likely that user will have a positive reaction… with a focus on what the algorithm determines as meaningful interactions"[23]. Therefore, the pages, people, hashtags and searches individuals like and/or follow will innately be interest based. This creates separate information spaces, as certain peoples will

[23] https://tinuiti.com/blog/paid-social/facebook-algorithm/ accessed 21/1/2019

invariably be attracted to certain informational sources or networks, thus creating social and informational bubbles for users. Parties must appreciate this fact, as understanding the operation of Facebook is important for creating effective content. Unfortunately, researchers do not have access to most social media platforms' algorithms (not only is it a closely guarded secret, but also every single user's algorithm is personally unique) as they are a major element of their intellectual property. This is constraining research; however, we can nevertheless appreciate that parties can learn to play the systems algorithms. Thus, although we cannot understand an individual's network or why they see what content, we can at least understand that Facebook is an individualised personalised experience.

3.4: Ethical considerations

The collection and analysis of social media features ethical challenges. The nature of this thesis' examination of political parties leads this thesis to avoid many of the ethical pitfalls other papers have suffered from. Some studies such as Bode (2010) or Facebook's own experiments[24], have been heavily critiqued due to a lack of informed consent, or even nefarious goals. This thesis stands within a body of literature that examines Facebook pages through extracted Facebook data (Gulati & Williams, 2013), with its focus on political parties within the public interest not users' personal data. The understanding of public vs. private spaces on Facebook is a key ethical area. In contrast to Twitter, which is defined by the "public nature" of tweets and replies (Bruns & Highfield, 2013, p.671), Facebook offers the opportunity for private, public and semi-public interactions and content. Some users do set their privacy settings to allow access to everyone, but many users opt for more restrictive privacy settings, especially since the Cambridge Analytica scandal. If researchers are collecting private information or interacting with Facebook users, then there is an ethical obligation to adequately inform users about the research, gain their consent, and protect their information (Solberg, 2010). However, this thesis is not examining individual

[24] E.g. Facebook's unethical experiment where they attempted to change users' sentiment by altering the messages they receive.

Facebook users, with the only reference to users' data through anonymised totalled engagement metrics of party-political content or anonymised socio-demographic information.

Netvizz is incapable of accessing or extracting private Facebook data, whether private page posts, personal user information or private user posted content. Netvizz acts via the user's Facebook identification using their application programming interface (API), and thus has only the same access as the Facebook account used. Consequently, Netvizz has no power to go beyond the boundaries of what is visible and legitimate content a personal account can view. This is important as some advanced programmes of data mining, can reverse this important privacy wall and extract personal (privately designated) Facebook data. Finally, Netvizz operates within Facebook as an app, following Facebook's interface and the rules it assigns. Although Netvizz is now shut down, Crowdtangle - Facebook's research tool, uses the same system and data that Netvizz used to operate. This thesis thus only uses extracted data that has no reasonable expectation of privacy on behalf of the social media user. This data is open for fair research use, as all Facebook users have agreed to a set of terms and conditions featuring clauses that outline how their public data can be used by researchers[25].

Although the public nature of the data is important, several key elements also inform the ethics this thesis' research. A key aspect of ethical research is assessing the risk of harm. Anonymity is vital for the analysis of social media data, as it reduces the risk of harm. Consequently, all data is anonymized within the datasets; this means there will not be direct representation of individuals. Secondly, there is a very low risk of harm to the public from this research, as the data used cannot allow an actor to trace content back to the originator (see Narayanan, & Shmatikov, 2009). Similarly, no personal political opinions are recorded other than an openness to share, like or comment in abstracted data. This thesis upholds high ethical standards and follows the ESRC's Research Framework 2015, aiming to maximise benefit for individuals and society whilst minimising possible risks or harm. The research has a clear line of accountability, to both Bath University and the ESRC's research and ethical standards. The

[25] See - https://www.facebook.com/full_data_use_policy

independence of this research is maintained, with it an independent thesis without party political or commercial interest, any conflicts of interest arising are made explicit within the research.

Facebook demographics, virtual members and cyber party ramifications?

4: Facebook demographics, virtual members and cyber party ramifications

4.1: Introduction

Examining Facebook audience insights data, BES survey data and Party Members Project data, this chapter examines who uses Facebook in the UK, and who parties' 'virtual members' are. It is vital to appreciate who the parties are reaching on Facebook, as content success is dependent on supporters rebroadcasting information into wider networks. The parties themselves will also be influenced by who they can reach, potentially tailoring content and organisation strategies to their audience. This addresses key elements of RQ1, with Facebook potentially offering a new body of supporters to campaign through, and a large mass population to campaign to. Four questions are used to appreciate any potential cyber party capability. Firstly: is this body larger than official membership? What are the socio-educational-locational demographics of virtual members? Does this support offer opportunity in contrast to official membership? Finally, do virtual members alter across page types, suggesting the importance of leadership?

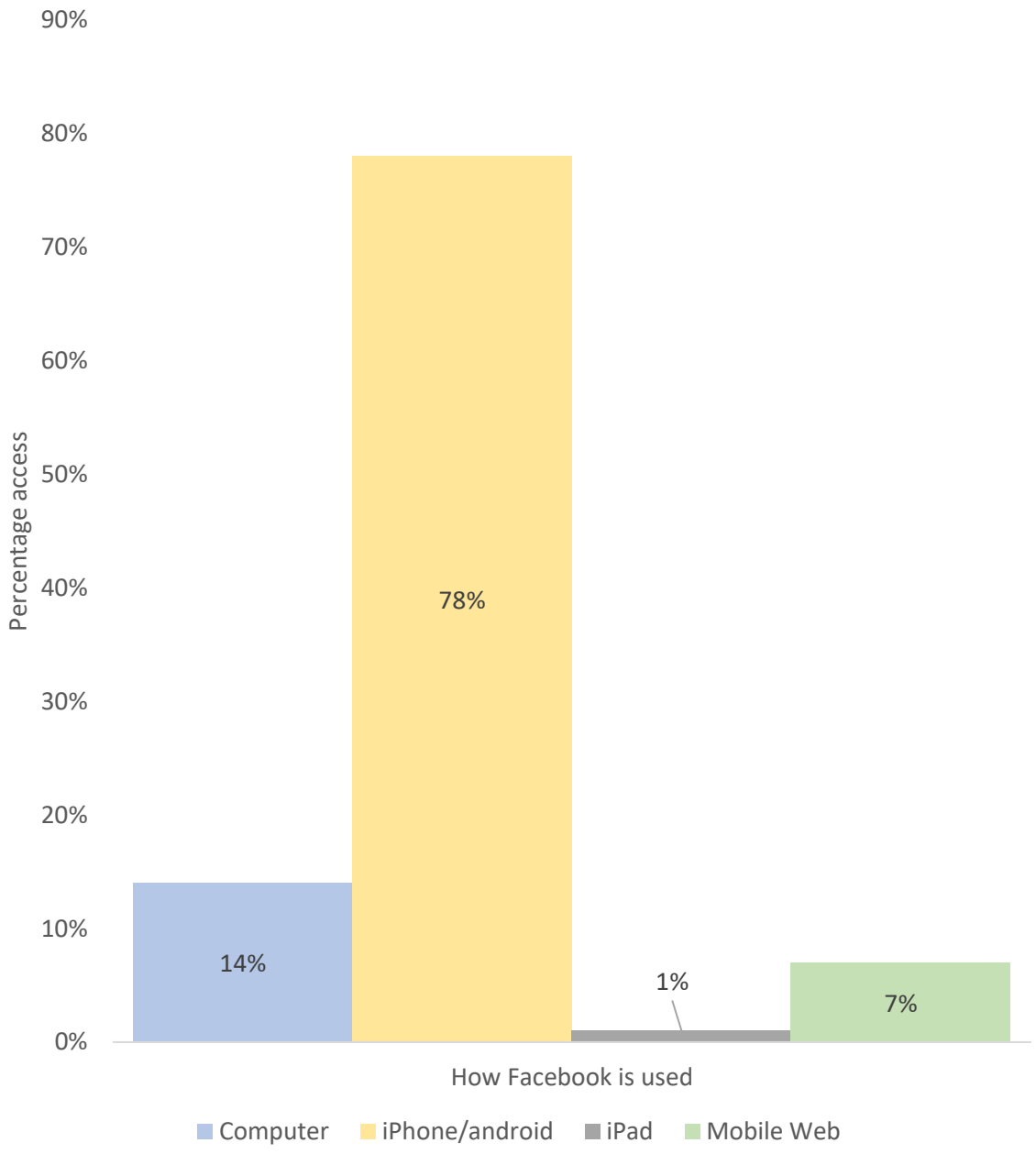
4.2: Who is on Facebook in the UK?

Friends and usage

Individual's Facebook networks are growing, in the UK one study (*n*=2000) has attempted to show the size of a user's ego-network. Dunbar found users' have an average of 155 friends, with the study finding that "27.6% of each Facebook user's friends were considered 'genuine' (i.e. close) friends" (Dunbar, 2016, p.21)[26]. Facebook users' networks thus somewhat mirror the existence of genuine offline friendship networks, meaning powerful elements of the sociological model can operate. The 'kitchen table' has to some extent been replicated online, with the phenomenon growing. Political parties consequently have a gateway into a very personal world, and if successful in generating share

[26] A particularly high percentage for a social network.

engagement, important access to individuals' subsequent networks. Political parties have benefitted from this expansion of users' online networks: according to the Reuters Institute by 2017 42% of United Kingdom social media users followed a politician or political party page. Unlike past tools, individuals at high rates are personally *deciding* to follow and engage with party politics.



Graph 1. How UK Facebook users accessed over 30 days from 14/02/2018 – 13/03/2018[27]

[27] Based on user activity and environmental data via Facebook Audience Insights.

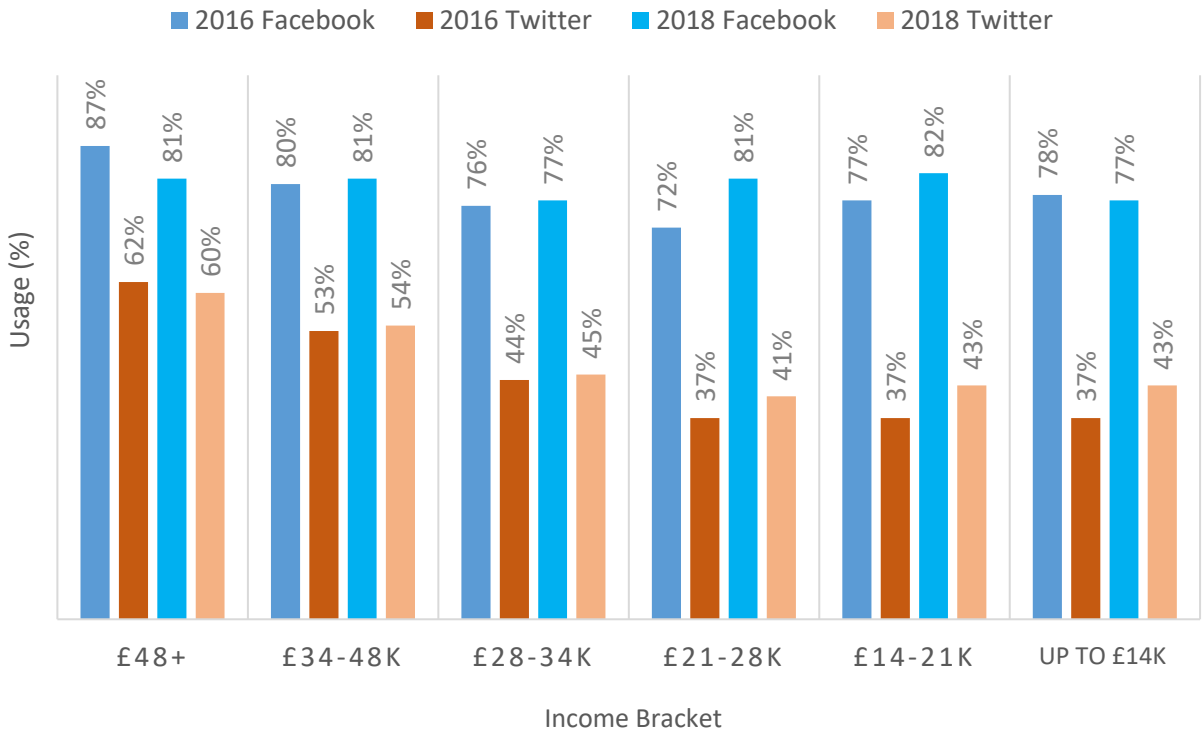
Today most access to Facebook occurs through smartphones. In 2017 a monthly average US user spent 41 minutes per day on the network, up from 36 minutes in 2014 (eMarketer, 2017), although growth has stalled recently. Facebook's use in the UK has also peaked in some demographics reaching saturation levels, in 2017 Facebook was reaching 83% of UK millennials and 62% of adults each week; only 1% more millennials and 3% adults than in 2016[28]. Despite declining growth, Facebook today is a platform only rivalled by television and email (UK usage rates are 66% social media, 82% email – ONS internet study). Facebook also offers a key gateway to the public for political parties because we spend so much time on the platform. Facebook with its 2.3 billion users is the central network of choice for the World. The social network accounts for much of the growth in the global ad market and ~40% of all internet traffic[29], we are on the platform and we are paying attention to the content that comes our way. Huge levels of engagement are seen with political content on the platform, with the ability of political content to go viral, pushing political communications into the smartphone screens of even the most apolitical individuals. Although many do scroll past political content, the scale and level of engagement with politics in the digital age has opened up a key new avenue for political campaigns (Boulianne, 2016). Half of people now get their news from social media (Ofcom, 2019) and thus never before has there been such a direct communications path between political parties and voters.

[28] Although growth has stalled recently - https://www.emarketer.com/Article/Time-Spent-with-Facebook-Still-Growing-Not-by-Much/1013903 accessed 1/06/2018

[29] https://www.newsweek.com/facebook-google-internet-traffic-net-neutrality-monopoly-699286 (accessed 09/04/2019)

The UK Facebook population

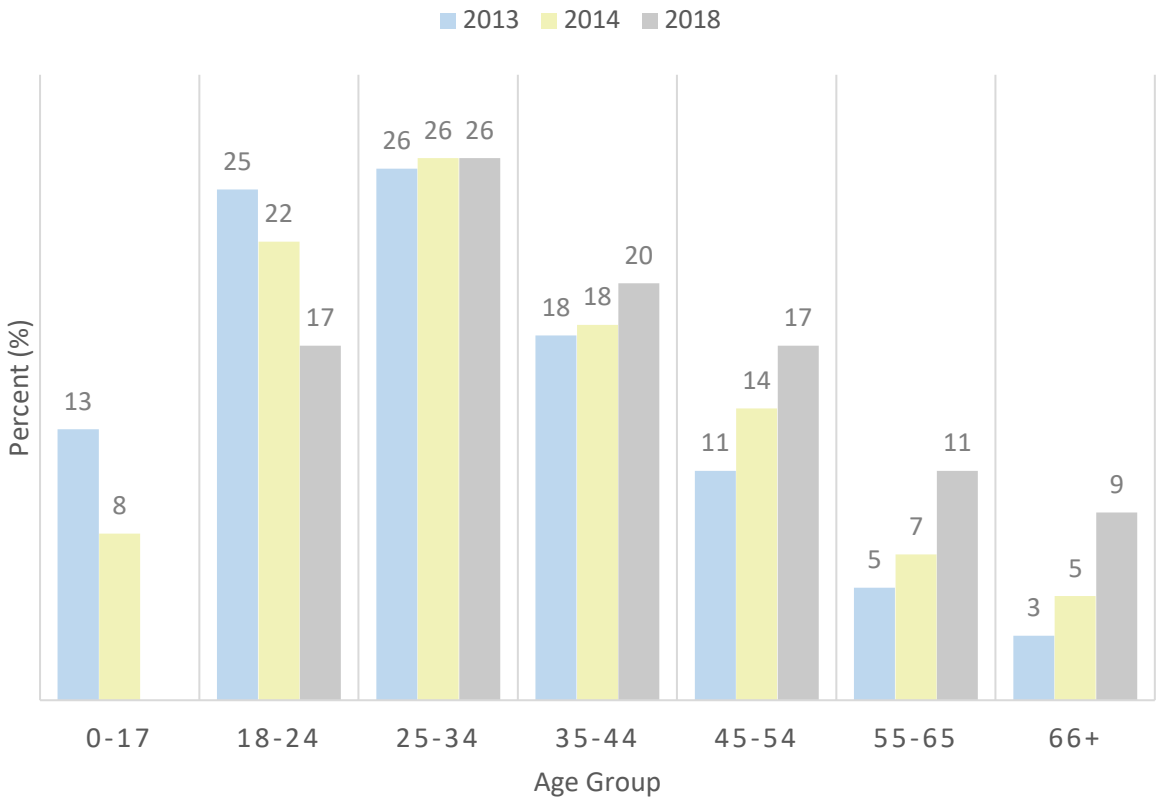
Facebook is a useful campaign tool because of a diverse userbase, while its real name policy means users are avatars online of their offline selves. This contrasts with other social networks more fluid approach, such as Twitter. Across income, class and location Facebook's userbase is shown to be an electorally useful one to tap into. *WeareFlint,* a UK based design agency engaged in two polling reports in 2016 (*n*=2,092) and 2018 (*n*=2,008), they provide the best longitudinal data available.



Graph 2. WeareFlint poll, UK 2016 and 2018 Twitter and Facebook usage rates by household income

The data in Graph 2 shows Facebook is relatively representative of lower income households. WeareFlint's class data shows similar trends, in 2018 Facebook was used by 87% ABC1 and 74% of C2DE income brackets, in contrast Twitter is shown to be a middle-class tool with only 38% C2DE usage. Facebook also features strong representation of rural users, in 2016 Facebook was used relatively equally between urban 79% and rural 77%, against 46% urban and 40% rural for Twitter. Clearly, Facebook's reachable audience is one the parties are interested in, given its capacities over other platforms. To examine age, Facebook

Audience Insights allows us to examine the basic socio-demographic statistics of all Facebook users according to their interests. Facebook is the social media platform with the greatest capability to reach voters (Mellon et al., 2017), having achieved this over time through technological and demographic change.



Graph 3. Age profile of UK Facebook users 2013–2018 (Facebook data 2013, 2014 and 2018)[30]

Older cohorts especially those over 35 have used Facebook more over time, with over 65s having become a far larger population from 3.1% in 2013, to 9% in 2018. However, usage among 18-24-year olds has declined from 24.5% in 2013 to 17% in 2018, showing how younger users have abandoned Facebook in favour of other networks such as Instagram or TikTok. Facebook and ONS data show 56% of the UK population were on the platform in 2016. Over 2018, 35-40 Million UK people were using Facebook monthly (Facebook Audience Insights, 2018). Although the platform features relatively stable gender demographics, some age cohorts do exhibit a skew to one gender or the other. Facebook's older

[30] Data for 2018 sourced from Facebook - https://www.facebook.com/; 2014 Facebook data from DazeInfo - https://dazeinfo.com/2014/01/08/66-internet-users-u-k-facebook-inc-fb-report/, and 2013 Facebook data from Fananalyzer - http://www.fanalyzer.co.uk/demographics.html accessed 03/05/2018

demographics skew more heavily towards women, with younger demographics more accurate of the UK's gender breakdown.

Only a handful of studies have examined the demographic representativeness of social media against the UK electorate (Duggan et al., 2015; Greenwood et al., 2016). The only study to examine this question in the UK is by Mellon and Prosser et al., (2017). In examining BES 2015 General Election data, they find users of Facebook younger than the rest of the representative sample, but older than Twitter. Facebook presents opportunities to the parties in gathering younger support but also highlights a limited use in reaching older populations. However, it is important to note the age of the study, as shifting patterns of Facebook use means over time the platform has become more representative of a wider population. For UK political parties, with campaigns having finite resources and time constraints, the capacities of Facebook as a campaign tool to reach core and marginal voter groups has become unparalleled.

4.3: A cyber party? Party Facebook support

Followers and interested users as 'virtual members'

Parties will not be consistently reaching the entire Facebook population with their organic communications, instead they will primarily influence closer-networked followers and interested users. A follower is a person who has chosen to receive updates from a page they follow, with posts from this page being placed in their news feed (subject to the Facebook algorithm). Although it is still not clear exactly what it means to 'follow' or to 'like' a party or an individual, there is a strength to these actions, as these engagement relationships are public to the user's network of friends, and thus are actions that are both personal and public. There is therefore an instrumental value within the action of following. Nevertheless, the scale of this value is uncertain and further research needs to be done on what type of political relationship it describes. The number of followers a page has is important for several reasons; followers can be mobilised online and offline akin to official members, followers through sharing expand information dissemination capacities with followers' friends potentially disseminating information further. Followers are therefore powerful, they spread messages with

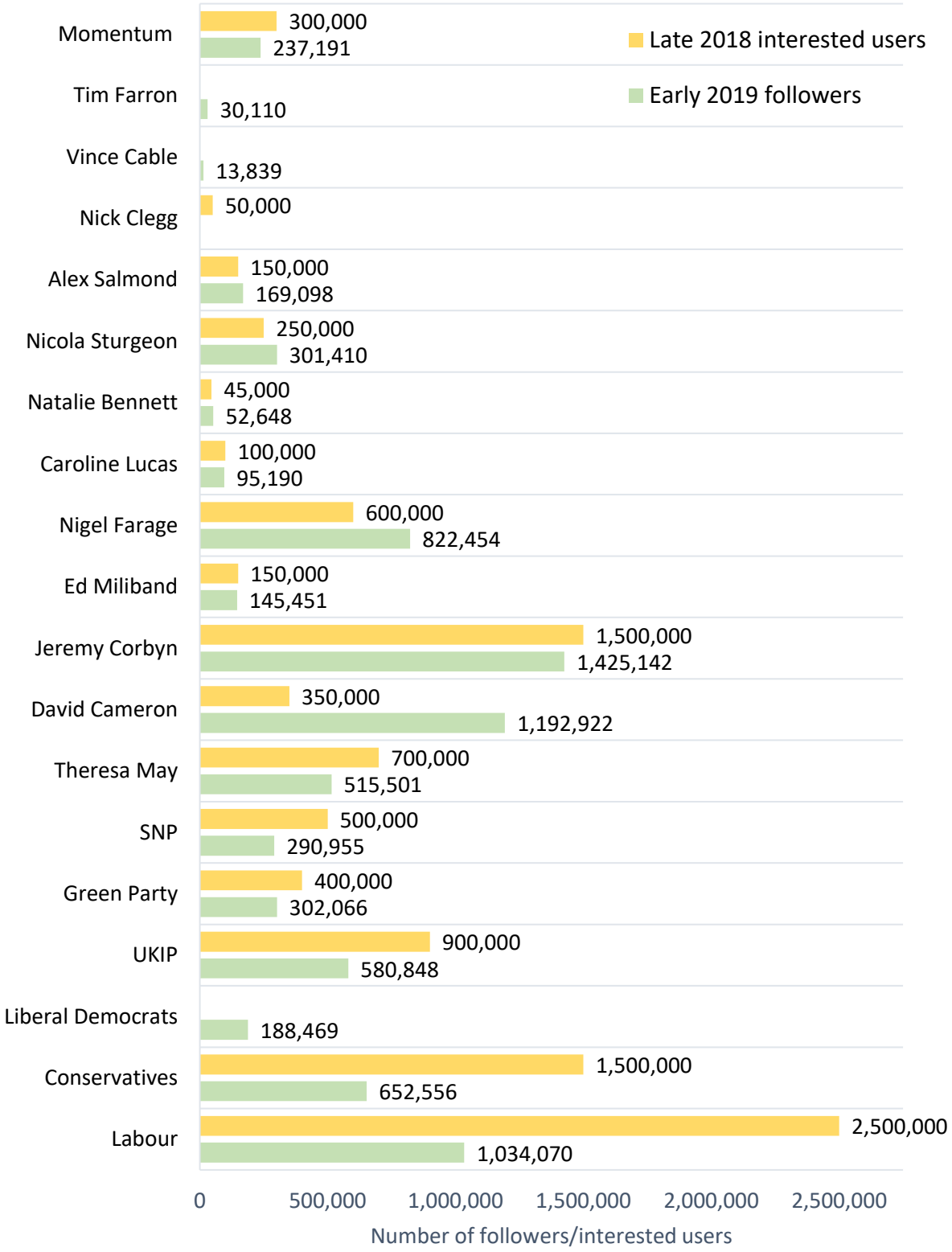
their own personal approval and often with their own twist on the messages campaign information. As Elizabeth Linder former UK Facebook politics manager asserted; “people don’t trust campaigns…. they trust their friends" (Linder, 2015).

It is important to consider that different types of party pages exist in how parties’ campaign on Facebook. This thesis examines party and leader pages as they are the biggest political pages. Given their scale these pages most accurately represent any party virtual membership seen online. This contrasts with the smaller followership’s accumulated by local and satellite pages, which do not represent the potential of virtual membership as effectively. It is also likely someone who follows a local/satellite page will follow a party or leader page, thus making these pages the best proxy for examining virtual membership.

“(Facebook) audiences are a significant gap in our knowledge” (Lee, 2016, p.322). With no specific way to examine followers of a Facebook page above pure numbers, alongside analysis of follower numbers this thesis examines these users via proxy through Facebook Ad Manager’s Audience Insights database of ‘interested users’. The data source allows for the analysis of the number and basic demographics of UK-based monthly Facebook users who are ‘interested’ in the studied pages. The interested audience group is determined by factors including; “pages followed, apps used, ads clicked, pages engaged with, the activities people engage in on and off Facebook, purchase behaviours, demographics, mobile device used and speed of network connection” (Facebook Business, 2018). There is clear overlap between the number of followers and interested users (Graph 4), although the relationship is not perfect. Interested users for each page provides (normally) a higher population than the specific pages’ followers count (8049920 followers to 9695000 interested users, 32% larger than follower numbers)[31]. As Graph 4 shows, although not perfect, interested users are a great proxy to examine page followers. Labour and Conservative party pages appear to have a strong advantage in reaching more interested users. Why users do not follow the pages yet are still interested in the pages is potentially related to contextual elements, including interest being drawn from the news, television or other political events. Information on Facebook is subject to the algorithm, with

[31] The data studied on 15/03/2018, data not retroactive and is subject to change as it is social data. All party and leader pages’ audiences were accessible bar some Liberal Democrat pages.

the nature of communications heavily linked to activity, thus content of interest is pushed to users irrespective of whether they follow the specific page.



Graph 4. UK Facebook interested users and followers of pages

Followers (as also studied via interested users) are conceptualised in this chapter as ‘virtual members’. This concept of virtual membership stands as a third position of activism for parties. As a middle ground between official membership and general interest, virtual membership describes a group who are mainly not official members but are still connected and can be organised. This new human resource is a lynchpin of any impact Facebook can have, because of their potential to campaign on a party’s behalf or be organised for online and offline campaigning (Lee & Campbell, 2016; Bartlett et al., 2013). It also represents the realisation of elements of Margetts’ ideas of the ‘cyber party’ (2001) with the breakdown of barriers between members and non-members. This is important as most parties’ virtual members are not party members. BES data shows an average of 24% of the respondents who gave a Party ID across the studied parties follow candidates or parties on the platform (BES 2017 Campaign Wave 12, n=17,415). Rates for Conservative followership was 12% and Labour 26%. This shows that that millions of UK individuals follow a party page online but are still not official members of a political party.

Some scholars originally asserted that social media supporters are ineffective for campaigning because of their “politically partisan” social groupings, lack of non-partisan interpersonality (Rainie, Smith, Schlozman, Brady, 2012) and damaging levels of homophily (Grevet, Terveen & Gilbert, 2014). However, this academic position has been shifting towards a position that argues online social media communications are not as heterogeneous as previously envisaged (Barbera et al., 2015), with real potentials to activate supporters on and offline (Bale, Webb & Poletti, 2018). Having a large virtual membership thus presents clear opportunities to parties, even when partisan. Although Facebook virtual members have not received examination, in the wider literature some studies have examined the similar phenomenon of non-member supporters (Webb et al., 2017). Webb estimates that there are 8,852,903 million ‘supporters’ of UK political parties who are not official members. This support closely matches the 8,049,920 followers and the 9,695,000 interested users found on the Facebook platform in 2019. This group of un-official support is important as “at the aggregate level, campaign work done by supporters matches that done by party members” (Webb et al., 2017, p.64). As Table 11 shows, Webb finds that supporters engage at 21% of the overall activism level of official members using an additive scale. The key

element is that rates of activism on Facebook were very high from both members and supporters. Further, for Facebook activity, supporters engage at 39% of the activity level of members when liking Facebook content. Thus, although Facebook supporters may differ from offline supporters in demographics and scale, the rates of activism seen make them an important resource for campaigning. The large number of Facebook virtual members' parties can gather means a huge new potential reservoir of activism is available. Importantly this is also not exclusive, with high rates seen for both Labour (18.8%) and the Conservatives (10.2%).

Table 11. Webb et al.'s estimations of activism of members vs. supporters using 2015 BES data for general and Facebook activities

Activity		Con	Lab	LD	UKIP	Green	SNP	Total
Activism Index (additive scale)	Members	2.15	2.56	2.38	2.28	2.43	3.02	**2.5**
	Supporters	0.25	0.48	0.42	0.37	0.79	0.8	**0.5**
'Liked' something by party/cand. on FB (percentage)	Members	39.6	51.1	47.4	44.2	67.6	72.7	**53.4**
	Supporters	10.2	18.8	14.8	17.2	35.5	31.2	**21.0**

Given the huge difference in numbers between official membership and supporters, there is real value in cultivating and using unofficial support, because this is where the majority of activism occurs from on Facebook. The potential to convert online users to offline campaigners is an unparalleled resource unseen in any other tool. The high activism rate of supporters on Facebook represents an opportunity for parties, but also indicates a fundamentally different landscape for party organisation.

How many virtual members are there?

The best available data upon the number of followers of the pages over time is used. Access to data is problematic, thus figures used present an amalgamation of data from roughly similar periods (within 3-4 months), taken from a combination of journalism, Google image searches of the pages at the specified time, the Wayback-machine (a website that saves websites over time) and academic articles. Given the benefits of having a large diverse follower base,

political parties have spent years building support bases for their party and party leader pages. This has occurred through organic support growth or other means such as advertisements, as seen in claims levelled against David Cameron 'buying' followers in 2014[32].

Table 12 shows a comparison of follower numbers for the leader and party pages of the 8 most important political parties. From late 2010 to 2019 followership increased 2,572% across all the pages. The rise in followers seen cannot be wholly linked to the increase in the UK Facebook population, as in 2010 Facebook boasted of 26 million UK users, meaning that Facebook from 2010 to 2018 has only seen a 54% increase in userbase.

[32]https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/david-cameron-resorts-to-paying-for-facebook-fans-because-not-enough-people-like-him-9180055.html accessed 09/07/2018

Table 12. The political parties' page followers from 2010-2019

	Party Page	Late 2010	Mid 2013	Late 2015	Early 2018	Early 2019	Late 2019
L	Labour	61,271	143,244	304,875	1,016,836	1,034,070	1,038,311
C	Conservatives	111,690	159,044	480,955	652,116	652,556	669,655
LD	Liberal Democrats	7,652	92,078	113,126	186,339	188,469	199,253
U	UKIP	1,069	25,906	462,672	587,084	580,848	571,305
G	Green Party	7,858	19,165	215,955	305,808	302,066	310,447
S	SNP	4,079	.	203,883	287,818	290,955	294,518
B	Brexit Party	.	.	.	.	.	143,431
C	Boris Johnson	.	.	.	.	.	680,825
C	Theresa May	.	.	.	477,941	515,501	537,376
C	David Cameron	50,240	128,000	695,173	1,218,540	1,192,922	1,185,615
L	Jeremy Corbyn	.	.	71,849	1,386,549	1,425,142	1,483,129
L	Ed Miliband	12,441	30,200	101,263	149,328	145,451	144,359
U/B	Nigel Farage	.	.	269,646	786,957	822,454	875,557
U	Richard Braine	.	.	.	.	.	643
G	Caroline Lucas	5,900	.	.	92,815	95,190	96,895
G	Jonathan Bartley	.	.	.	.	.	10,989
G	Natalie Bennett	.	.	24,000	55,472	52,648	52,097
S	Nicola Sturgeon	.	.	193,076	299,872	301,410	305,191
U	Alex Salmond	1,718	91,709	162,679	173,730	169,098	168,035
LD	Jo Swinson	.	.	.	.	.	12,206
LD	Vince Cable	.	.	.	11,962	13,839	14,860
LD	Nick Clegg	41,023	80,689	90,692	95,432	Page private	Page private (working for FB)
LD	Tim Farron	.	.	.	35,338	.	34364

Online virtual membership started slowly with political parties on Facebook in 2010 a minority pursuit. Party membership dwarfed online followership, with usage of Facebook partially a gimmick or used to drive website traffic. 'Social media was important, but mainly in creating 'buzz'… to drive people to websites where they could lay out their wares' (Newman, 2010, p.1). Craig Elder, former Conservative Digital director highlights a skin-deep appreciation; 'we wanted to show people we were smart and clever… we wanted to show them shiny things" (Ross, 2015). However, by 2017 usage and implementation was ubiquitous. Two important trends are visible in followership, first is the radical rise in followers from 2010-2015, second is the slowdown in followership growth after 2018. The data suggests that offline political events, growing political interest by Facebook users and potential Facebook developments spurred growth.

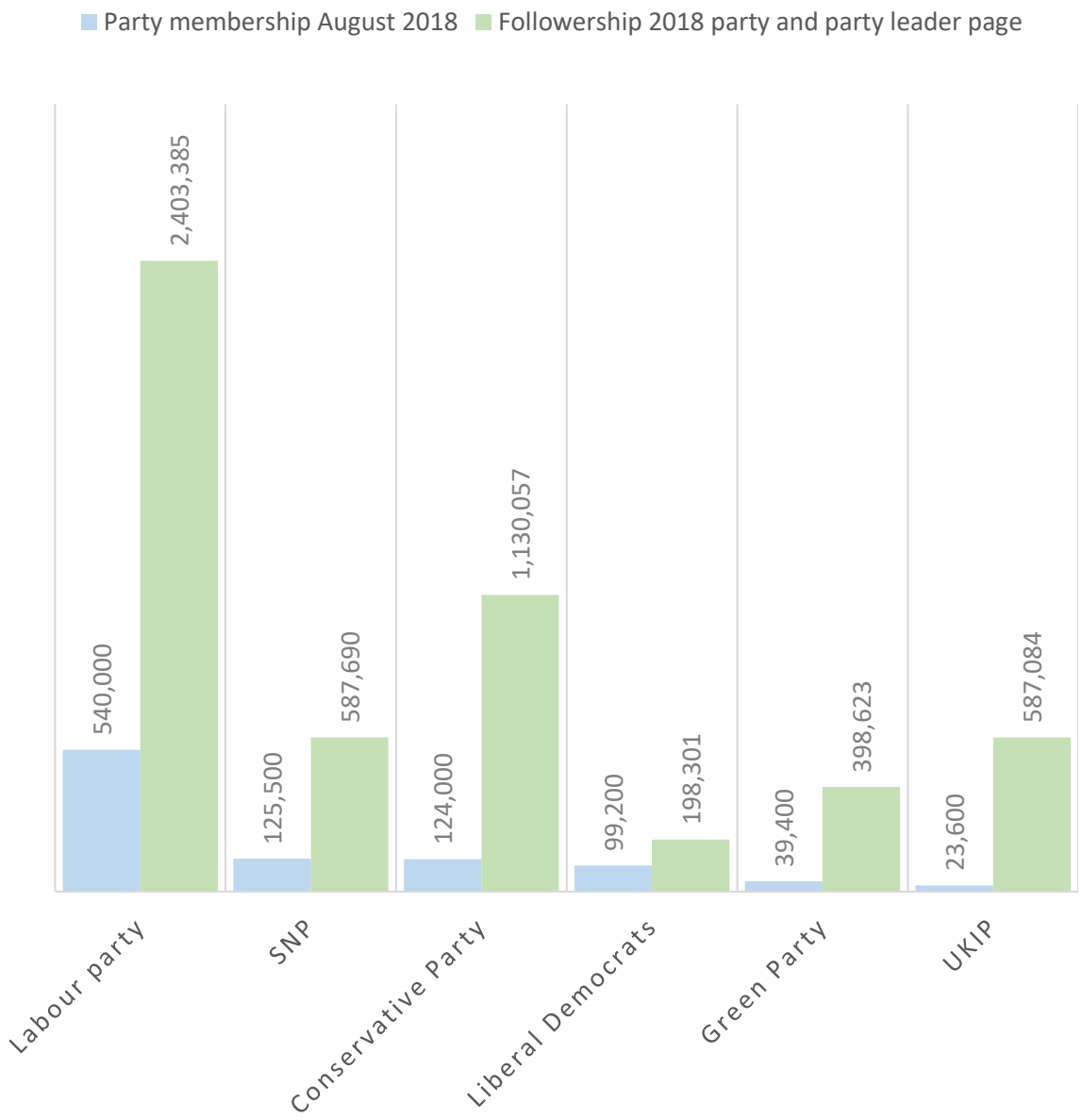
The nature of support on the platform offers insight into the question of normalisation or equalisation. As Lev-On & Haleva-Amir assert; "the equalization hypothesis claims that Internet platforms predominantly aid peripheral and marginal players… conversely, the normalization hypothesis suggests that online activity will eventually reward established and dominant players" (2018, p.1). In terms of Facebook followers, one would expect to see a clear trend in numbers towards Conservative and Labour supremacy, or the splintering of support across the smaller parties.

Table 13. Follower numbers of; Labour and Conservative party and leader pages, and UKIP, SNP, Liberal Democrat and Green party pages

Grouping	Late 2010	Mid 2013	Late 2015	Early 2018	Early 2019
Labour and Conservative party page	172,961	302,288	785,830	1,668,952	1,686,626
Other party pages	20,658	137,149	995,636	1,367,049	1,362,338
Follower difference	***152,303***	***165,139***	***-209,806***	***301,903***	***324,288***
Labour and Conservative leader page	62,681	158,200	796,436	1,864,490	1,940,643
Other leader pages	48,641	172,398	547,017	1,214,982	1,232,893
Follower difference	***14,040***	***-14,198***	***249,419***	***649,508***	***707,750***

2015 saw the greatest degree of equalisation in online virtual membership bases across both party and leader pages. The Conservative and Labour pages only had 39,613 more followers than UKIP, SNP, Liberal Democrats and Green Party combined. This supports studies such as Southern & Lee (2015) who found peripheral parties highly active on Facebook at the time. This trend was also reflected in the 2015 General Election where smaller parties received a larger segment of the popular vote than ever before (Audickas et al., 2017). Although the equalisation trend is visible in 2015, followership by 2018 returned to the two-party norm seen from 2010-2013 (in large part due to Labour's growth). Since 2015 the Labour and Conservative parties have seen their followership grow to a 1 million lead over the smaller parties. However rather than a clear trend towards normalisation over the last decade, there has been consistent volatility between followership levels of smaller and larger parties. Social media is not a stable influence on either a normalisation or equalisation process. Although we recently see a stabilising normalisation trend, positions are in flux. The literature also finds social media leading to equalisation and normalisation. Across similar time periods, Gibson & McAllister (2015) and Samuel-Azran, Yarchi & Wolfsfeld (2015) asserted equalisation, whereas Van Aelst et al. (2017) found normalisation. Overall, there is a clear trend of follower supremacy for the UK's two major political parties, however the two main party's hegemony should not be taken for granted as followership can fluctuate enormously.

Even though Facebook use has continued to grow, the fact we have seen recent low growth in political followership speaks to a new landscape for parties' campaigns. If we are witnessing the end of ever-increasing organic reach this creates new challenges for the parties on the platform. Parties will need to seek new followers from reducing circles of new users, battle for new audiences from within the large group of less politically interested Facebook users, or contest for those who are already engaged with others political pages. With an inability to increase followership into new younger demographics, a stagnant online support base suggests the increased need for targeted advertisements and other tools to reach and activate voters. Finally, if reflective of wider trends, it may be the signal of the stagnation of Facebook itself, a process which will see the platform reinvent itself.

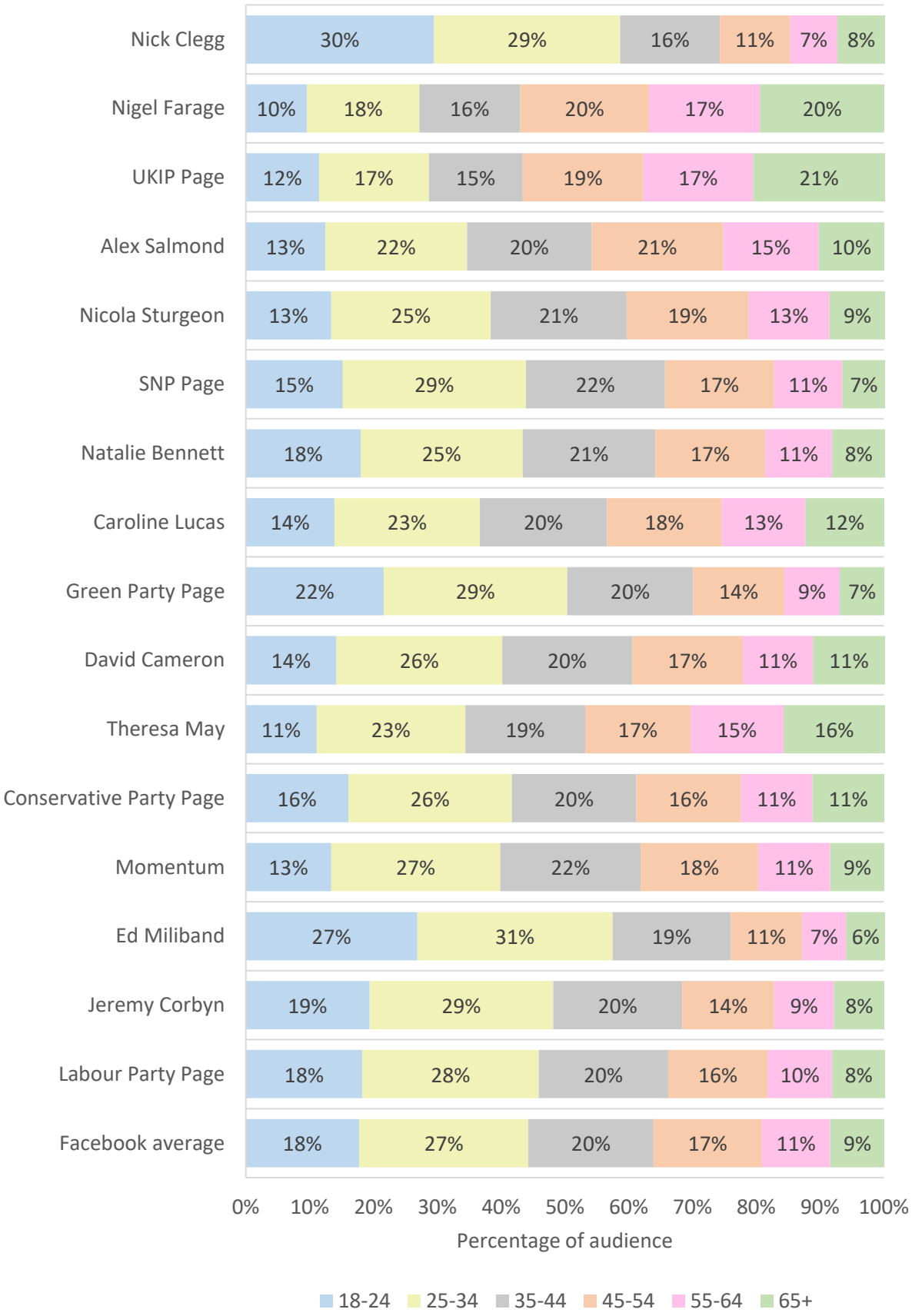


Graph 5. Official membership vs. party and leader page followership 2018

Is the body of virtual members larger than official membership? Clearly yes, although there are growth problems, as Graph 5 shows there is a huge scale of followership far larger than official membership. Today over 8 million people, 1 in 5 UK Facebook users, follow one of the examined party or party leader pages (See Appendix 5). The parties have access to a body of virtual members that are interested in party politics, but who are not willing to be official paying members. The capacity to reach these individuals, and subsequently socialise and potentially mobilise them, is something fundamentally new for campaign teams.

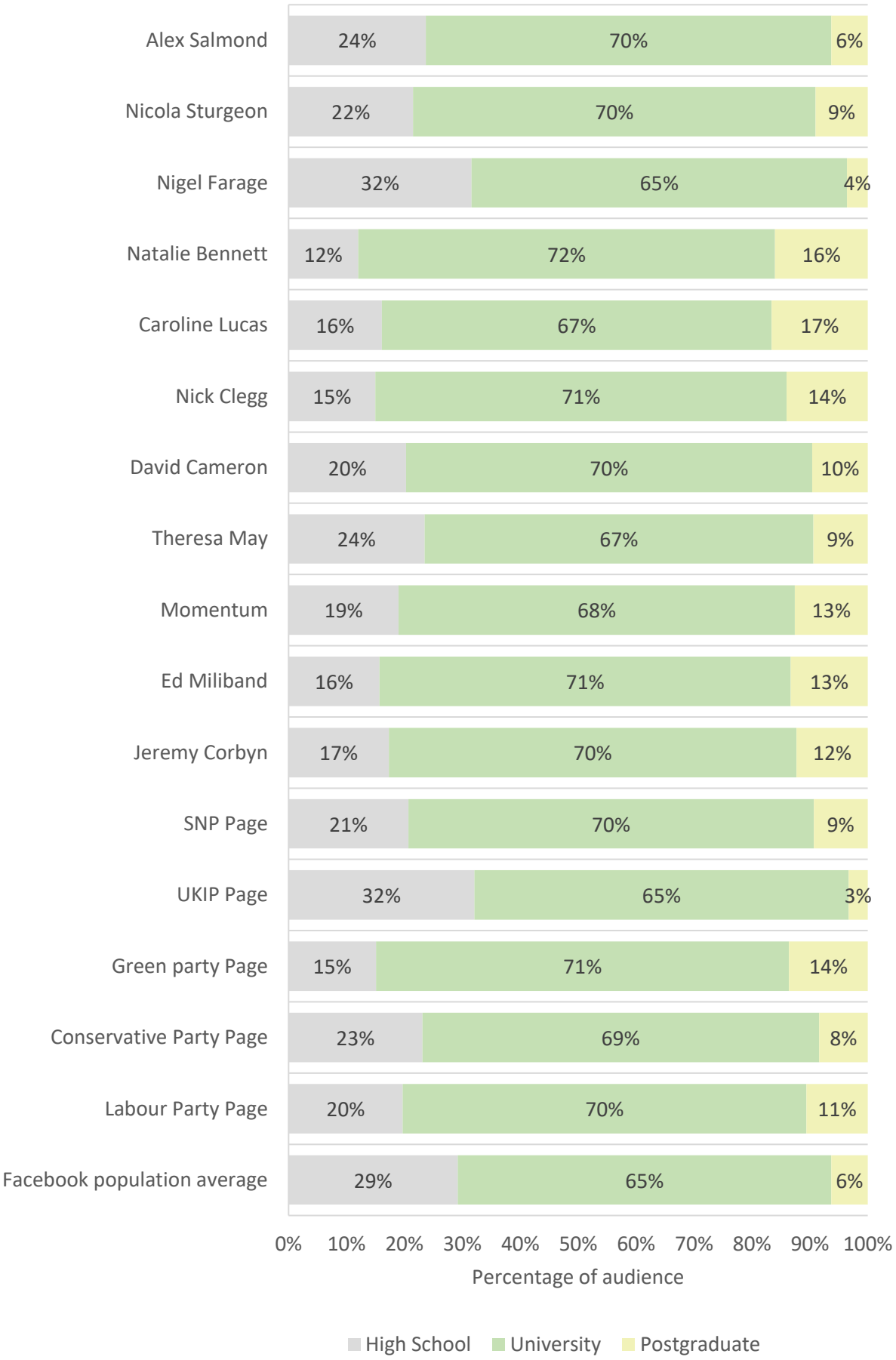
Socio-educational-locational-demographics of virtual members

It is important to understand who these virtual members are, and whether there are opportunities for parties in reaching new groups directly and through these new connections. This is important as it is highly likely that users offline socio-demographics will influence their online network formation because offline friendship networks will be partially replicated online. Political parties' page audience's may be echo chambers of certain demographics heavily represented in official membership, or conversely virtual membership may be broader in support. The implications of this are that when parties' supporters share the political content to their friends, they may only be reaching socio-demographics/groups that are more likely to support the party already. Parties virtual members may also be generally reflective of their traditional official memberships meaning that associated benefits and problems are reflected online. This may force a party to rely more on targeted advertisements to communicate to key demographics outside the reach of organic communications. More detailed page gender/age data is available in Appendix 6.



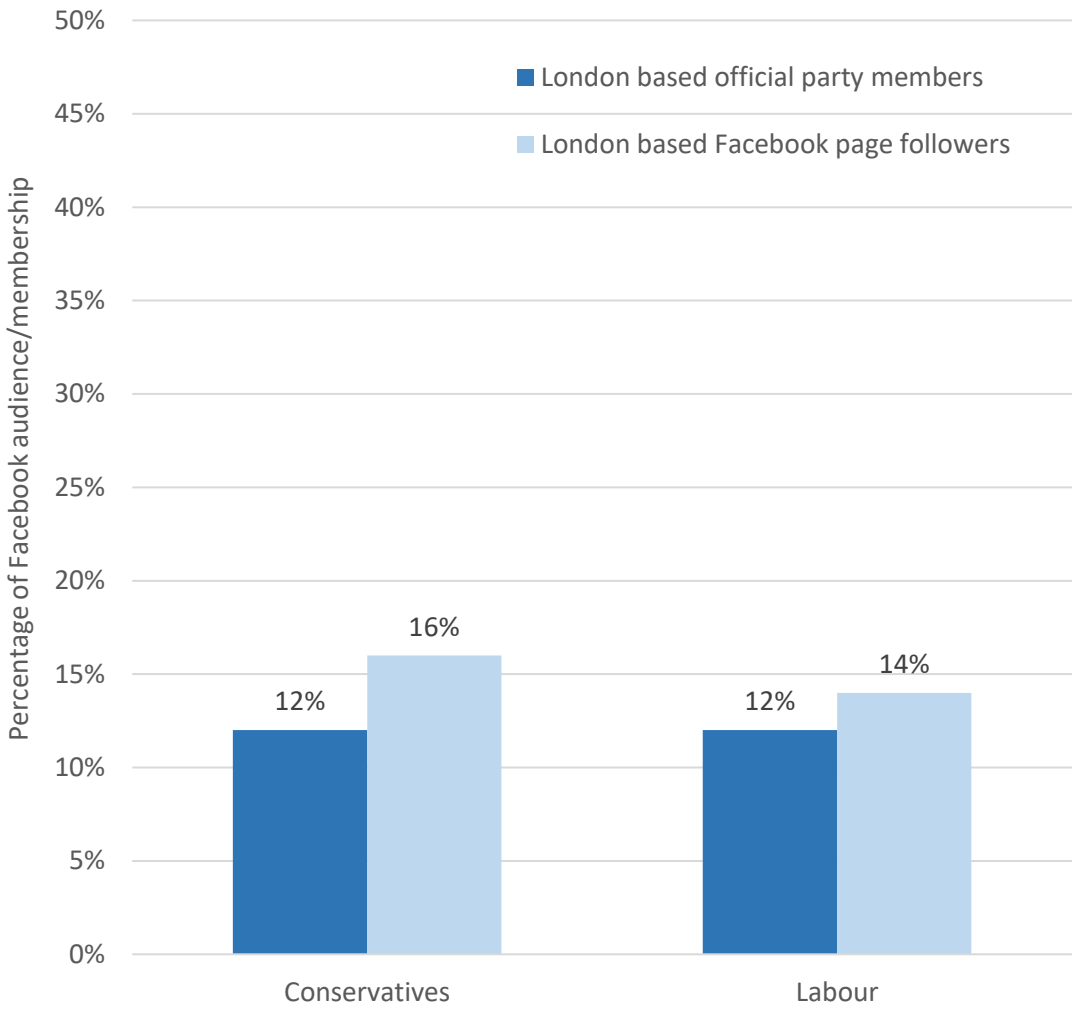
Graph 6. Facebook party page and party leader page (+ Momentum) audience age demographics

What are the socio-educational-locational demographics of virtual members? Firstly, using interested audience data, we can examine the age ranges of the party pages in contrast to the Facebook average population. Labour, SNP and the Green Party feature younger followers than the other parties and are more representative of the Facebook population. In contrast, the Conservative Party, SNP and UKIP feature skews towards older demographics. Appendix 6 presents the same data but split by gender. When examining male and female demographic skews away from the UK Facebook population, the parties overall suffer from a greater female skew (20%) than male (16%). All the pages' followers are generally more male than female; parties, especially right-wing pages, are struggling to gather female followers.



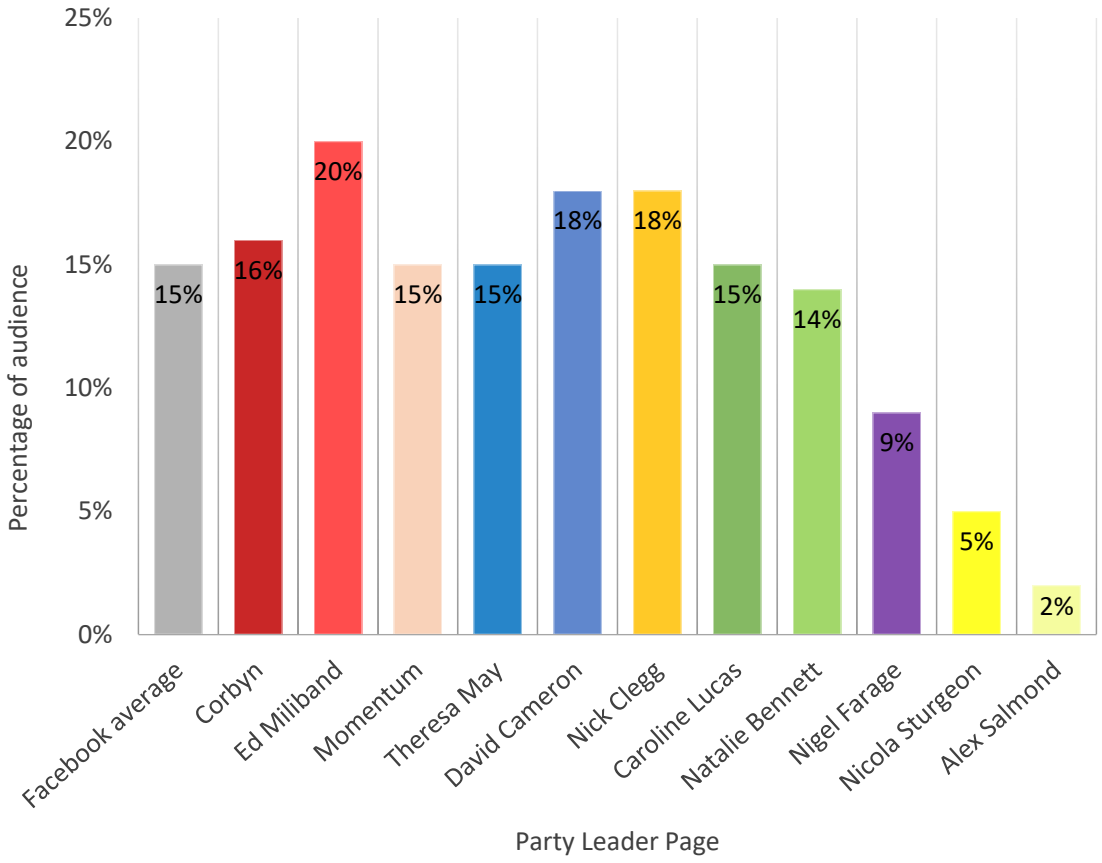
Graph 7. All studied pages by educational demographics

Graph 7 shows right wing followers of parties are more educationally representative, followed by the left and then centre. Against the Facebook average, almost all-party pages except UKIP feature more educated individuals than the Facebook average (perhaps exhibiting the 'left behind' support that Goodwin et al. claimed in 2013). The highest educated virtual members of the Liberal Democrats and the Green Party are the least representative of the Facebook population. Claimed trends about the changing nature of parties' support are reflected in the data. The Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn and Momentum Page have followers that are more educated than the Facebook average. This perhaps reflects the shift of the Labour Party from working class support to cosmopolitan middle-class support (Bale, YouGov, 2017). See Appendix 5 for number estimates.



Graph 8. London based party membership and followers (interested audience) as a percentage of national membership (using PMP data via Webb et al., 2018)

Location is also important for the capacities of Facebook as political parties have areas of strong electoral support that constitute safe seats, but also important areas of contention via their target seats. As virtual members on Facebook will feature elements of their offline networks replicated online, this means that information shared by supporters that flows to their friends will ultimately be tied to spatial factors. As such there is an interest, depending on political factors such as target seats, for parties to be able to influence or organise users within important geographic areas. Surprisingly, Graph 9 shows that the party page with the most London-centric followership when compared to the Facebook average, is the Conservative Party. Whilst Labour, which is often asserted to be a particularly London-centric force is not, this is potentially due to the huge membership change that occurred after Corbyn came to power in 2015. When comparing results to PMP data, some similar trends are visible, with the Conservatives seeing a comparable London skew suggesting that more virtual/official members are London dwellers than expected.

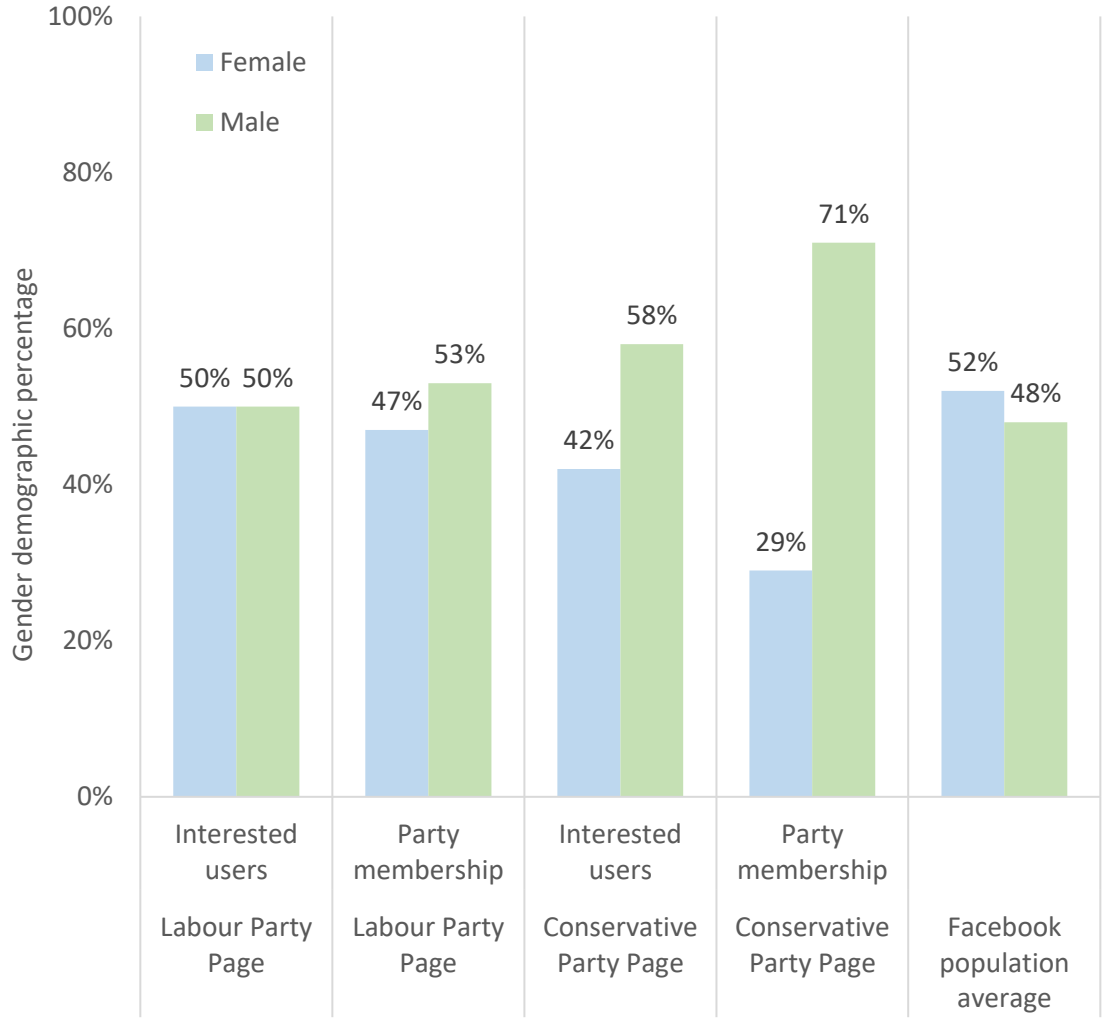


Graph 9. Percentage of party leader page audience in London

When examining leaders in Graph 9, London exhibits a leftwards focus. However, against expectations David Cameron has more of an audience in London than Corbyn. This may potentially be due to his status as a Prime Minister, given that many more people will follow the page out of interest even if not a supporter, however it also suggests that some of the metropolitan-London narrative of Corbyn's support is untrue. There are clear ramifications for how parties can utilise their virtual members given these results, as online actors are heavily related to their offline characteristics. Trends are also seen in other major cities such as Manchester.

Do virtual members differ to party membership?

Does virtual member support offer opportunity in contrast to official membership? Examining Labour and the Conservatives specifically, Facebook offers the different parties diverse benefits from virtual membership. The Labour Party page has an equal gender distribution of 50/50, this is only slightly different to the Facebook average (52% Female, 48% Male). Most importantly, this ratio is superior compared to its official party membership at 53% Male, 47% Female (Bale et al., 2018). In contrast, the Conservative Party page is starkly different from Labour, with gender heavily skewed towards men at 58%. This is obviously problematic for the Conservative Party's organic reach, and the page's capacity to reach women. However, it is an improvement upon the party's real-world membership at 71% male (Bale, Webb & Poletti, 2018). Thus, when questioning the real-world benefits of Facebook, for the Conservative Party, Facebook offers a vital gateway to women. 23% more women are interested users in the Conservative Party page than its official membership gender breakdown. In comparison the Labour Party sees a benefit of only 3%.

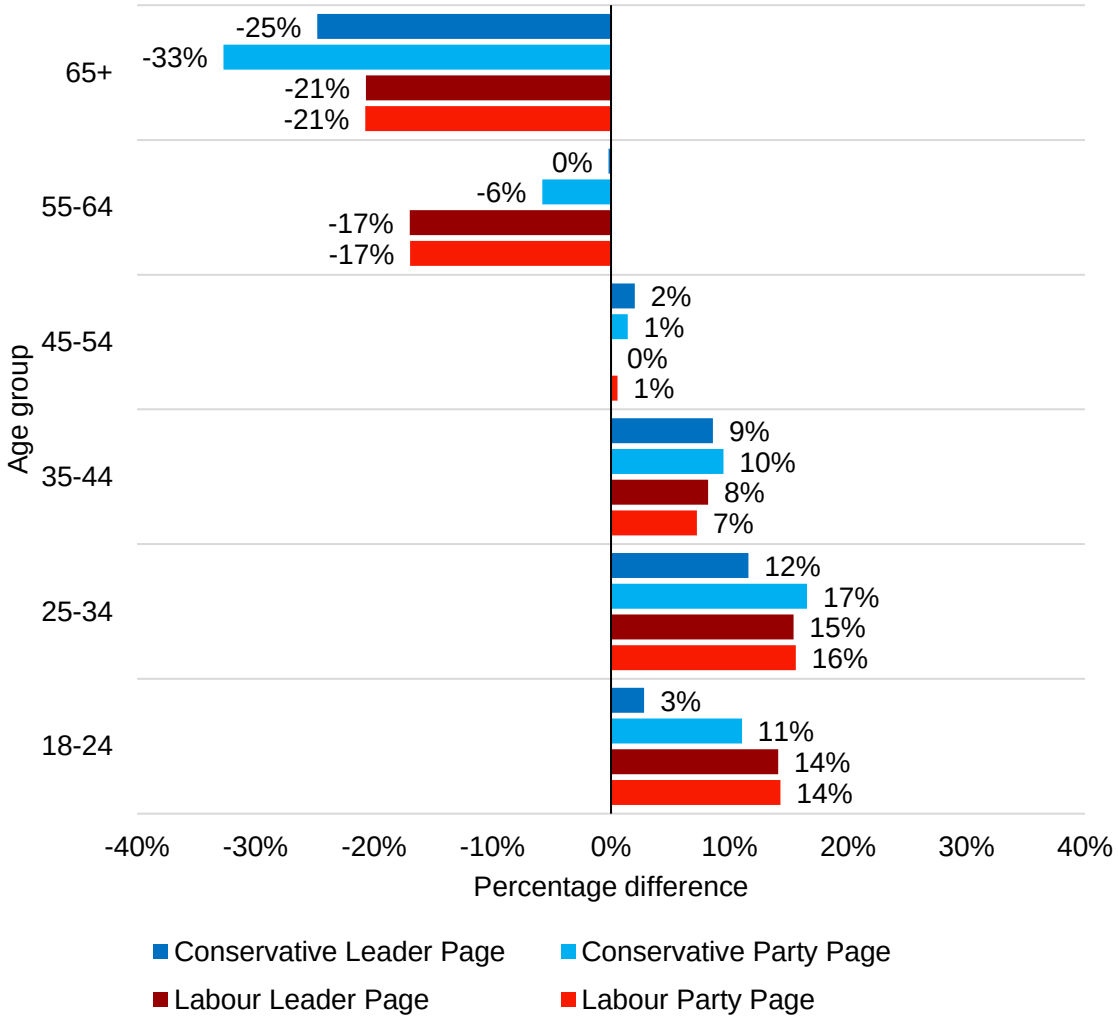


Graph 10. Gender demographics of Labour and Conservative party pages

If parties are trying and succeeding in mobilising online virtual members, then the ability to promote female voices online can potentially offset a male gender skew offline. Further, if these online virtual members are capable of being organised, or generated into official members, the greater female representation on Facebook offers a new source for more representative membership alongside potential improvements in offline campaigning. This pool of female interested supporters not only helps challenge political parties' male dominance (Campbell & Childs, 2015), but can potentially improve campaign efficiency. Gillespie found in his focus group study of canvassers "in general… the gender of the visitor had a huge impact on whether one would open the door" (Gillespie, 2010), there is no reason to doubt similar effects will not occur on Facebook. Although Facebook offers the Conservative Party a greater scale of benefit from its official membership in reaching women voters, it is obvious that the party has problems

in this area. The Conservative Party's members are older and male, and although capacities to saturate these key demographics online is important, Labour clearly has a far more balanced and influential audience base. The Conservatives via organic Facebook communications will struggle to reach female voters, perhaps highlighting why the party has placed so much weight on targeted advertising.

As well as gender, there are benefits in virtual members being younger than official members as seen in Graph 11. For the Conservative Party, this new pool of more diverse younger people, who can be potentially stimulated into online/offline campaign action, is currently an underutilised resource. Currently it appears only Labour is attempting to spur into action their online audience, although from the data it is obvious that the potential exists for all the parties.



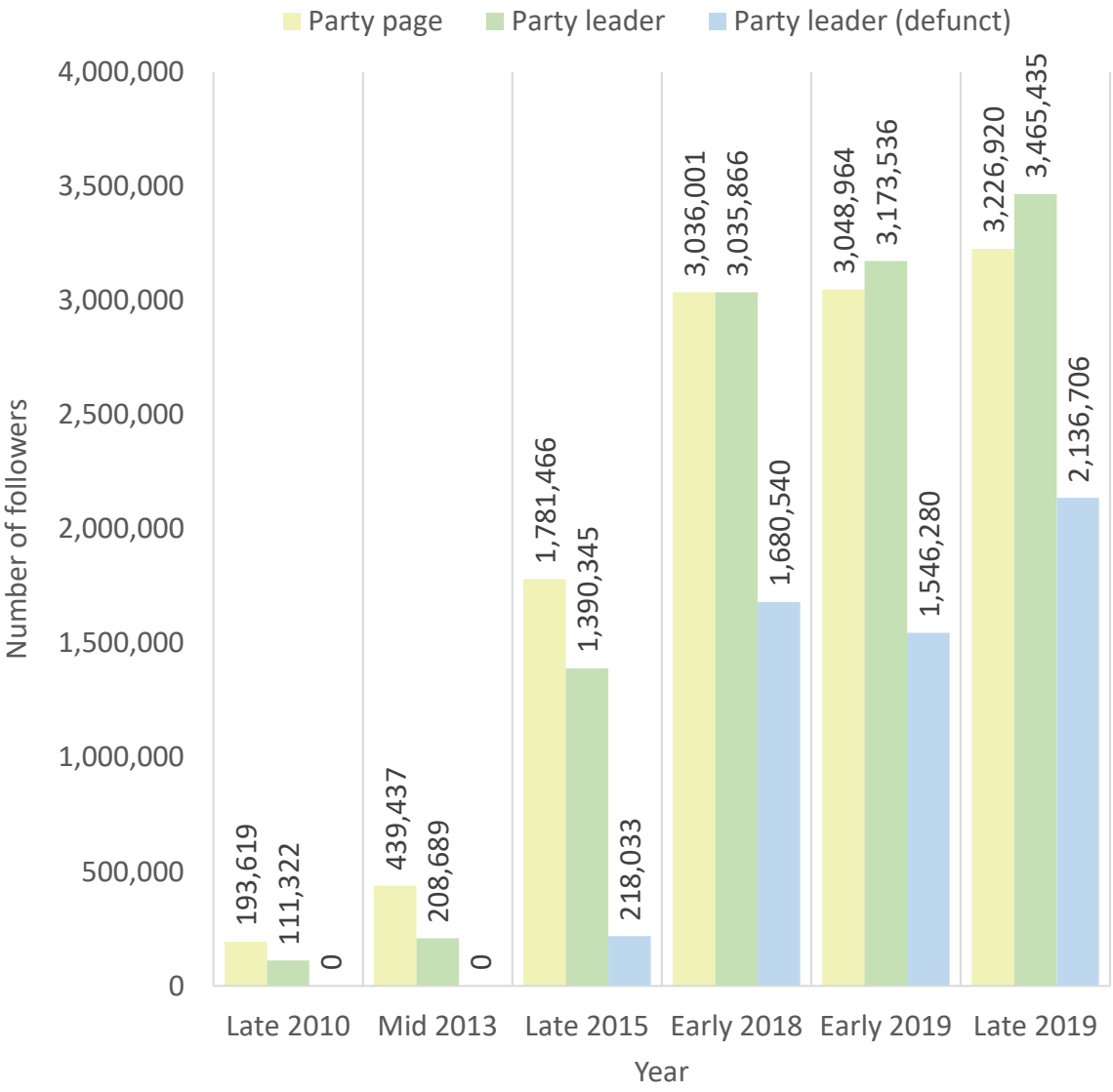
Graph 11. 2017 Labour Party and Conservative Party, leader and party page Facebook audience demographic age difference to official membership

Both Labour and the Conservatives maintain a group of virtual members that is larger and more representative of the UK than official membership. Issues are still apparent, with offline party problems reflected online. However, Facebook offers an opportunity for parties to reduce the male dominance of official membership. While the platform provides a good space to promote female centred policies, voices and activism. As such, Facebook offers parties a fundamental shift from past capacities in generating a support base.

What role do leader pages play in virtual membership?

Do virtual members alter across page types, suggesting the importance of leadership? Different types of pages may also see different audiences generated. Virtual membership demographics may therefore play a role in Janus-faced campaigns, as parties utilise party, leader and satellite pages with differing approaches and demographic targets. Party leader pages have been a central feature on Facebook since 2010, although some central party figures took a long time to create a public Facebook profile such as Theresa May.

As Graph 12 shows, party leaders' pages in 2019 were the central focal point for political parties' followership on Facebook. This represents a major political shift on the platform. Leaders are now not only the vehicle offering increased follower growth but are the central focus for followership on Facebook. Although seemingly a recent trend, as previously seen in Table 12, party leader page growth has outstripped party page growth consistently. The 2013-2015 rapid growth phase seen for party pages was replicated across party leader pages. It was this era that saw UK Facebook users flocking to follow politics on the platform. From 2013-2015, Labour's party page received 113% growth against 202% growth for the Conservative party page. While for the leader pages, Ed Miliband's page saw 235% growth against 443% for David Cameron's page.



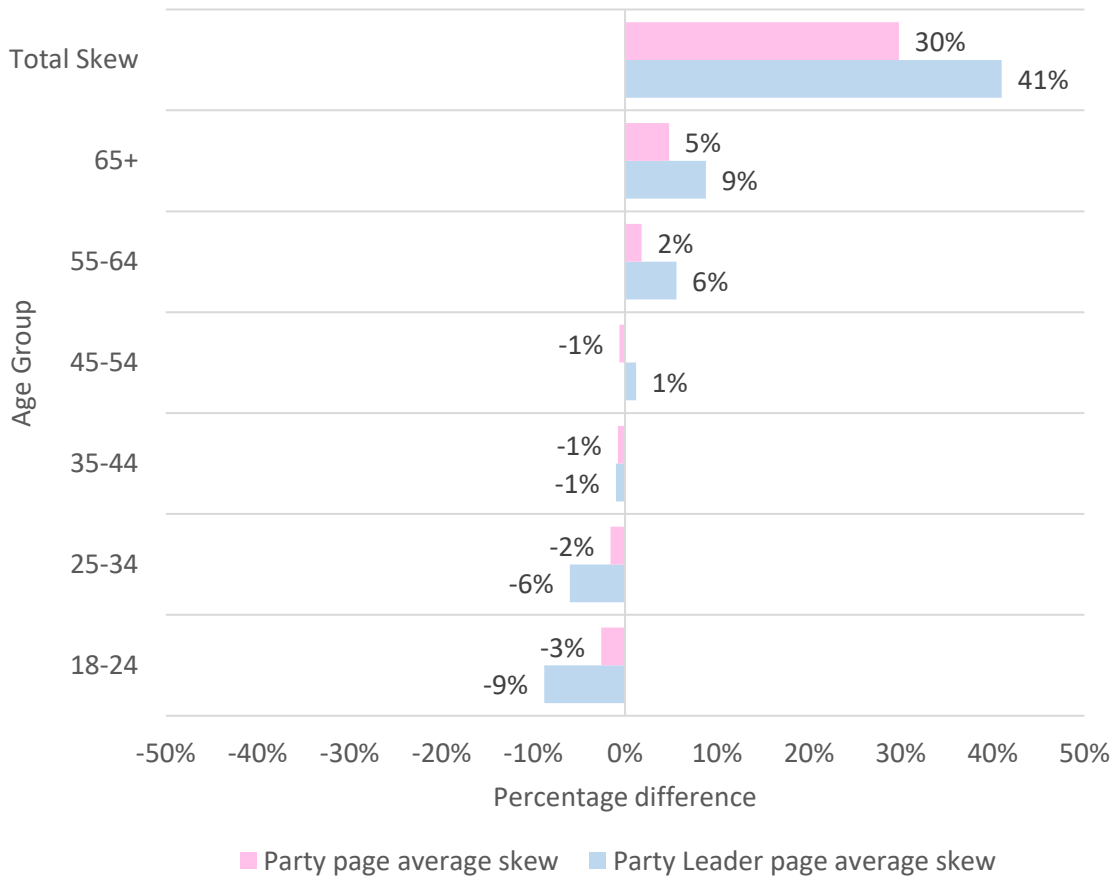
Graph 12. Party page vs. party leader followers

Table 14 shows that party pages are more representative of the UK Facebook population than leader pages, suggesting a marmite effect via leader pages. The differences are clearly exemplified in the Labour Party; the party page does not see large amounts of support from 18-24-year-old young people. Instead this trend is seen in Jeremy Corbyn's page especially for those aged 25-34. The lack of a large under-24 support base alludes to the myth of the 2017 'Youthquake'. As Prosser et al. explain "a slightly larger (turnout) rise for those aged 30-40" was picked up in the BES, with their being no "dramatic surge in youth turnout" (Prosser et al., 2018).

Table 14. Party and leader page average follower demographics

Age group	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
2017 Leader pages	13%	23%	19%	18%	13%	13%
2017 Party pages	18%	26%	19%	16%	11%	10%
Facebook average	18%	26%	20%	17%	11%	8%

Overall, the trends suggest age and gender influences within internal political support, alongside the importance of leader pages in generating differentiated virtual membership. This will have ramifications for campaigning and organisation. There is a relationship between age and gender and the followership of party leader pages, as Graph 13 shows, the trend for being a follower of a leader page is correlated with older age groups.



Graph 13. Average audience skew of party and leader pages away from Facebook average population (Conservative, Labour, SNP, Greens and UKIP)

Party leader pages are struggling to reach younger people compared to party pages. The role of politics cannot be ignored as high levels of older female and male Farage and Theresa May followers influence the swing. However, Caroline Lucas and Nicola Sturgeon also badly underperform in reaching younger men and women. Thus, the trend is arguably less to do with politics and more likely connected to demographics. If the personalisation of politics plays a role in the development of audiences for party leader pages, there is the potential that effects are being seen in older demographics more than young. The potential for leaders to gather different audiences is one that is very important to the campaign use of Facebook, including the development of Janus-faced campaigns via multiple pages. The fact that party leader pages and party pages feature different follower demographics is important for; organisable virtual membership, organic message dissemination, content approaches taken and the need for advertising.

This study is the first to place weight on the differing natures between page types, and on leader pages themselves. With party leader pages now the central focus of parties' follower support on the platform. As well as appreciating party and leader page differences in virtual membership, it is also important to consider wider political implications of leader-led politics. The growth of leader pages over party pages suggests a further rise in the personalisation of politics (Karvonen, 2010; Enli & Skogerbo, 2013), or in parties attempts at generating celebrity politicians (Street, 2012). Thousands of Facebook users in the UK are choosing to receive campaign information from leaders not parties. This means that personalised content via leader pages is today a vital campaign medium, both due the way that party leaders can put a face to a policy choice, but also because of the importance of leaders over parties. Parties now need a popular figurehead on Facebook to achieve effective follower support, with the latest example being Boris Johnson. There has been a lack of focus within the field on leader's pages, however the current growth trends and huge scale of followership signal leader pages as vitally important, whether similar trends are seen in engagement is examined in Chapter 2.

4.4: Conclusion

A potential cyber party?

Margetts' (2001) cyber party model asserted that the internet would create a more fluid relationship between parties and internet users. This would see hugely reduced costs for participation, with organisation refreshed through the reformulation of meetings and canvassing through online means. This body of online support could engender "virtual belonging towards the specific online group enhanced by the possibility of interacting directly with likeminded people" (Bartlett et al., 2013, p.11). The potentials of the cyber party are numerous on paper; however, to have a cyber-party you must have virtual members.

Facebook has helped parties develop a new group of supporters that is far more representative of the wider UK and Facebook population than official membership. The virtual members examined are younger and more female, offering a huge opportunity for party renewal in an era where party membership skews towards older males. This group of supporters is an important tool for parties' campaigns as activism rates are high (Webb et al., 2017) and numbers large. This was seen at the 2017 General Election, as former press adviser to David Cameron, Giles Kenningham, asserted "Labour's very polished social media presence… worked. It energised people and got the base out" (Guardian, 2017). Labour's development of offline action via participation saw the party "channel their social media-enabled activism into party politics and to integrate it with face-to-face doorstep campaigning" (Chadwick, 2017, p.87). This novel resource is very real; however how virtual members are being used is still unclear.

There are important differences found across and within the parties. The platform appears to offer opportunities for smaller parties in generating online support; normalisation or equalisation in the scale of support (followership and engagement) appears to fluctuate. However, in general the continued dominance of the main two parties on Facebook is apparent. Major demographic differences are seen, right-wing parties skew older but are more educationally representative, while proportionally the benefits of Facebook's younger userbase is seen for right wing parties like the Conservatives. Labour is more

representative of the UK Facebook population; having greater capacities to organically reach and influence diverse demographics through its virtual members.

There are also differences across pages, demographic differences between leader and party pages suggest that virtual members are heterogeneous even within parties. For example, Jeremy Corbyn and Theresa May have different followers to their party pages, suggesting that virtual membership is linked to political choice. People do not just mindlessly follow the leader and the party page, instead the differences seen show deliberative decision making on the part of virtual members. Wider differences are also seen; party pages are more representative of the UK population than leader pages, suggesting a leadership marmite effect that presents both opportunities and drawbacks for communications and organisation. If the driver of followership of leader pages is the personalisation of politics it appears to be a turn off for younger people, while conversely older groups flock to leader pages. Overall, the differences seen across the pages shows that parties must utilise Facebook holistically. The parties have either inadvertently developed different page-to-page virtual memberships or have done so deliberately, either way Janus-faced campaigning is now a necessity as the parties control pages with dissimilar virtual memberships.

Examining whether Facebook offers fundamental change for parties' campaigns, the development of a novel body of online support via virtual members suggests the answer is yes. Facebook allows parties to not only 'preach to the converted' (Norris, 2003), but also 'preach through the converted' (Vissers, 2009) across election campaigns and permanently. Parties are now able to reach, inform and engender millions of UK residents who would not likely sign up to formal party membership, to be 'virtual members'. These audiences and virtual members are younger and more diverse than official membership. Unlike other tools there is huge scope for different audiences on the platform, with the vitality of leaders' pages feeding into Janus-faced campaigning. Parties are now able to present different images of the party to different groups to maximise intended goals. New tools have also benefitted the parties, the use of Facebook audience data is allowing parties to inform themselves of who they are reaching, how and through what medium. The feedback Facebook offers means

parties are less likely to leave electorally important voters untouched. Not all is positive however, as there are also threats to this new dynamic. Firstly, Facebook has stopped growing, parties must now compete for the politically interested, especially via leader pages, with younger generations slowly avoiding the platform. Secondly the parties still feature unrepresentative virtual memberships in comparison to the UK population. Virtual members are generally older and more male, London-centric and educationally unrepresentative. Despite these weaknesses, the dawn of the cyber party is visible in the huge numbers of virtual members the parties have gathered. However, these virtual members and their subsequent networks must engage with content for Facebook to offer a fundamental change in how parties can campaign.

Facebook content and engagement, a new avenue for campaigns?

5: Facebook content and engagement, a new avenue for campaigns?

5.1: Introduction

As seen in Chapter 4, Facebook has allowed parties to gather and communicate with virtual members, with these people potentially able to campaign on the party's behalf. The easiest level of participation from this group is via their engagement with party content. The ramifications of engagement, given the average user has 155 friends (Dunbar, 2016), is that from only a handful of shares thousands of Facebook users can potentially be exposed to a party's political content. Parties will likely use Facebook to both reinforce political views through content designed for virtual members (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008). While also pushing content of wider public interest to help diversify voters political information (Valeriani & Vaccari, 2016). Both these avenues rely on engagement, as higher engagement helps promote the content to virtual members and increases subsequent spread to wider communities.

Investigating British parties' engagement and structural content approaches across 49,230 posts from 2010-2017, this chapter questions whether Facebook engagement and content are offering parties something new to their campaigns. Engagement gives us a lens through which we can understand the success of the parties' content approaches, virtual membership activism levels and the wider reach of the parties on the platform. Five questions are examined that investigate how parties use content and what engagement they achieve:

1. Are parties beginning to reflect one another in engagement and content?
2. Across the permanent and one-month campaign, do we see engagement and content differences?
3. Across page types (party and leader pages), do we see engagement and content differences?
4. Do we see normalisation or equalisation (between larger and smaller parties) in engagement and content differences?
5. Do different content forms receive divergent levels of engagement?

5.2: Facebook engagement and other campaign tools

Engagement on Facebook is still a relative enigma, but likes, shares, reactions and comments are externalising actions that have value. The Facebook platform is designed with a view that user actions are public to their friend network, with a user choosing to participate in sharing a message forwards to a wider audience. These actions are consequently performed for others as well as the user. The three key engagement forms are likes, shares and comments.

Likes are a vital litmus test for parties' content and overall popularity. "Clicking like below a post on Facebook is an easy way to let people know that you enjoy it… people will be able to see that you liked it… a story will be posted on your timeline that you liked it… and the person who posted the video will get a notification that you liked it" (Facebook, 2018). Some more sceptical academics have argued that liking requires minimum effort and thus attracts users with lower political interest (Erikson, 2008; Vitak et al., 2011). Although liking is an easy action, given its public nature it does present some level of emotive resonance between party, content and user. Reactions added in February 2016 allow a user to choose an emoticon in place of the like; Love, Haha, Wow, Sad, Care and Angry. Reactions allow for some element of sentiment to be visible, but in this thesis' data, the form was much less commonly used than the traditional like button (see Appendix 9).

Shares are vital for externalising a message to Facebook users outside the normal follower circle centred around a page. Through one click, a user will replicate the post on their own personal Facebook page, this will then be placed (owing to the algorithm) within their own circle of friends via the news feed. The share function thus allows users to become arbitrators of other pages' content, acting as what Bruns et al. (2012) call "producers", as gatekeepers for others (Sundar & Nass, 2001). In terms of the strength of the action, a sharing user is often adopting the content as their own, distributing its message to those within their friend network, as such the relationship is arguably one of major importance. Negative sharing is also common, with sharing allowing for negative commentary on content, thus not all sharing is endorsement. However, for political parties,

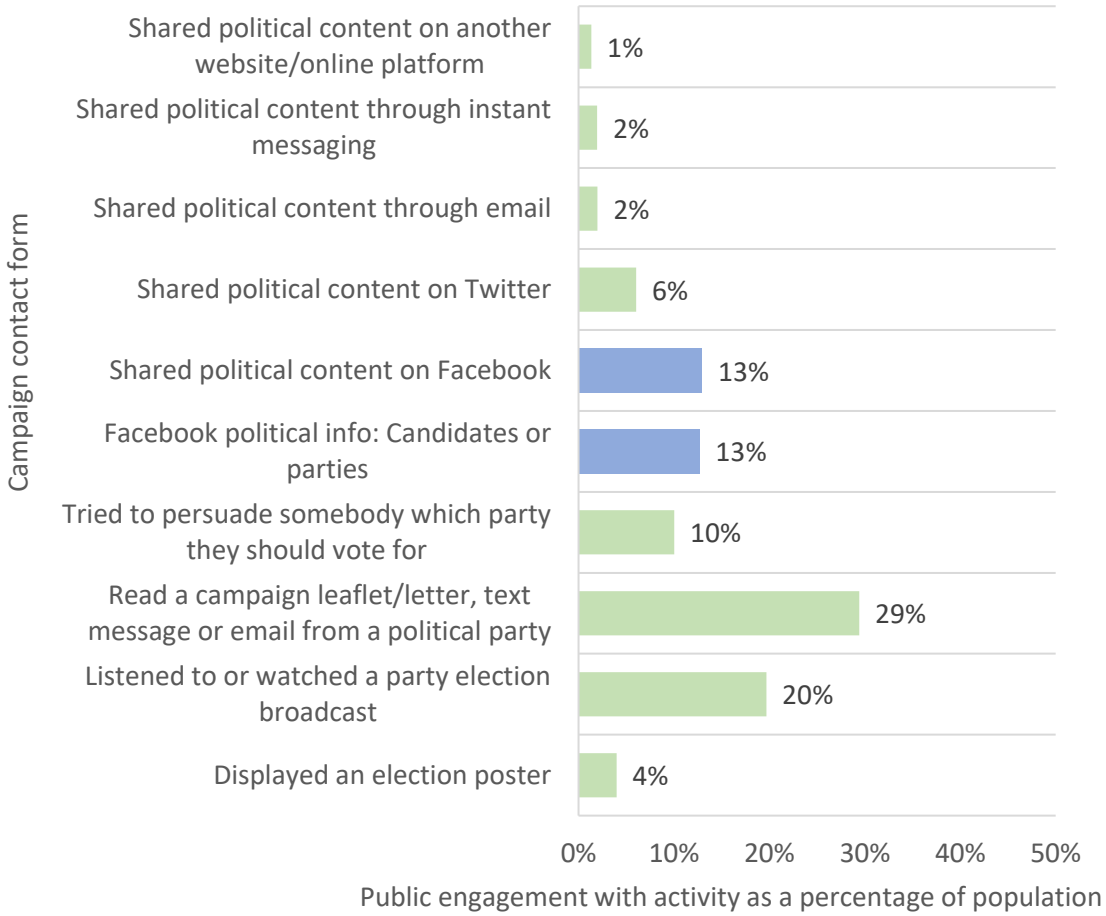
sharing likely follows the motto that all publicity is good publicity, because shares can lead to page growth in followers and in total engagement. Shares are the most powerful force on Facebook for developing communications flow outside of the 'converted' (Norris, 2003), because of the importance of social characteristics influencing political behaviour (Bond et al., 2012). Generally, emotive content is found to promote sharing (Nelson-Field et al., 2013; Shifman, 2012; Southgate et al., 2010).

Commenting is an integral part of the social nature and user experience of Facebook. Comments help make the platform a participatory campaign tool unlike many others, as comments allow for political feedback and user engagement with content and each other. With little evidence of two-way communications between party and public (Magin et al., 2017), comments generally exist for peer to peer debate and political criticism or praise. As such comments act as a virtual public square informed by the content above the line. Comments do not generally increase content reach, although recent changes to the Facebook algorithm has led to commented posts being placed on users' news feeds[33]. Content that features elements of persuasion has been found to receive the greatest number of comments (Bronstein, 2013).

Other campaign tools

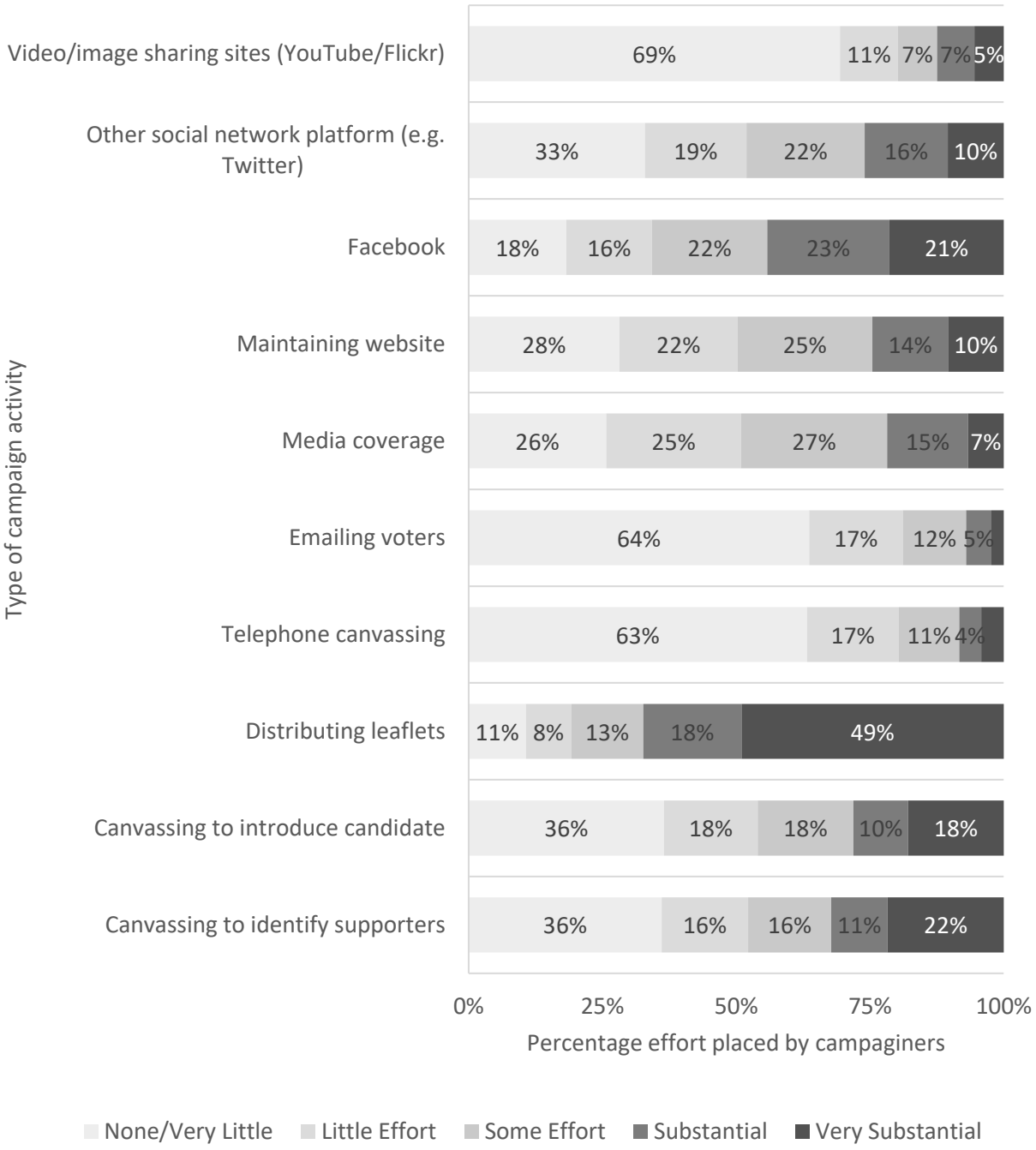
BES and EAS data help to conceptualise the scale and approach political parties take to the wider campaign. As Graph 14 shows, the reach of Facebook is very impressive especially when compared to core campaign tools used by parties. Sharing content on Facebook stands above traditional forms of participation and contact, surpassed only by leaflets, party election broadcasts and TV debates (although only 21% of Wave 12 of the BES watched the first 5 leader election debate, n=20,315). The platform therefore has capacities for party-controlled information transmission not seen outside of a few core tools.

[33] https://www.searchenginejournal.com/facebook-news-feed-change/312743/ accessed 31/07/2019



Graph 14. 2017 Wave 14 Participation and contact forms as percentage of total BES sample (n=33,726)

One major area of difference is frequency, in 2017 across 664 Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat and SNP agents, 1,048,532 posters and 25,147,540 leaflets were given out. Although nearly everyone on the UK will receive at least one leaflet, Facebook allows for higher frequency campaign content. If 29% of the UK electorate (38,371,400 people) read campaign leaflets, 11,127,706 individuals' will be reached, however if 13% of the UK electorate, 4,988,282 individuals' share Facebook content subsequently read by 66 friends (via video view/shares relationship - 30% of Dunbar's 2016 study average) 329,226,612 people will be reached. Facebook offers a fundamentally new scale of organic communications, not even accounting for targeted advertising.



Graph 15. EAS 2017 data on effort placed into different tools by electoral agents

Parties place different levels of effort into different campaign tools, as Graph 15 shows, in 2017 Facebook received a large degree of effort, with only leaflets ahead. Traditional tools are shown in the data to still be favoured, but over time have been supplemented with Facebook. However, the overall trend has been Facebook and social media growing in importance while other tools see slow decline.

5.3: Party engagement from 2010-2017

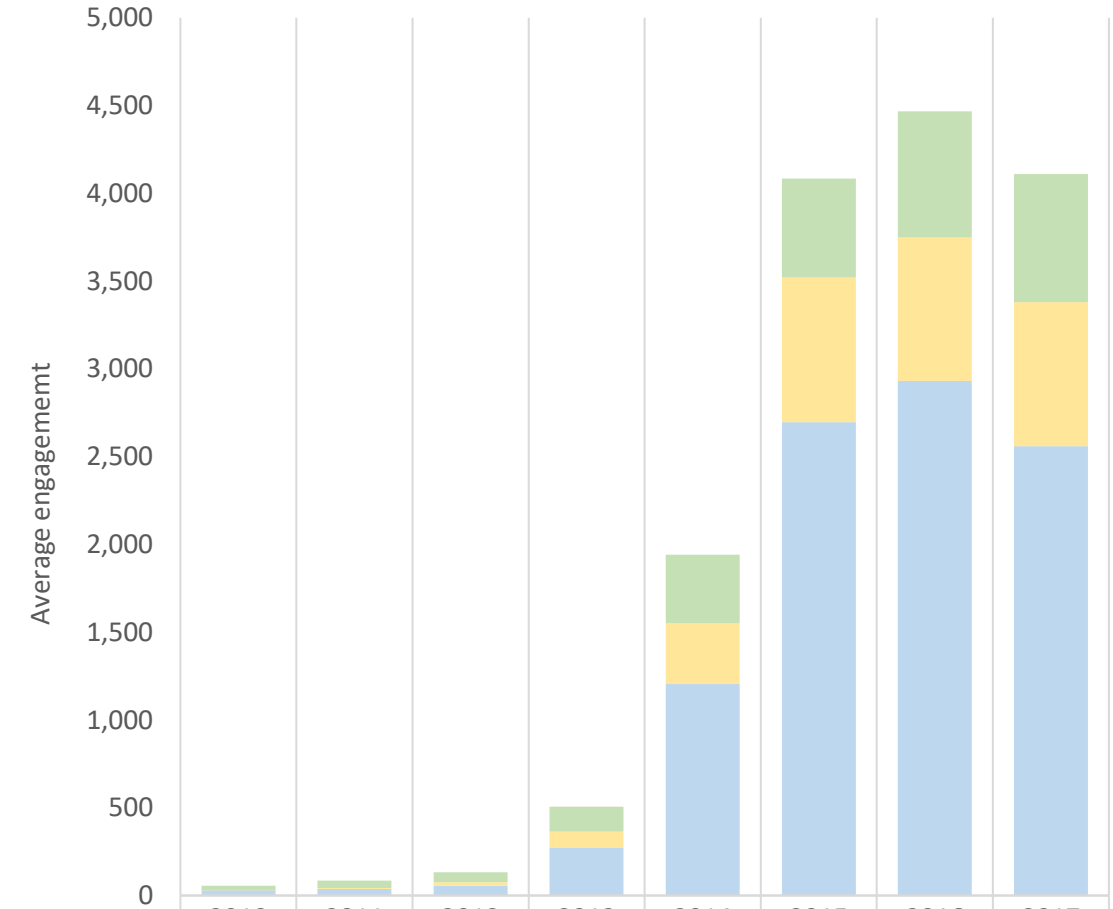
What engagement do parties achieve?

Who are the parties reaching, the public or virtual members? To examine this, we can use video views as they act as measure of total reach because they auto-play. Over the one-month before the 2017 General Election, the Labour and Conservative leader and party pages received 102,306,685 video views from videos shared 1,550,654 times. This would equate to each piece of shared video content being viewed by 66 friends. The reach of Facebook is therefore enormous, passing far beyond the parties' virtual members. Shares of video content was equivalent to 43% of the parties' total followership, given the Labour and Conservative pages' 3,627,269 followers. The number of shares seen in video content across the two one-month campaigns suggests a high level of engagement from a smaller group. Shares are only actionable once by each user for each piece of content, thus through examining the relationship between total follower numbers and video shares we can determine that the group of those sharing are more likely virtual members. If each follower shared one piece of video content over the one-month campaign, under half the party's virtual members are likely active. Minimising those sharing to an absolute minimum via dividing the video shares by the 29 day one-month period, 53,470 individuals are sharing content per day. This suggests a potentially small core of active support, but still a huge reach of 3,527,817 video views a day. Despite the potential for highly active members repeatedly sharing content to be where all engagement is occurring from. The evidence suggests that engagement is driven by both a base of highly active support, (and through them) a subset of the wider public, thus most virtual members will be engaging sporadically. This will be dependent on the nature of the content, as some content goes more viral than others.

To illuminate total engagement trends, likes, shares and comments were combined to provide an overall picture for the parties. This was quantified by combining in sum the engagement for the party and associated leader page during their periods of leadership. Where leadership overlap in a year was seen, the leader with the highest engagement was used for that year. As some UKIP

leaders did not have presences on Facebook, the party's most prominent consistent figurehead Nigel Farage was used.

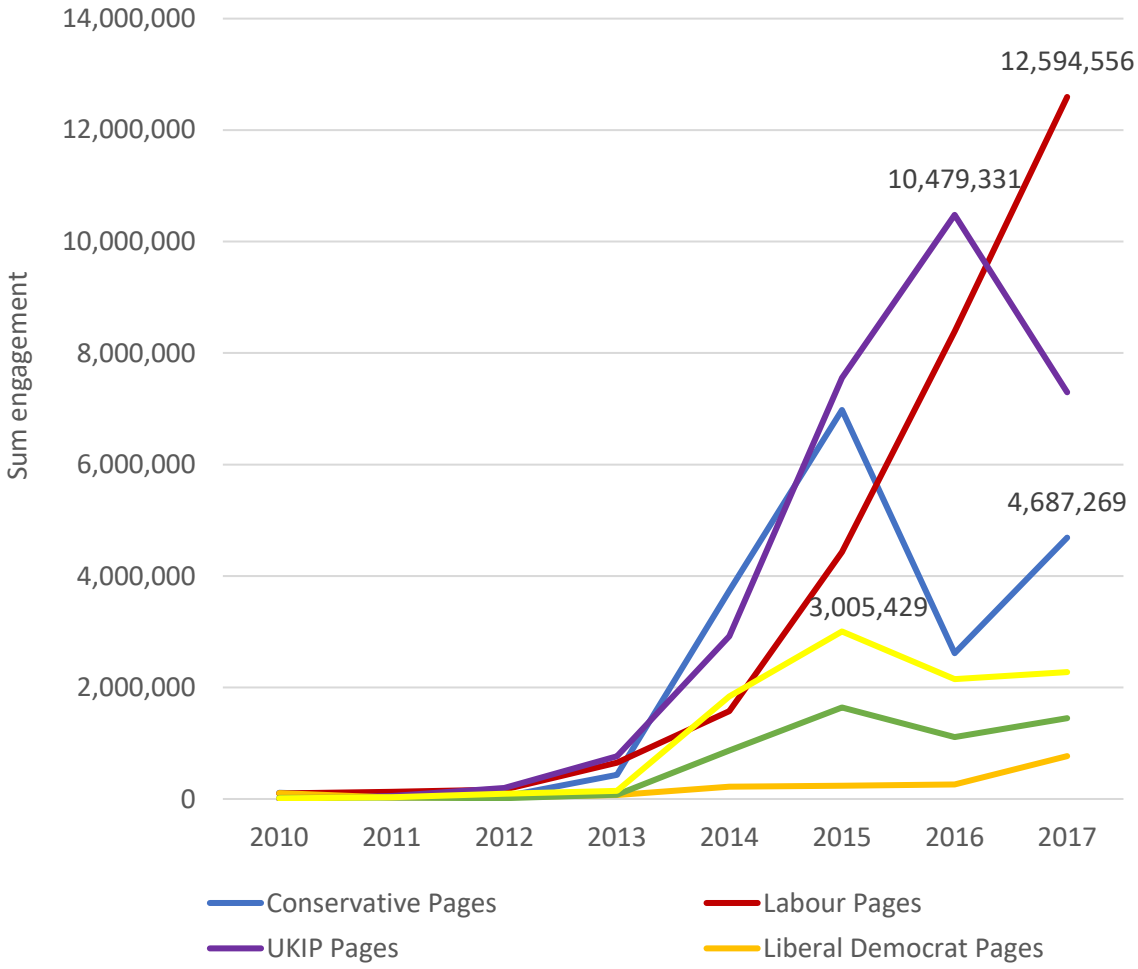
Graph 16 shows the radical rise in engagement we have seen over the last decade. Early Facebook saw incredibly low engagement, with posts averaging only 55 likes in 2012 against 2,560 today, a 4,555% increase. Engagement began its rise in 2013, this trend reflects the period of rapid followership growth seen. Reflecting that followership is plateauing on the platform, average engagement has peaked with 4,466 engagements per post in 2016, but 4,110 in 2017. Parties are now in a more competitive environment, with rising engagement not a given.



	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Comments	24	42	57	144	390	564	718	729
Shares	1	5	21	92	347	825	817	821
Likes	30	38	55	271	1204	2696	2932	2560

Graph 16. Average number of engagements per post across studied parties from 2010–2017 (n=49,551)

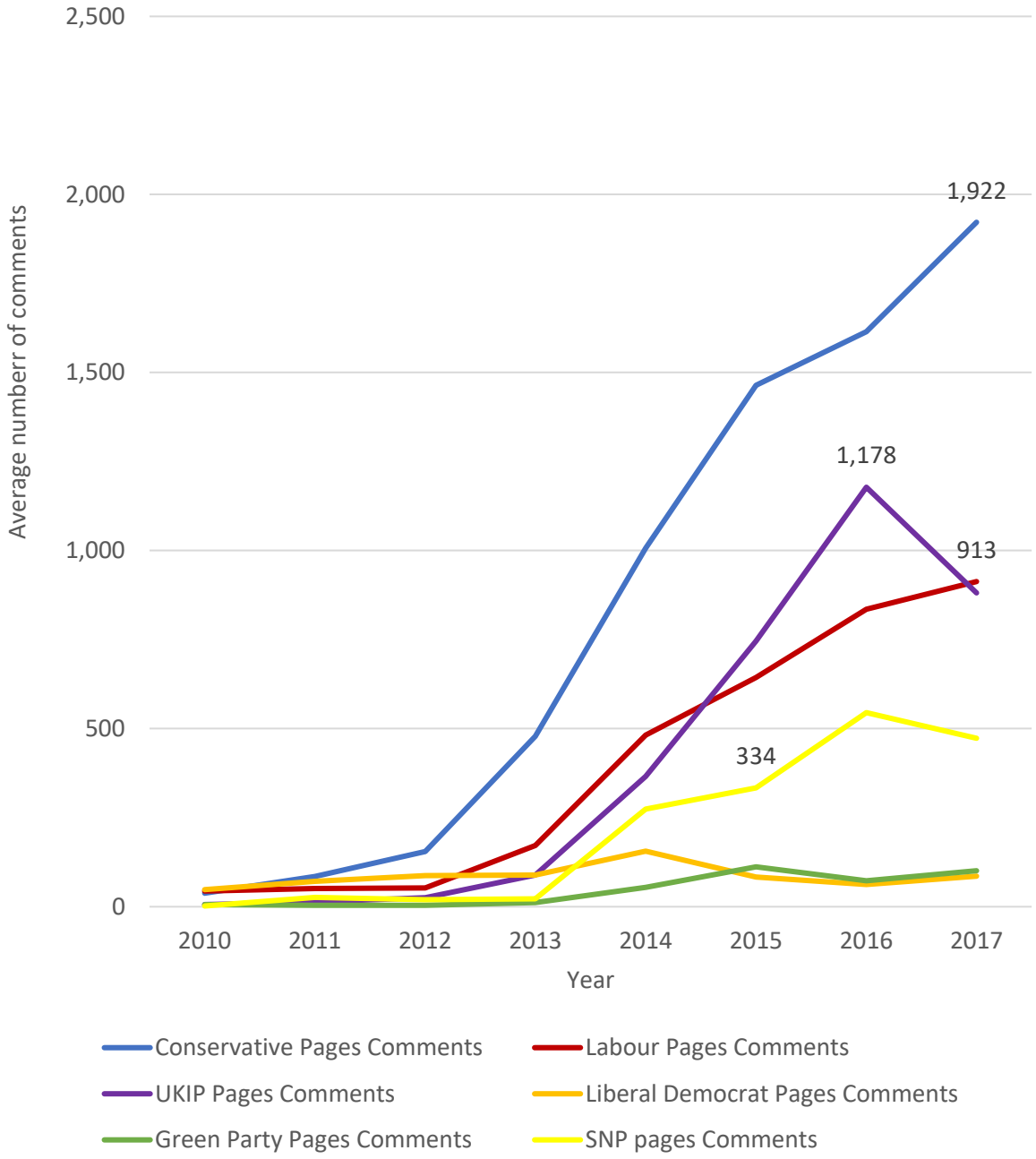
Despite a slowdown in growth, engagement rates are still high. There are important party-based trends. Engagement stagnation is not seen for the Labour Party, who received 12,594,556 individual engagements in 2017, over double their 2015 engagement. There is clearly a large amount of volatility, as engagement has shifted considerably between the Conservative Party, Labour and UKIP from 2015-2017, but by 2017 Labour were in clear supremacy. Average engagement data is seen in Appendix 9.



Graph 17. Sum post engagement for relevant leader and party pages by year (n=40,659)

Some important engagement trends are visible. Firstly, Labour has advantage in shares, this occurred to some extent in 2015 but later accelerated. With shares so important for message spread, Labour had a huge advantage in 2017. 57% of all the shares seen for all the pages studied were for the Labour

leader and party page. Those virtual members or the public who reached out to their friends on Facebook were centrally Labour supporters. Comments per post display a different picture, with UKIP never the central location of debate in any year; instead the Conservatives achieved the most comments. This is to be expected as the Conservatives have been the party of government across the entire study period, and thus likely to receive more comments.



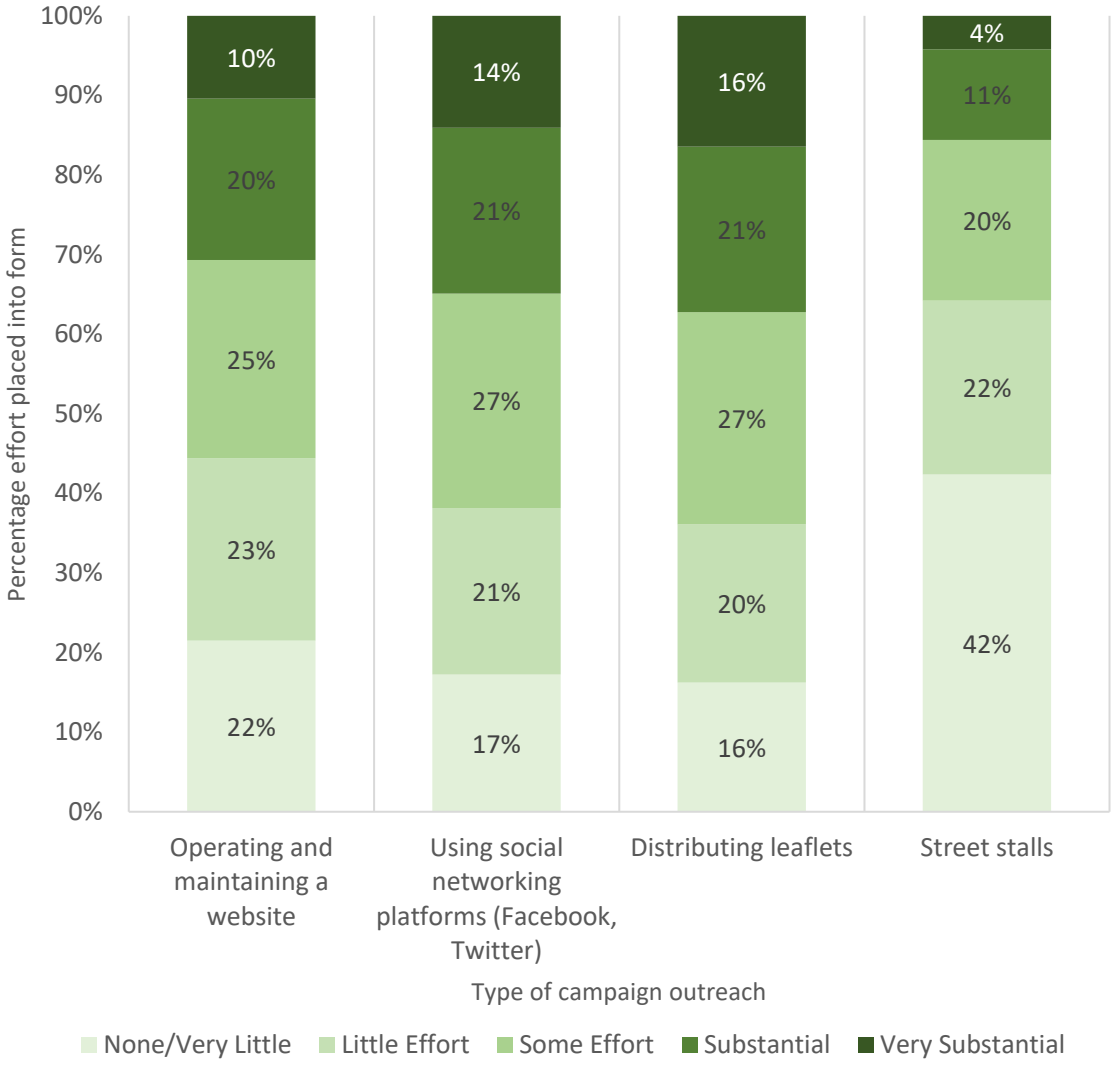
Graph 18. Average number of post comments for relevant leader and party pages by year (n=49,551)

Overall, the numbers of people parties are reaching is huge, unparalleled bar the most ubiquitous of traditional tools. However, unlike these other tools, Facebook offers a cheaper party-controlled avenue for communications that retains all the capabilities of the most engrossing forms of communications, such as television. Millions can be reached directly, with those millions then engaging with millions more, this is important as "followers of parties and politicians on Facebook are opinion leaders and are especially active in online and offline networks" (Karlsen, 2015, p.301). The engagement trends seen reflect wider electoral and political reality. UKIP are seen to disappear in 2017, Labour through Corbyn had social media supremacy, and the Conservatives underperformed in 2017 in part due to Theresa May's weak performance. This reflective relationship shows that millions of actions by Facebook users are not mindless clicktivism; but are offering an insight into deeper political trends. This echoes several studies that have found links between social media engagement and electoral performance in aggregated web 2.0 analysis (Effing, van Hillegersberg, & Huibers, 2016), Facebook shares (Bene, 2018) and Twitter adoption (Kruikemeier, 2014; Sobaci et al., 2016) or followership (Cameron et al., 2015).

Do we see engagement differences across the permanent and one-month campaign?

One key feature of Facebook over other campaign tools, is that it offers new capacities for permanent campaigning. As Gerodimos & Justinussen assert "the digitization of the permanent campaign has allowed political parties to reach out to both loyal and swing voters throughout the electoral cycle, renewing early hopes regarding… a more substantive relationship between elected representatives and citizens" (2014, p.115). Facebook is always on, the audience is always available, and parties are shown to send content throughout the year, albeit with greater intensity around election times (Ceccobelli, 2018; Larsson, 2016). Permanent campaigning thus allows for the socialisation and mobilisation of online support via consistent communications delivered by parties and virtual members. As EAS survey data shows, Facebook is currently a key tool within a wider campaign toolkit, standing among other campaign approaches pre-campaign. A great deal of effort is placed in social networks by campaigners,

treated with similar importance to websites and leaflets. This data however presents constituency campaigning. Permanent national social networking is potentially even more important for major party pages.

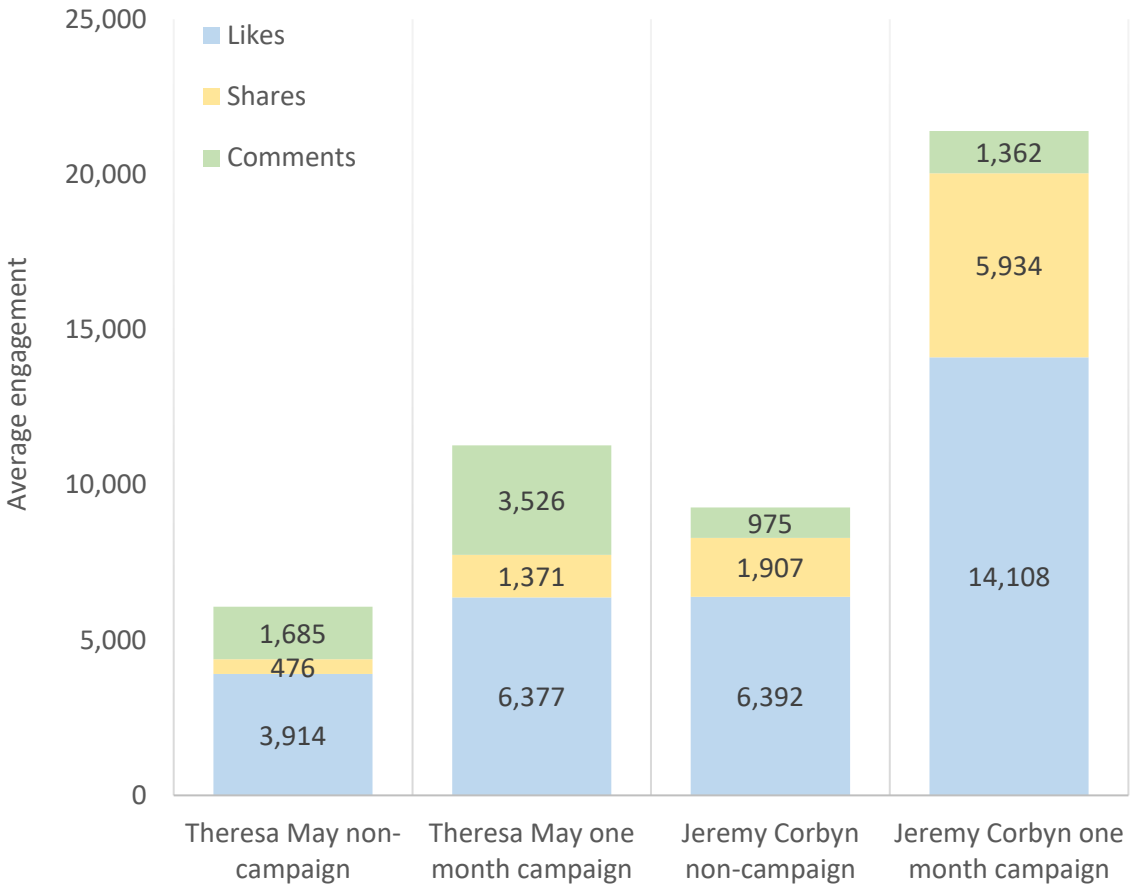


Graph 19. Labour, Conservative, Lib Dem, SNP & UKIP EAS 2017 constituency survey data showing effort into forms of pre-election activity

Those who are engaged year-round may be a small core of selectively exposed virtual members, thus meaning that Facebook permanent campaigns are relatively insular and have reduced capabilities. However, engagement levels may be consistently high throughout the year. This would suggest that virtual members are 'always on', with greater potential for engaging the public with reshared content. One would expect that engagement is highly related to electoral periods, suggesting Facebook supports a normalised system. Evidence

of normalisation has been found in posting frequency, labelled the “election year effect” (Larsson, 2014). This would constitute some degree of ‘politics as usual’ (Margolis & Resnick, 2000) with limited impacts from permanent campaigning. However, Larsson’s study examined post frequency rather than engagement, and election years rather than the one-month before the election. This short campaign period is when political campaign activity spikes and is the temporal period used in most political study.

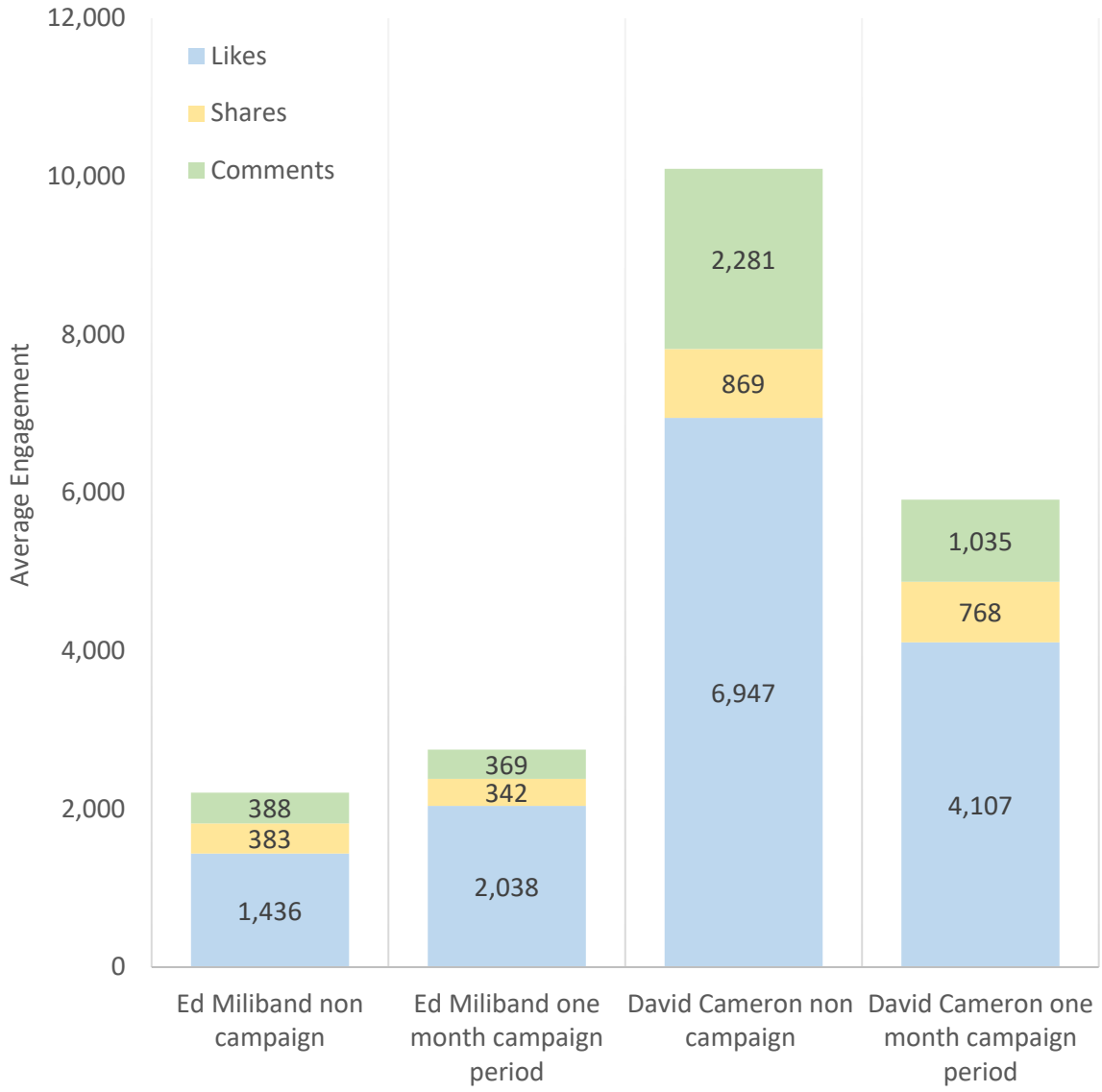
By examining the average engagement of the one-month campaign versus the rest of the year (both excluding Election Day), we can delineate the power of permanent campaign and the scope of those engaged. Graph 20 shows that there is a clear 2017 ‘campaign dividend’, with a large jump in average engagement during the one-month campaign period. Between campaign and non-campaign periods, there is an 86% increase for Theresa May’s page and a 131% increase for Jeremy Corbyn’s page. For Corbyn this jump is mostly in likes and shares, whereas for May this occurs in comments and likes. These clear results highlight that any ‘election year effect’ (Larsson, 2016) is dwarfed by the one-month campaign dividend.



Graph 20. 2017 Labour and Conservative party leaders' average post engagement across one-month and permanent campaign (n=2,223)

Virtual members and the Facebook public were far more engaged during the 2017 election campaign period. However, average engagement rates outside of the one-month campaign are still high. In fact, Jeremy Corbyn's year-round average engagement is close to Theresa May's campaign engagement. Thousands of users were spreading Corbyn content throughout 2017 creating large waves of indirect exposure, whilst hardening a core of virtual support around the leader. Although academics posit that Jeremy Corbyn used novel and effective methods on Facebook via a permanent campaign footing (Walsh, 2017). When examining the 2015 Facebook data in Graph 21, it appears that David Cameron's use of the platform was the original permanent campaign. David Cameron was engaged with so consistently over the whole year that his average engagement declined during the campaign period. This suggests Cameron was energising his online support to engage with his content

throughout the whole year, using Facebook as a tool to reach out to supporters and the public consistently.



Graph 21. 2015 Labour and Conservative party leaders' average post engagement across one-month and permanent campaign (n=1,836)

One would expect less divergent levels of engagement between campaign and non-campaign periods for the 2017 General Election given it was a snap election. However, the reverse is true as the party leaders saw much closer levels of engagement between campaign and non-campaign periods in 2015. Ed Miliband only saw a 25% increase in engagement, against -59% for Cameron. Examining Labour and Conservative party and leaders' pages together important trends become clear. Conservative and Labour support in

2017 shifted towards engagement during the one-month campaign. This shows a support base that is not necessarily 'always on' but instead activated during electoral periods. The engagement seen suggests either genuine public interest with the parties during the 2017 election campaign, or that across 2015 engagement was more muted across the campaign period. Using the video reach calculated earlier to examine all shared content, Table 15 shows that 102,536,412 users were reached across 2017, against 124,970,010 during the one-month campaign. More people were being reached in 29 days than across the rest of the year. Nevertheless, for a campaign tool to offer a reach of 102 million throughout the year is a fundamental shift in parties' capacities to reach the public.

Table 15. Calculated reach of Labour and Conservative shared content across 2017 campaign and non-campaign periods (n=4059)

Party	Campaign period	Total Shares	Average video friend reach	No. Days	Total reach
Conservative Party page	Non-Campaign	241,125	66	335	15,914,250
	Campaign	282,621	66	29	18,652,986
Labour Party page	Non-Campaign	519,860	66	335	34,310,760
	Campaign	683,110	66	29	45,085,260
Theresa May	Non-Campaign	53,585	66	335	3,536,610
	Campaign	73,776	66	29	4,869,216
Jeremy Corbyn	Non-Campaign	739,012	66	335	48,774,792
	Campaign	853,978	66	29	56,362,548
Total	Non-campaign	1,553,582	66	335	102,536,412
	Campaign	1,893,485	66	29	124,970,010

Table 16 overleaf shows average engagement for the Labour and Conservative pages, 2017 average engagement levels effectively doubled during the one-month campaign.

Table 16. Average engagement by party, page type, election year and campaign period (n=4059)

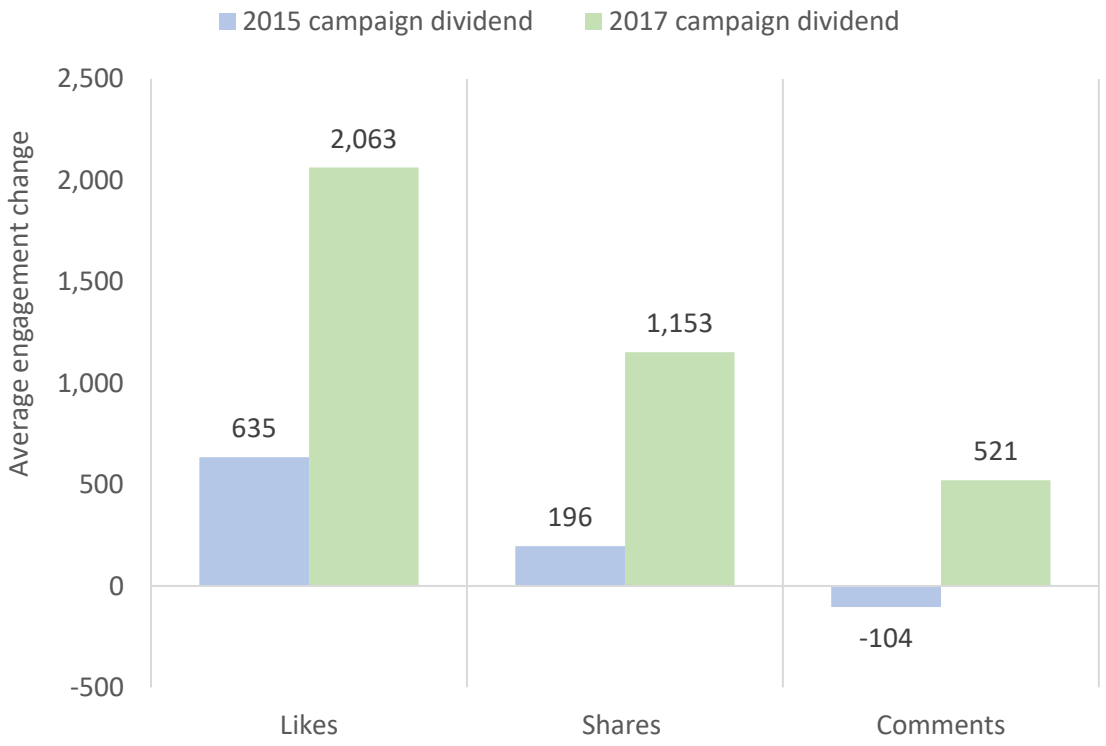
		Conservative Party campaign period	David Cameron campaign period	Conservative Party non-campaign	David Cameron non-campaign	Labour Party campaign period	Ed Miliband campaign period	Labour Party non-campaign	Ed Miliband non-campaign
2015	Likes	2,827	4,107	2,268	6,947	1,754	2,038	1,403	1,436
	Shares	787	768	537	869	1,324	342	739	383
	Comments	781	1,035	1,014	2,281	399	369	516	388
	Total	**4,395**	**5,910**	**3,819**	**10,097**	**3,477**	**2,749**	**2,658**	**2,207**
		Conservative Party campaign period	**Theresa May campaign period**	**Conservative Party non-campaign**	**Theresa May non-campaign**	**Labour Party campaign period**	**Jeremy Corbyn campaign period**	**Labour Party non-campaign**	**Jeremy Corbyn non-campaign**
2017	Likes	5,006	6,377	1,642	3,914	3,663	14,108	1,812	6,392
	Shares	2,962	1,371	508	476	2,361	5,934	1,247	1,907
	Comments	3,002	3,526	1,183	1,685	724	1,362	739	975
	Total	**10,970**	**11,274**	**3,333**	**6,075**	**6,748**	**21,404**	**3,798**	**9,274**
Difference from 2015 to 2017		**6,575**	**5,364**	**-486**	**-4,022**	**3,271**	**18,655**	**1,140**	**7,067**

The 2017 data shows that Conservative virtual members were less active until the one-month campaign period, showing a virtual membership that is less engaged with the permanent campaign. With their virtual membership having become more electorally focussed, they have lost capacity for permanent campaigning since Cameron made way for May. In contrast, the Labour Party in 2017 saw a campaign period characterised by slightly higher average engagement than its 2015 General Election performance, with Labour's colossal improvement in engagement driven by Corbyn's page. Jeremy Corbyn's non-campaign average engagement surpassed that of the 2017 Labour Party page's campaign engagement. This shows how many supporters preferentially followed and engaged with Corbyn over the Labour Party, mirroring the followership trends seen. It also suggests that Corbyn took over from Cameron regarding permanent campaign engagement levels. As well as a shift towards campaign engagement, there is a clear trend of generally increased average engagement from 2015–2017. The trends of greater 2017 campaign engagement are mirrored across all the party pages as seen in Appendix 9.

Overall, parties have an opportunity to campaign permanently, but audiences are still engaged at much higher rates during election campaigns, it appears this is driven by wider public engagement alongside virtual members. Facebook acts as a permanent campaign tool unlike any other available, with consistently engaged users providing an opportunity for the parties. However, Facebook is becoming more of a campaign period machine, with engagement levels of the one-month campaign period now radically increased. Although much of this is due to Jeremy Corbyn's popularity, positive trends are seen across all the parties. As Graph 22 shows, party page average campaign dividend has increased enormously, with each shared 2017 campaign period post reaching 76,032 more people than the rest of the year, as opposed to 12,936 for the 2015 campaign. The engagement rates seen in the non-campaign periods, driven by leaders such as Corbyn, show that Facebook can act effectively as a permanent tool. Although the engagement levels year-round suggest that there is a core virtual membership who are consistently engaged, the spill-over into the public seen via Corbyn and Cameron's pages suggest that Facebook has high reach over the year. Thus, Facebook since 2015 has become both a more effective permanent and election campaign tool, although the trend

of engagement is towards the latter. However, rather than defined lines, the boundary between campaign and non-campaign periods may be becoming blurred. As Gibson asserts in recommending Elmer et al.'s *The Permanent Campaign;* "we are seeing the development of permanent campaigns that are less about temporal periods but are instead "a more ubiquitous social and spatially embedded concept, in which 'flux' itself becomes the new permanence" (Gibson, 2012).

Graph 22. Party pages' average one-month campaign engagement dividend 2015 and 2017 (n=18,286)

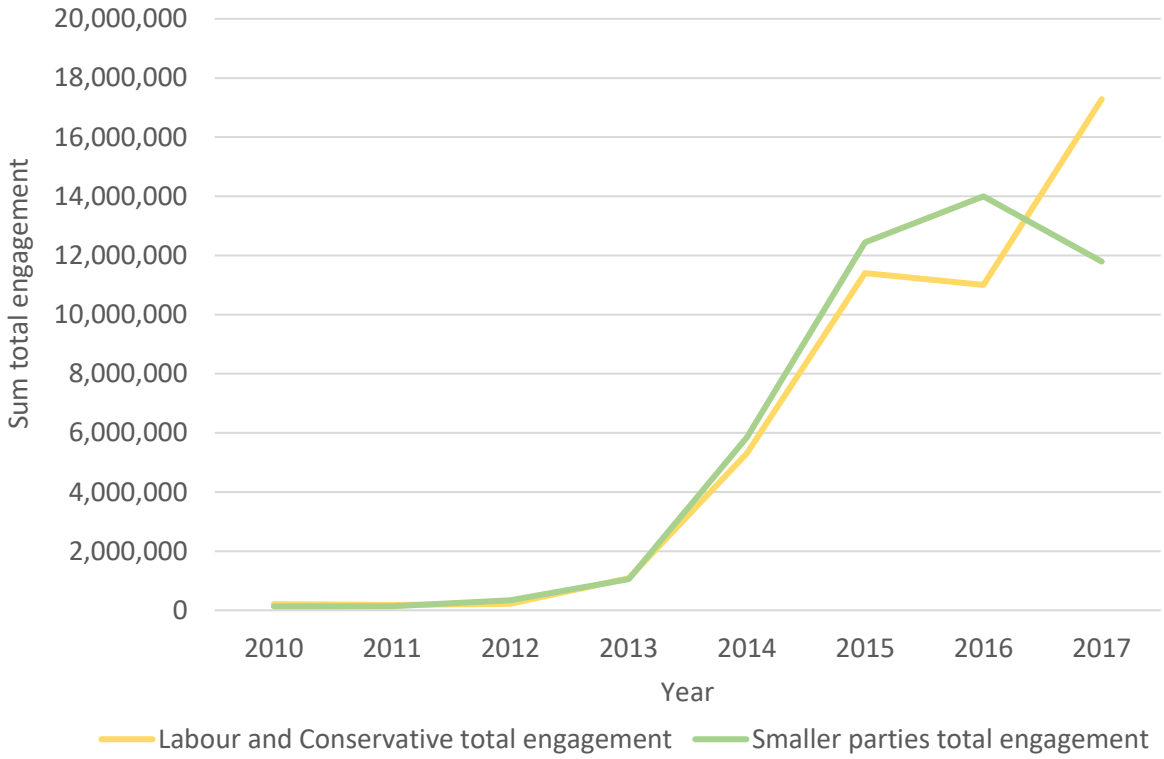


Engagement – normalisation or equalisation?

Facebook potentially offers smaller parties the ability to reach millions more voters and organise far larger pools of online support than previously possible. This is especially important because smaller parties generally lack resources, meaning the low-cost nature of Facebook allows for smaller parties to reach millions of voters without the need for a large paid up membership or expensive campaign materials. Despite this potential, some studies have found normalisation with traditional larger parties achieving far greater engagement,

akin to the domination they have in other media forms. Lev-On & Haleva-Amir found normalisation in Israeli Facebook engagement (2018), whilst Southern & Lee (2018) found normalisation in UK candidate adoption. However, when examining Labour and Conservative party and leader engagement against the other smaller parties (SNP, UKIP, Green Party & Liberal Democrats), there are clear benefits from Facebook use for smaller parties.

Graph 23. Total leader and party pages' engagement. Small parties vs. Labour and the Conservatives (n=49,551)



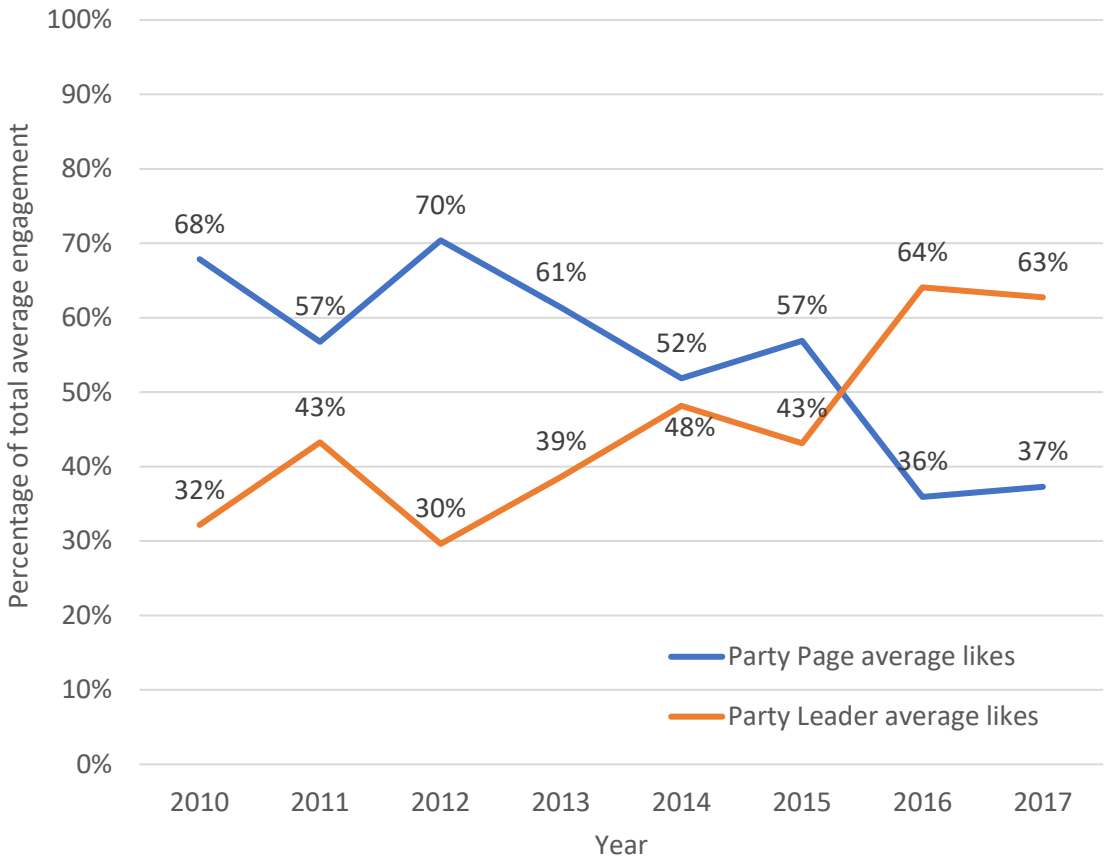
Totalled like, share and comment engagement levels show greater equalisation from 2010-2016, with the trend reversing by 2017. This reflects the 2013-2015 period of greatest followership equalisation seen earlier. Two-party hegemony in Facebook engagement is a recent phenomenon with the equalisation trend seen in 2015/16 now quashed. The smaller parties' challenge to the two major parties now looks relatively weak as engagement numbers show growing normalisation. This supports most of the academic literature, however trends can alter. Facebook offers to alternative parties, potential levels of reach far outside the possibilities of traditional campaign tools. Thus, although a normalisation trend is visible, the potential for the pendulum to swing back is

always there. Total engagement also masks the internal engagement trends across the different forms; likes, shares and comments. Normalisation is mostly seen in likes, with shares and comments closer between the major and smaller parties. The like difference suggests real public interest in major parties especially around election times, while the closer ranges in shares and comments show that smaller parties feature enthused and active support bases. Given the different sizes of virtual membership, this suggests the potential vivacity of smaller parties on the platform, they are waiting in the wings for the two major parties to falter.

Do we see engagement differences between party and leader pages?

With the continuing role of the personalisation of politics (Langer, 2007) and ever 'decreasing focus on parties' (Dowding, 2013, p.618). As Enli & Skogerbo assert "social media fits into long-term ongoing processes where political communication has become increasingly focused on personalities and personal traits of politicians" (2013, p.759). "Personalisation is extensively regarded as a defining and pervasive feature of contemporary politics… developed as a result of… (post)modernity and the individualisation of society, declining party identification and membership, the weakening of binding ideologies and the rise of 'life-style' and identity politics…" (Langer, 2007, p.371). The importance of leaders has already been seen in followership. However, leaders have other potentials, including an ability to represent a different face to the main party page (for example Jeremy Corbyn and Labour) as part of Janus-faced campaigning. The public appear to appreciate leaders, thousands of virtual members are choosing to follower leader pages over party pages. Although studies have examined party leader pages on Facebook with regards to content and engagement (Larsson, 2014, 2016, Bene, 2017), no study has comparatively examined leader page engagement against party pages.

To examine the trends, the like engagement of party pages was examined against the like engagement of the relevant party leader of the time (Farage was used for UKIP). Likes were used as they present a broader avenue for engagement than shares and suggest more clearly the wider popularity of the pages. Average like engagement was charted across page types contribution to the total for all 6 parties in Graph 24.

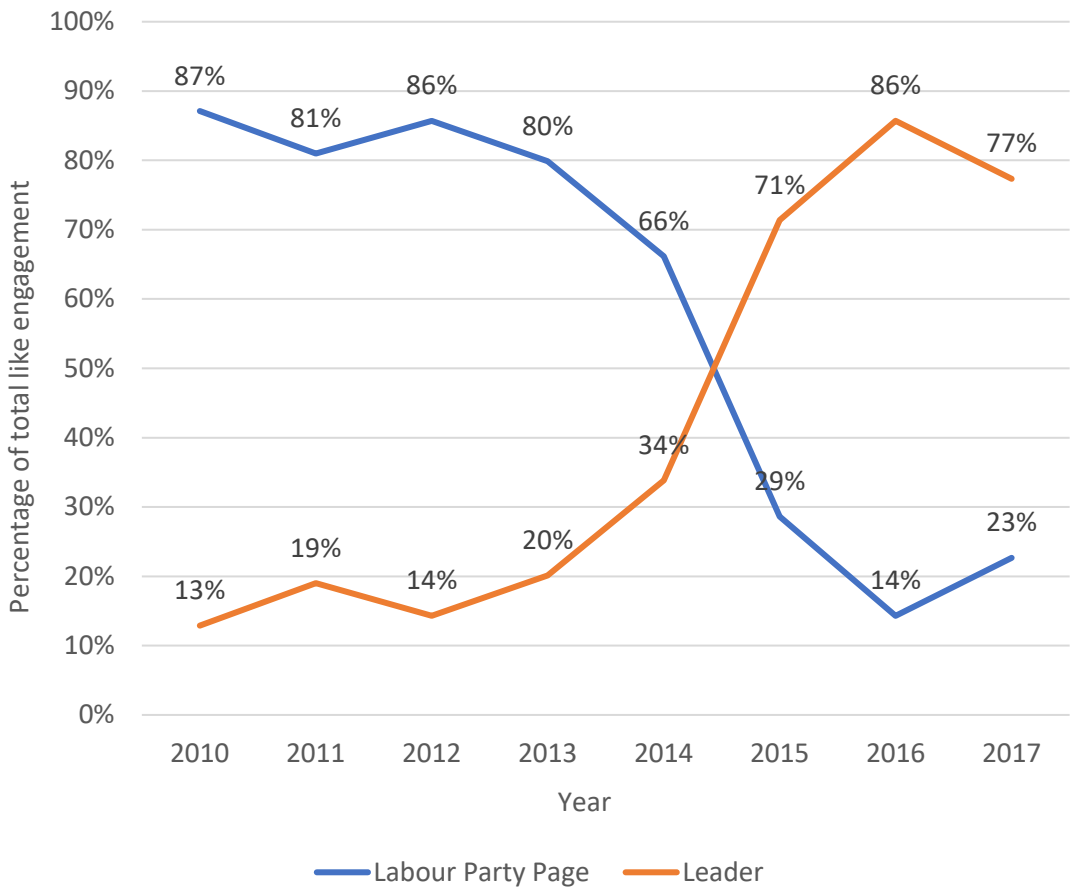


Graph 24 – Percentage of average post like engagements with party page vs. active leader page (n=40,659)

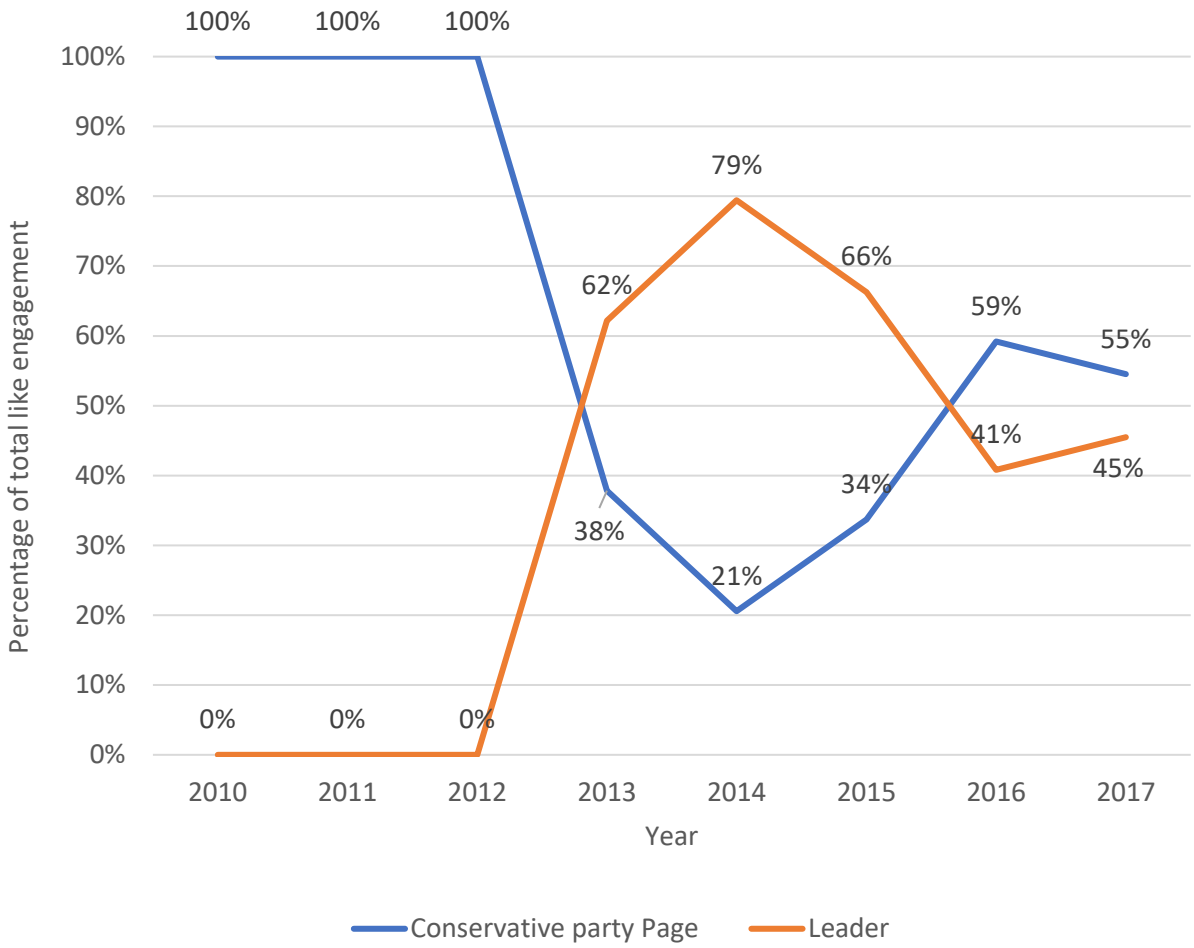
Engagement is clearly now driven more by leader pages than party pages, with this shift occurring after 2015. This closely mirrors the trends seen in followership, with the shift to leader pages occurring in 2015-2017. As previously shown, leader pages are now slightly ahead of party pages in followership, however the engagement gap is much clearer. This suggests that virtual members are choosing to engage with leader pages rather than party pages, with the only uptick in like engagement for party pages across the two election years. This election year effect suggests that party leaders may be a superior

force for permanent campaigning, whilst party pages' virtual members are activated more during campaign periods. Overall, the data shows a clear growth in Facebook users engaging with leaders over parties. The parties appear to be succeeding if they are attempting to promote their politicians as celebrity like figures (Street, 2012). To check whether averaging the total engagement created the relationship, Appendix 9 examines the same question via sum like engagement. A similar trend is visible albeit one that is slightly less strong.

Examining the main parties, Labour and the Conservative's show the trend towards party leader clearly, with the Conservatives returning to party centred engagement during the leadership of Theresa May. Labour as expected has seen engagement centred upon Corbyn's page since his rise.



Graph 25. Labour percentage of total post like engagements with party page vs. active party leader page (n=7,399)



Graph 26. Conservative percentage of total post like engagements with party page vs. relevant party leader page (n=4,362)

The trend towards party leaders is not seen across all the parties. Using the same data approach as the Graphs, Table 17 shows the percentage of average like engagement received by the leader page over the party page. It is clear the Liberal Democrats (after Nick Clegg's leadership) have seen their party leaders provide very little engagement compared to their party page. Nevertheless, the overall trend is very strong, with 63% of the 2017 like engagement the parties received occurring via leader pages

Table 17. Percentage average like engagement with leader as opposed to party page (n=40,659)

	Year							
	2010	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**
Conservative Party Leader	0%	0%	0%	69%	75%	68%	70%	69%
Green Party Leader	19%	37%	33%	24%	17%	15%	43%	44%
Labour Party Leader	19%	40%	40%	25%	53%	54%	86%	78%
Liberal Democrat Leader	55%	60%	63%	69%	49%	17%	36%	17%
SNP Leader	0%	60%	0%	17%	77%	63%	78%	79%
UKIP Leader	100%	63%	42%	29%	18%	42%	72%	89%
Average engagement with leader page	**32%**	**43%**	**30%**	**39%**	**48%**	**43%**	**64%**	**63%**

Overall, it is apparent how important party leader pages are for campaigns on Facebook. Facebook offers parties an avenue to exploit personalised leadership and fits into wider trends of personalised politics. Many virtual members and Facebook users prefer to engage with the leader not the party. This signals a broader shift in Facebook's political environment towards citizens identifying and developing new kinds of emotional resonance with leaders (Langer, 2007, p.373). The public are responding to personalised politics at the broadest level, this trend is examined in the content approaches taken across the page types in Chapter 6.

5.4: Content forms from 2010-2017

Although some suggest a slacktivist critique of online support, with engagement typified by fandoms engaged in partisan clicktivism (Morozov, 2009), the qualities of content play a major role in engagement (Del Valle et al., 2018; Xenos et al., 2015; Bene, 2017). Those on the platform are selecting what content they engage with, with parties now rightly spending millions of pounds on their social media communication operations. Parties appreciate that content must be both tailored to inform, but also be engrossing to prompt engagement and thus greater reach. Given a lack of longitudinal study what remains unclear

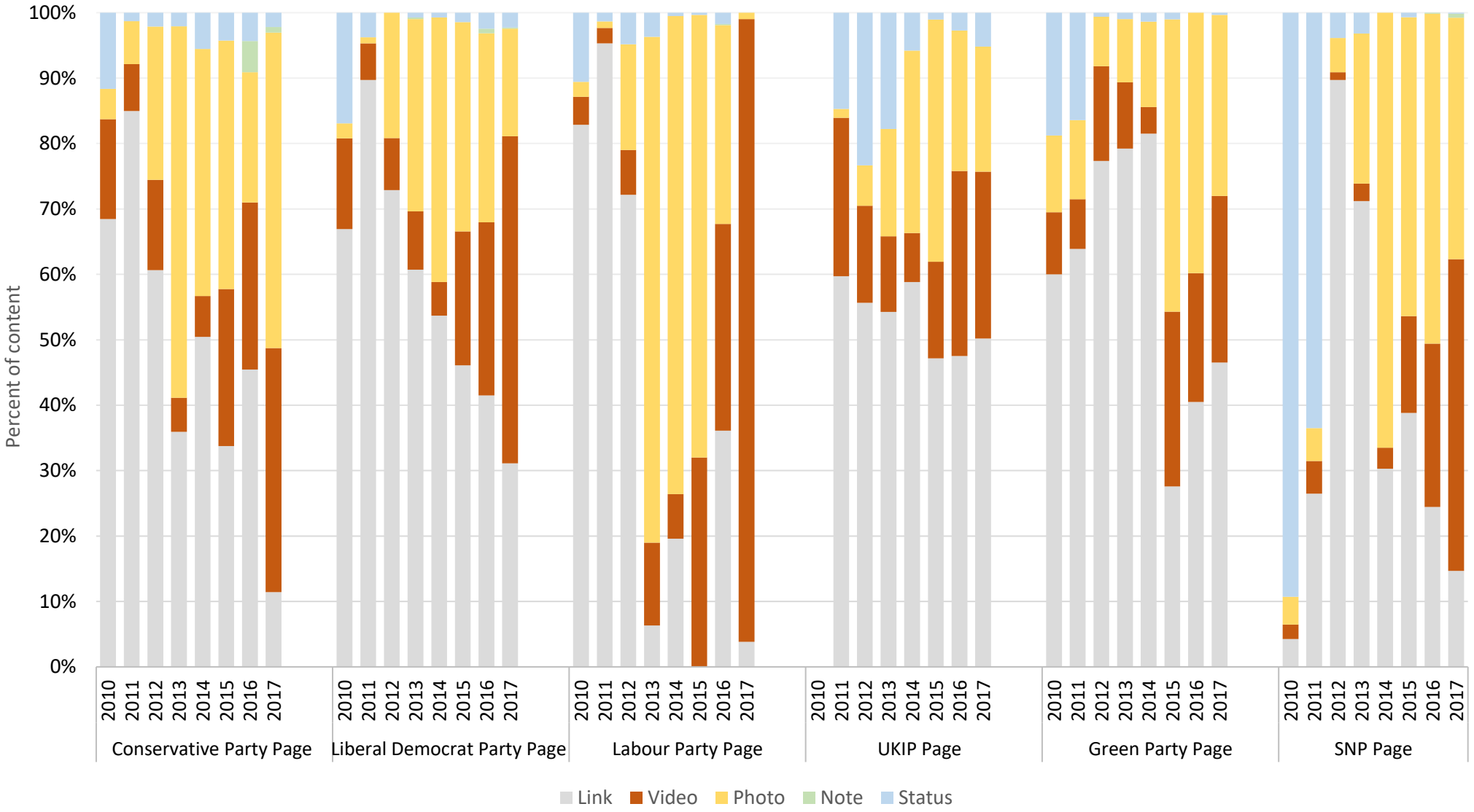
is how content approaches to Facebook have evolved within the context of technological and political change.

Content covers both the structural and informational elements of Facebook communications. Facebook offers a variety of post structures that can be used; photo, video, status, link, event and note. Each form offers different capabilities. Status, photo and video content forms have greater capacity for visual, personalised and creative content, with video offering huge capacity for information. Links offer parties the capacity to bring the outside internet into Facebook, allowing for them to legitimise arguments via linking to news websites or sending supporters to party websites. Finally, event posts offer the greatest capacity to organise and push the formed online community offline[34].

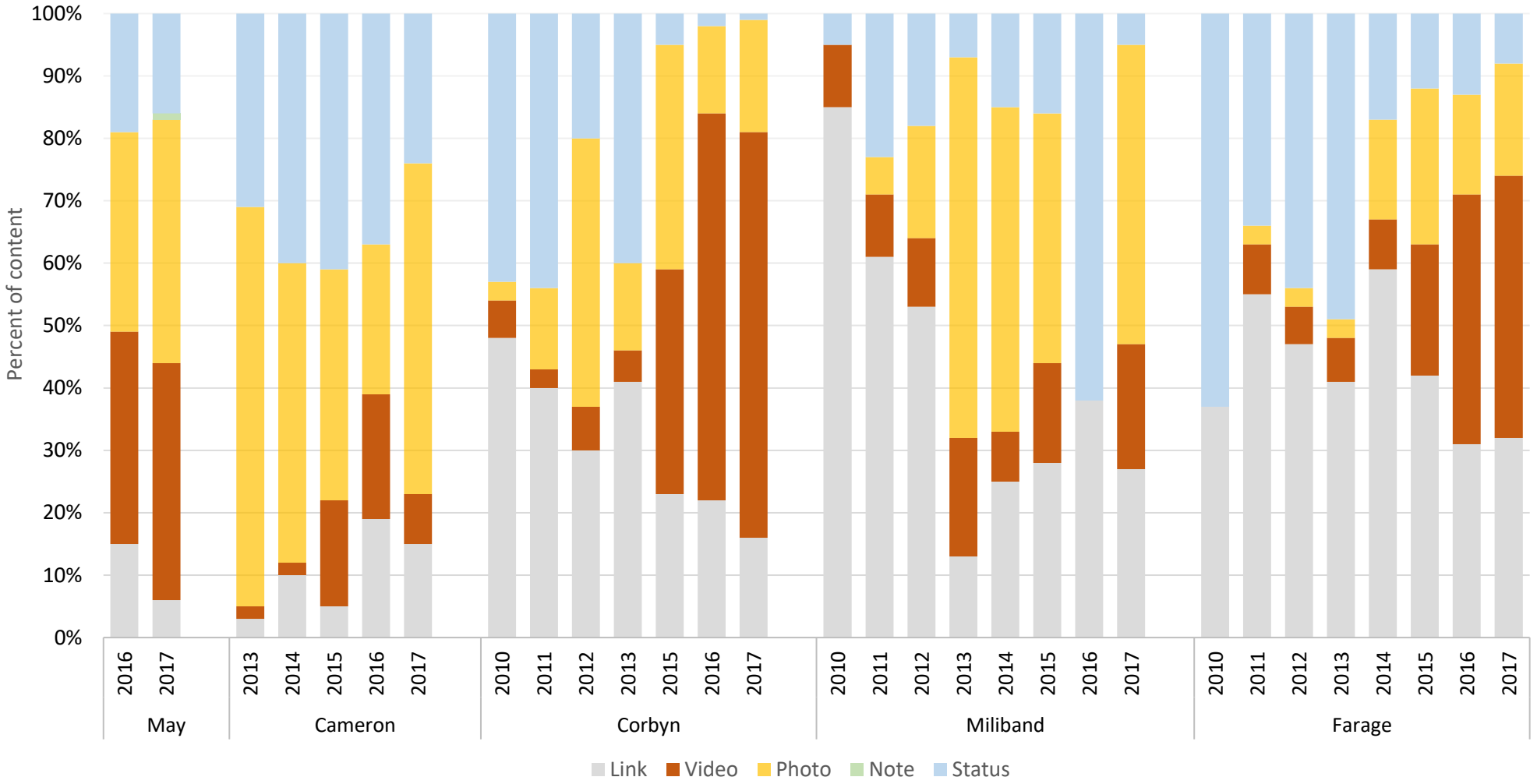
How do parties use content?

Overleaf in Graphs 27 & 28a/b the content forms used by the party and leader pages across the study period's 49,086 posts are displayed as a percentage of total content per year, years with no data are removed.

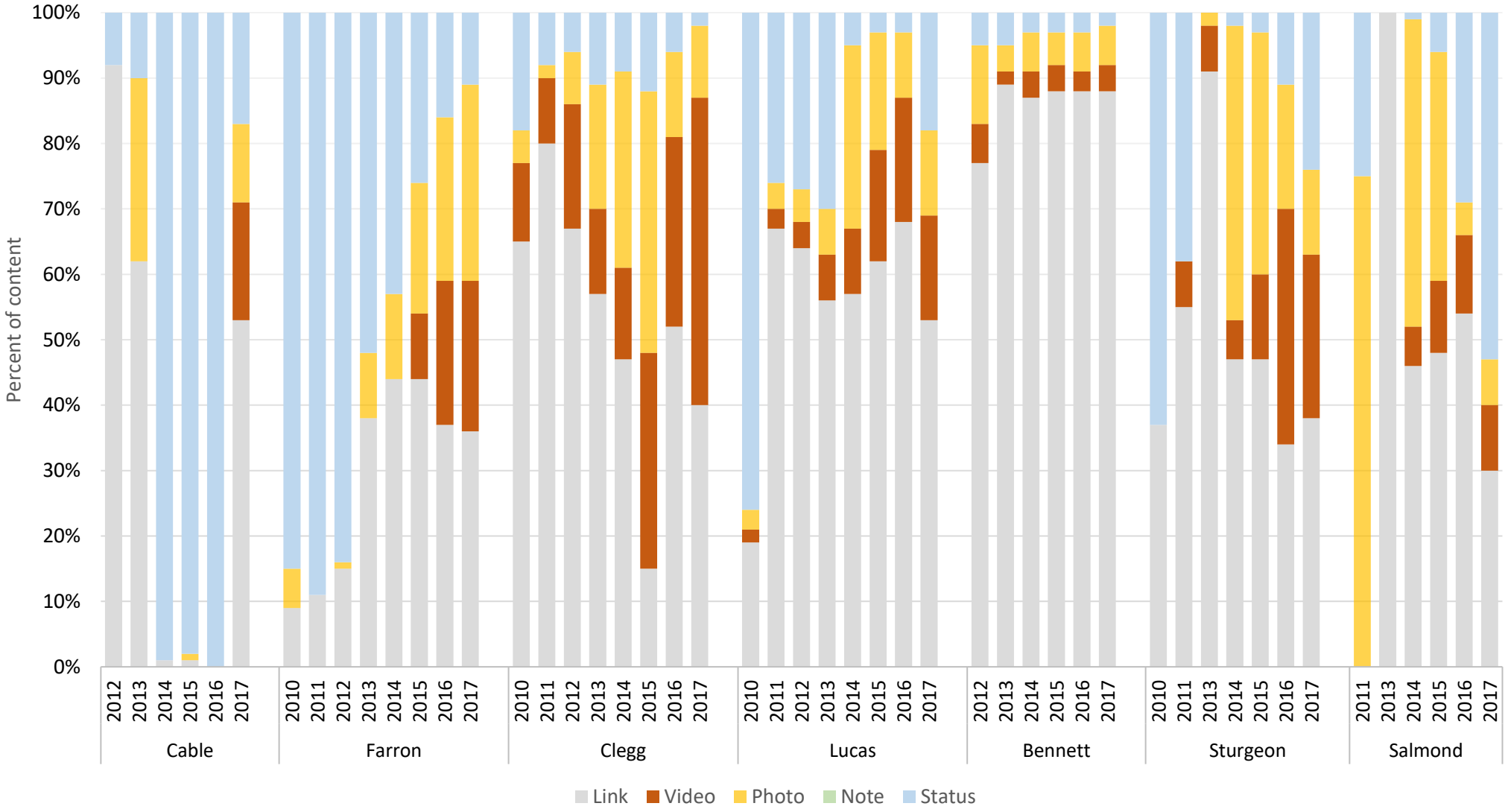
[34] Given notes and events were not often used, they are not examined.



Graph 27. Party page content forms from 2010 to 2017 (n=23,177)



Graph 28a. Conservative, Labour and UKIP party leader page content forms from 2010 to 2017 (n=26,373)

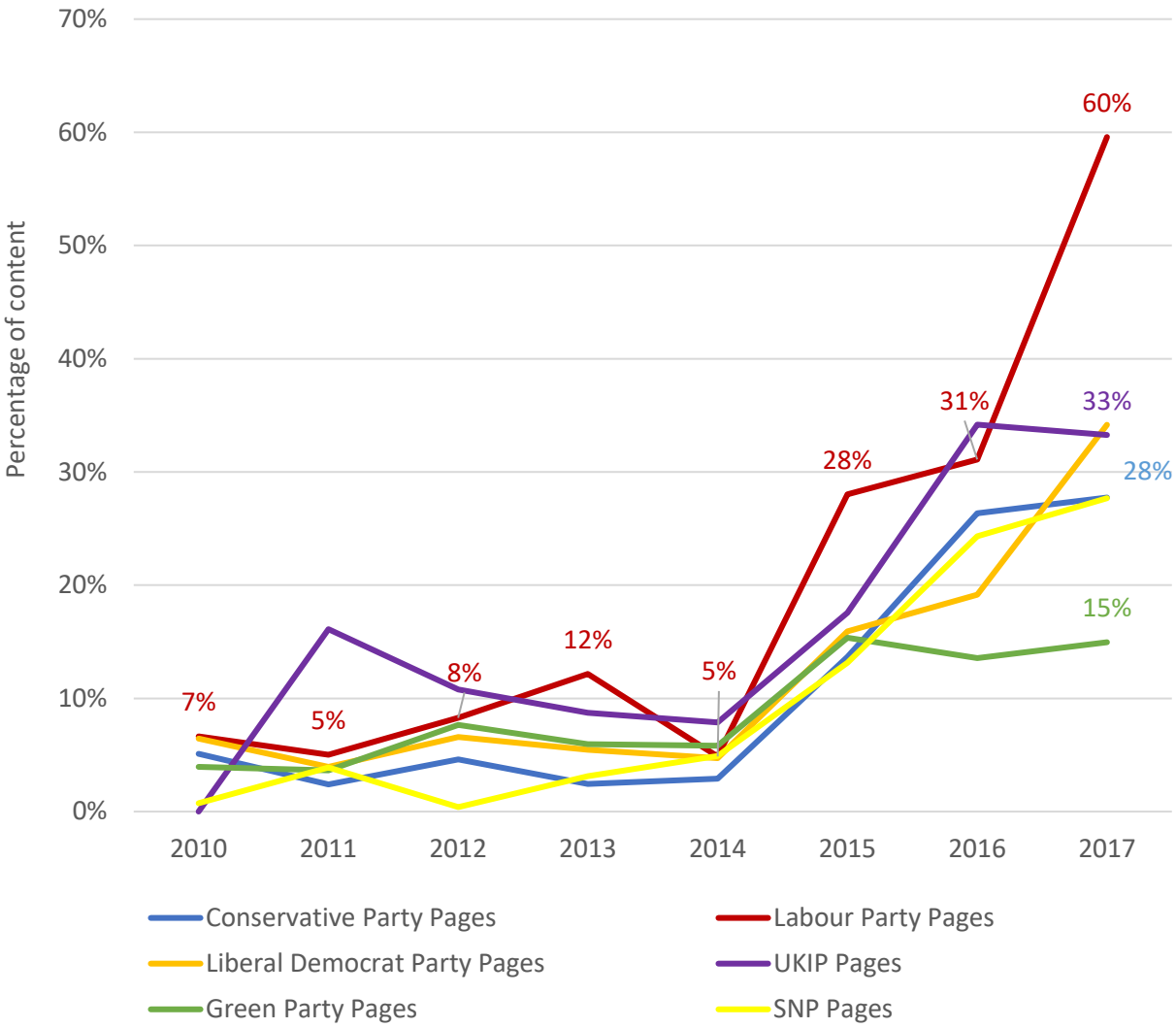


Graph 28b. Liberal Democrat, Green and SNP party leader page content forms from 2010 to 2017 (n=26,373)

Three major forms of content are used by parties today. Photo, video and link content made up 91% of the communications sent by leader and party pages in 2017, however large changes have occurred over time between these forms. Photos have many form including; infographics, graphically written content, posters, images highlighting a campaigning community, or photos of leaders or MP's. As Graph 27, 28a and 28b show, by the turn of 2013 content approaches had altered rapidly towards the use of photo, with photo content in vogue from 2013 to 2015 especially for party pages. As such the 2015 General Election can be characterised as a photo social media election, with this data reflecting Lee & Campbell's 2013-2015 online poster study. They found posters "in common usage… by different parties, with a dramatic increase in the run-up to election" (2016, p.336). Photos are still a major content form on the platform, even seeing a rise in use from 2016 to 2017 by leader's pages. However, the content form does appear to be in general decline given the rise of video.

Video content includes; gifs, meme style videos, infographics, party election broadcasts, TV segments and footage of campaigning. Graphs 27, 28a and 28b show the rapid growth of video usage by party and leader pages from 2014-2017. There has been a general trend across all the parties towards video content reflecting other studies (Bene, 2017; Magin et al. 2016). The trend towards video is most keenly seen in the Labour Party page, with video content rising from 32% in 2016 to 95% in 2017. The radical shift between photo in 2015 and video in 2017 shows how the two general elections crossed an important technological period. The popularity of video is due to its greater capacities for powerful personalised emotive information, multiple messaging and real-world representation (Keller & Kleinen-Von Konigislow, 2018). Today parties have in effect their own cable-TV channels, as Towner asserts "television altered the relationship between voters and candidates... this political visual rhetoric has spread from campaign websites to social media" (2017, p.27). Across leader and party pages on average 37% of 2017 content sent was video. The fact that the trend towards video is seen less in party leader pages, signals a difference between leader and party pages. For example, in 2017 Jeremy Corbyn's page featured 65% video to Labour's 95%. This shows page differences in approach either spurred by internal political divisions, differing levels of professionalization or a lack of central party control. The rise of video upsets many of the conventions of political Facebook analysis given its propensity for multiple

messages, this makes many previous studies' methodological approaches less capable of appreciating today's more complex content.



Graph 29. Video content as a percentage of party posts (n=49,551)

Links allow Facebook pages to not be endpoints, but instead become hubs of the wider internet, allowing parties to send users across to external websites via clickthroughs, integrating Facebook within parties' wider campaign strategies and helping develop organisational impacts. Links can prompt users to visit a party website, join the party, signing up to campaign or give personal information. Finally, links can also let parties use news content sources, both reputable and highly partisan, to legitimise their ideas, justify their policy agendas or attack the opposition. Graph's 27, 28a and 28b show links were a huge part of early Facebook, with the use of links having generally declined over time as other content forms have become more popular. The slow decline of link content has been paralleled by more

photo and video content, this suggests parties are prioritising internal content over external content; personalisation and interactivity over evidence and organisation. The trend shows that parties have become less interested in linking audiences with external party or news websites, instead parties are happy for Facebook to be the endpoint where information and organisation occurs. This situation suits Facebook who have engendered the user experience to favour staying on the platform. For the parties, the decline of links challenges Chadwick's idea of a hybrid media system; where "actors in this system… create, tap, or steer information flows in ways that suit their goals and in ways that modify, enable, or disable the agency of others, across and between a range of older and newer media settings" (Chadwick, 2017, *xi*). Rather than utilising the wider web to deliver official information from news sources or links to party websites, it instead appears that parties are forgoing hybridization, in favour of Facebook as an insular communication system. This means that Facebook is not so much part of a hybrid system but is instead a campaign system onto itself. The trend away from links is more strongly seen in the major parties (links see continued use by UKIP and the Greens for example). This is because the use of media links allows fringe parties to legitimise their viewpoints, suggesting these parties are keener to push virtual members and the public to party websites.

Do we see content differences across the permanent and one-month campaign?

Given the differing levels of engagement seen between the one-month campaign and the rest of the year, it is probable that content forms will alter as well. This will be due to parties replacing their permanent campaign approach with one designed for the short campaign. This is an unknown in the literature, as although studies have examined content approaches over the short campaign and over election years (Bene, 2017; Larsson, 2014), no study has compared campaign with non-campaign periods. Table 18 shows the party and leader pages' content approaches across the two periods in 2017.

Table 18. 2017 party and leader one-month campaign content vs. rest of the election year, excluding election day (n=6698)

	Campaign period	Video	Photo	Link	Note	Status
Conservative Party	One-month campaign	40%	46%	9%	2%	2%
	Non-campaign	37%	48%	12%	1%	2%
Theresa May	One-month campaign	42%	40%	4%	0%	13%
	Non-campaign	31%	42%	9%	2%	17%
Labour Party	One-month campaign	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Non-campaign	92%	1%	6%	0%	0%
Jeremy Corbyn	One-month campaign	68%	25%	6%	0%	1%
	Non-campaign	64%	14%	21%	0%	2%
UKIP	One-month campaign	29%	27%	41%	0%	2%
	Non-campaign	25%	17%	52%	0%	6%
Nigel Farage	One-month campaign	45%	15%	28%	0%	11%
	Non-campaign	41%	19%	32%	0%	8%
Green Party	One-month campaign	33%	45%	20%	0%	2%
	Non-campaign	24%	24%	52%	0%	0%
Caroline Lucas	One-month campaign	19%	35%	35%	0%	10%
	Non-campaign	17%	11%	54%	0%	19%
SNP	One-month campaign	64%	27%	8%	1%	0%
	Non-campaign	45%	38%	16%	1%	0%
Nicola Sturgeon	One-month campaign	28%	25%	28%	0%	20%
	Non-campaign	24%	12%	41%	0%	24%
Liberal Democrat	One-month campaign	72%	11%	11%	0%	5%
	Non-campaign	47%	17%	34%	0%	1%
Vince Cable	One-month campaign	32%	37%	12%	0%	18%
	Non-campaign	15%	8%	57%	0%	20%

There is a swing in content away from link forms towards video and photo content during the 2017 one-month campaign. This presents clear evidence that parties adopt different content forms during an election. Interest in externalising content is reduced in favour of more visual forms via video and photo. There are major differences between smaller and larger parties. Major parties' campaign's see video use increase, while for the smaller parties both video and photo increase. There is a greater change in smaller parties' campaign period approaches, suggesting a normalised campaign dynamic, as there are technological barriers to video content. Larger parties do not adjust their approach as much because their permanent campaigns already feature large quantities of photo and video. Although all parties are focussing on content for a wider audience during the election campaigns. The data shows that major parties do not radically alter structural approach across electoral periods, this suggests the potential power of permanent campaigning. Previously a traditional one-month campaign would see parties invest money and effort into a variety of outreach tools, utilizing complex systems to deliver higher quality information than the rest of the year. Facebook has arguably upset this framework as the nature of the platform warrants quality content throughout the year.

Levels of video use between smaller and larger parties across 2017 show a clear normalisation effect, especially during the permanent campaign. The major parties used higher rates of video (59%) than smaller parties (31%). The higher thresholds needed for the creation of quality photo/video content does affect use by smaller parties. As Magin et al. suggest in seeing video frequency higher in larger German parties, "this might reflect the higher production costs of videos compared to photos, which the mainstream parties can afford, while the smaller parties cannot" (2016, p.1701). This result although expected, is surprising given the ease with which video and photo content can be created today, quality content only requires a smartphone. Although the data supports the 'politics as usual' thesis (Margolis & Resnick, 2000), smaller parties the SNP and Liberal Democrats see very high levels of video content. These trends must be examined further as it is possible that smaller parties may have increased video use considerably across 2018-2020.

Table 19. 2017 content form choice across two groups; Labour and Conservative's vs. smaller parties (n=6,698)

	Video	Photo	Link	Note	Status
Conservative Party page	37%	48%	11%	1%	2%
Theresa May	38%	39%	6%	1%	17%
Labour Party page	95%	1%	4%	0%	0%
Jeremy Corbyn	65%	18%	15%	0%	2%
Main parties	**59%**	**26%**	**9%**	**0%**	**5%**
UKIP page	25%	19%	50%	0%	5%
Nigel Farage	41%	18%	32%	0%	9%
Green Party page	25%	28%	47%	0%	0%
Caroline Lucas	17%	13%	52%	0%	18%
SNP page	48%	37%	15%	1%	0%
Nicola Sturgeon	25%	13%	38%	0%	23%
Liberal Democrats page	52%	16%	29%	0%	2%
Vince Cable	17%	12%	52%	0%	20%
Smaller parties	**31%**	**20%**	**39%**	**0%**	**10%**

Are parties' content approaches beginning to reflect one another?

Are we seeing the beginning of a template for Facebook use, with the ubiquitous use of video leading the way? Through the pressures associated with success, one would expect Facebook's architecture to force parties over time to mirror one another. Research has suggested the importance of digital architecture on political campaigns (Bossetta, 2018), but no study has examined content approach similarity across parties. Analysis shows parties' collective approaches have over time fluctuated. From 2010-2013 Labour and the Conservative's closely mirrored one another with only a 5-7% average divergence in content approach. The rise of photo and use of links led to divergence in approach until 2016, where again the parties mirrored each other, but video upset the balance again with 2017 seeing a return to divergence.

Table 20. All party pages' content approaches range difference from the year 2010-2017 (n=23,177)

Year	Link	Video	Photo	Status	Average range
2010	79%	13%	10%	79%	**45%**
2011	69%	22%	11%	62%	**41%**
2012	34%	14%	18%	23%	**22%**
2013	73%	10%	68%	17%	**42%**
2014	62%	4%	60%	6%	**33%**
2015	47%	17%	36%	4%	**26%**
2016	23%	12%	31%	4%	**17%**
2017	46%	70%	47%	5%	**42%**

When factoring in the other party pages the trends show greater divergence, but a similar fluctuating trend. Before the video trend emerged, the parties were starting to mirror one another, albeit to a less cohesive degree than for just the Conservatives and Labour. Overall, video upset any trend there was towards a unified template for campaigning, today parties do not mirror each other in approach. For the moment we exist in a period of experimentation and innovation, however the Labour Party page's all-video approach likely signals the end of this phase.

Do we see content differences between party and leader pages?

As Table 21 shows there are some major differences between leader and party pages' approaches over time. Party pages are 21% more likely to use video content and 13% more unlikely to use status content than leader pages. The year with the greatest similarity between the types of pages was in 2013, with a 38% skew between party and leader pages' approach. From 2010-2017 the difference increased from 42% to 46%, with much of this due to the radical shift in party page video content. Party and leader pages show similar levels of divergence to those seen between parties.

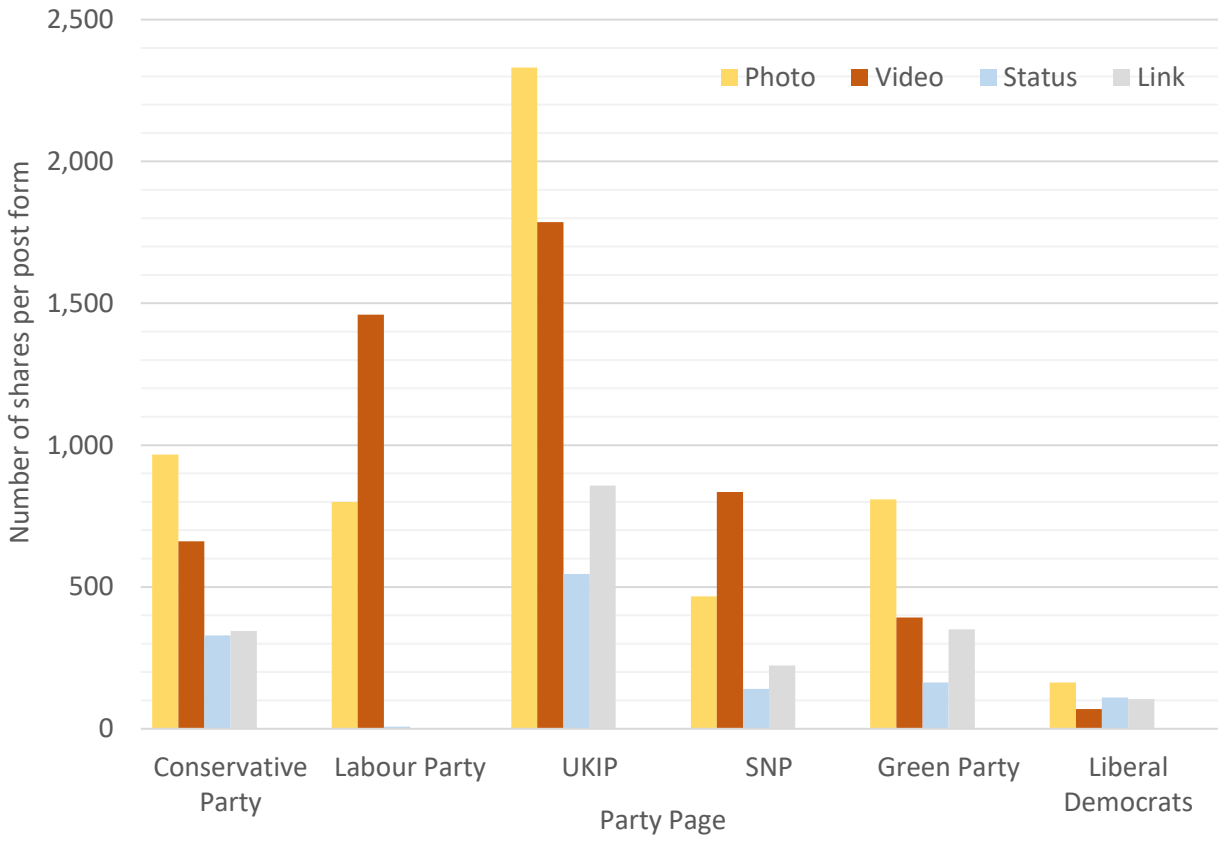
Table 21. Party and leader page type approaches to content over time (n=49,551)

Year	Page type	Link	Video	Photo	Note	Status	Total Skew for leader and party pages
2010	Leaders pages	43%	4%	2%	0%	50%	
2010	Party pages	56%	9%	5%	0%	29%	**42%**
2011	Leaders pages	46%	5%	13%	0%	36%	
2011	Party pages	79%	9%	4%	0%	8%	**74%**
2012	Leaders pages	56%	7%	11%	0%	27%	
2012	Party pages	71%	10%	13%	0%	6%	**41%**
2013	Leaders pages	54%	6%	19%	0%	21%	
2013	Party pages	51%	9%	35%	0%	5%	**38%**
2014	Leaders pages	42%	6%	29%	0%	23%	
2014	Party pages	49%	5%	43%	0%	2%	**43%**
2015	Leaders pages	37%	16%	27%	0%	20%	
2015	Party pages	32%	22%	44%	0%	1%	**47%**
2016	Leaders pages	38%	23%	14%	0%	25%	
2016	Party pages	39%	26%	32%	1%	2%	**46%**
2017	Leaders pages	36%	26%	22%	0%	15%	
2017	Party pages	26%	47%	25%	0%	2%	**47%**

Rather than leader pages being ever more professional tools that copy the approach of party pages, it appears these two types of pages are being used differently. With higher usage of link content Leader pages' act as the gateway to the wider internet, party websites and the news. They also still appear to be more personal featuring politician's status updates, although this has declined rapidly. Leader pages' lag party pages in the complexity of content forms used. This is a poor utilisation of campaign resources, as most of the trends are towards virtual members being interested in engaging with leaders first and parties second. However, it may be this genuine character that attracts users to leader pages over party pages in the first place.

What engagement do different content forms achieve?

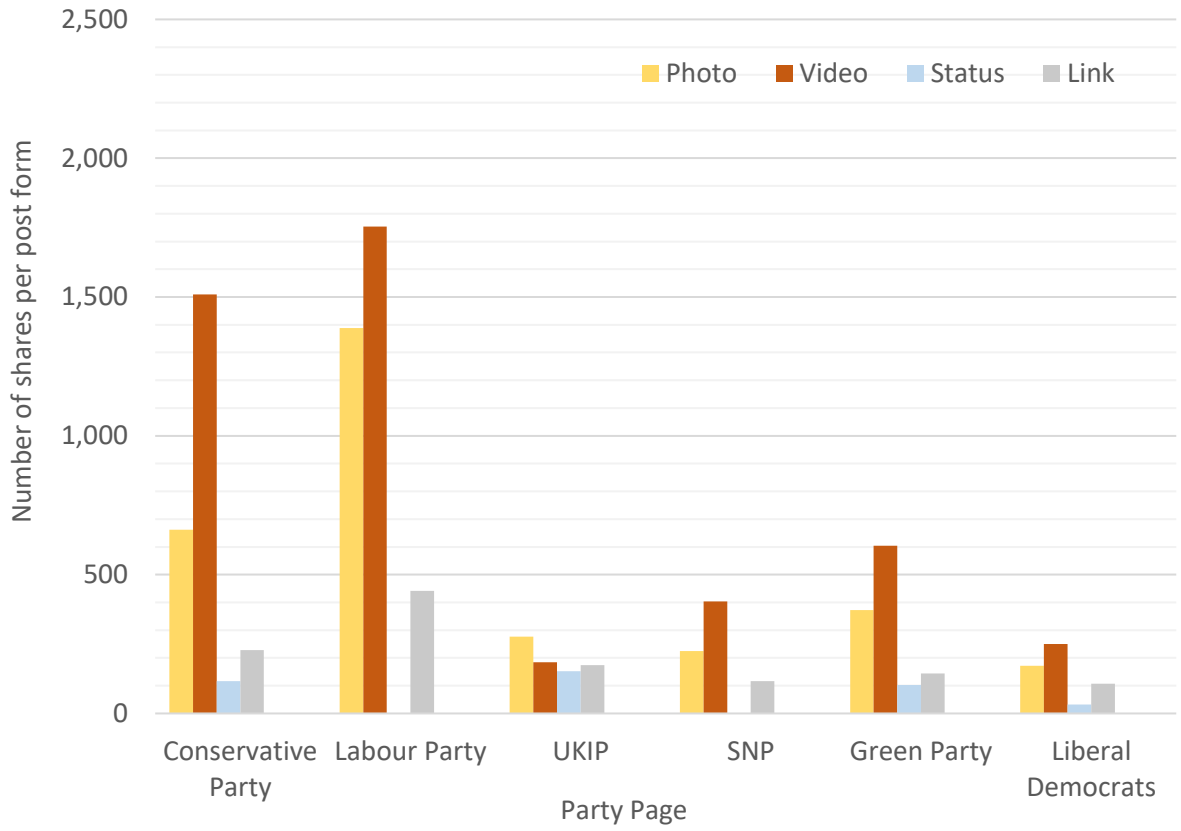
The effectiveness of different content forms on engagement is a central consideration as to how Facebook content is used and why. This analysis follows the work of studies that examine content and engagement (Bronstein, 2013; Larsson, 2014, 2016; Magin et al., 2017; Bene, 2017, 2018), however the capacity to examine this relationship in a longitudinal manner over a longer period, allows core themes to be drawn out that these studies could not. In 2015 the party pages used a wide variety of content to campaign on Facebook. As previously seen, there was a strong focus on photographic content, alongside use of links and some video content. As Graph 30 shows, the actual effectiveness in gathering engagement was more spread across the content forms.



Graph 30. 2015 average number of shares per post by content form and party page (n=3,248)

The number of shares a video achieved was on average not as numerous as photo content, other than for Labour and the SNP. This is fascinating, given that 2017 shows a radical change in the popularity of sharing video content. It is apparent that in 2015, photos achieved the best engagement from users of all the content

forms, with UKIP far ahead in per post share engagement for all content forms. UKIP on average were gathering 2,331 shares per photo post. In contrast, the Conservatives were achieving 967 shares. However, by 2017 the story of content and engagement had changed markedly.



Graph 31. 2017 average number of shares per post by content form and party page (n=3,816). SNP engagement levels should be interpreted with the caveat that the population of Scotland is 5.4 million compared with the population of England at 56 million.

By 2017, video had become supreme for all parties except UKIP. Whilst UKIP had gone backwards Labour and the Conservatives had pushed forwards in engagement across the two key content forms – video and photo. The Labour Party heavily pushed video in 2017 (95% of content), however it is interesting to note that photo content sent would have also provided respectable engagement levels for the party. Labour's radical video strategy appears to have been smart and forward thinking given increased average shares. Overall, not all content forms are equal, video attracts superior levels of engagement followed by photo content, with all other forms dragging behind.

5.5: Conclusion

A new avenue for campaigns?

As Gerodimos & Justinussen argue; “the Internet has had an undeniable impact on the ways and means through which the public engages with politics” (2015, p.115). Facebook offers radical change in the scope, nature and way campaigns can operate. This is because virtual members and the wider Facebook public are heavily engaging with parties’ content across one-month election campaigns and permanently over the year. Engagement has risen steeply from 2010-2017, accelerating from 2014 onwards. It is apparent that rather than mindless clicktivism (Morozov, 2009) the engagement relationship is one that is clearly related to content, technology, temporal periods, page type and party size dynamics. Millions of Facebook users are deliberatively engaging with the parties, with this increasing over time. Examining whether Facebook is just adding to the campaign toolkit or if use represents a fundamental change, the platform offers a scale of communications unparalleled bar the most ubiquitous tools such as leaflets. However, unlike leaflets or other traditional one-dimensional tools, content is socially located, is interactive and far more visually engrossing. Challenges do lie ahead, akin to the followership plateauing seen in Chapter 4, average engagement has also plateaued since 2015, presenting ramifications for the future of the platform. It is clear we are heading into a new Facebook campaigning landscape that is more competitive.

Structural changes in approach are found, with the technological improvements available altering how Facebook has been used. Only three forms remain widely used; photo, video and link content make up 91% of the communications sent by leader and party pages in 2017. Video has risen recently and is becoming ubiquitous; Labour is leading the way with a majority video approach. The 2015 and 2017 General Election years stand very far apart, signalling the rapid changes that have occurred. The rise of photo and then video to the exclusion of other structural approaches such as links, shows that parties are favouring information alongside internal Facebook activities. Facebook is today used as a campaign endpoint, not as part of a wider hybrid campaign system. Over time parties have become reluctant to send users off the platform to other locations with links in rapid decline.

Are we seeing a different approach to the platform from traditional methods? Given the nature of Facebook, with social activity central to message success, the parties are clearly approaching the platform with intent to maximise reach. This chapter's results show high levels of voter activity on Facebook in line with other studies (e.g., Magin et al., 2016; Gibson & McAllister, 2015; Klinger, 2013; Larsson, 2016). Facebook is offering parties new avenues to campaign that are fundamentally different from other tools available. Millions of virtual members and the general public are choosing to engage with party politics online. Facebook offers organic communications and socially located campaigning. Elements of Margetts' (2001) cyber party model are clearly apparent, as Facebook has connected voters and the party in new ways. Virtual members, who are more representative than official party membership, are now an active key component within this new system. Facebook thus offers parties access to millions of younger and more female Facebook users. As Bene asserts "political communication has always required reactions to exert influence over citizens or political discourse. However, until now, the reactions by the mass media and the elites within it have been what really matters" (Bene, 2017, p.526). Today Facebook allows parties to influence users' private reactions whether via conversations or engagement, with individuals now as important to message delivery as major media corporations. Huge levels of incidental and selective exposure are occurring from virtual members; "Facebook, has… dramatically expand(ed) the reach of citizens' causal political conversations and statements" (Bene, 2017, p.526).

Other key trends are visible across content and engagement. Facebook offers parties capacities for permanent campaigning. Although engagement levels are much higher at election times, the ability to reach thousands of virtual members and thus a large segment of the UK Facebook population daily, is a powerful new feature. Engagement year round is very impressive for some parties, with Corbyn achieving yearly engagement above that seen by Theresa May during the election campaign. Thus, this chapter's findings support Boulianne's posited explanation for an increase in campaign effects due to permanent campaigning (2018). Parties, (although centrally the major parties currently) due to technological development and knowledge, have the capacity to send year-round visual content of consistently high quality, in turn leading to impressive capacities for permanent campaigning. There is a relative normalisation trend within permanent campaign content and

engagement. However, as seen with followership engagement and content approach; there is considerable volatility, so major parties should not be complacent when it comes to their permanent campaigns.

Photo, video and link content make up 91% of the communications sent by leader and party pages in 2017. The technological leap seen is visible between the 2015 and 2017 General Elections, with 2015 a photo election and 2017 a video election. This is important as these forms receive higher average engagement than other structural forms. Video is now vital for success on the platform as video receives the most engagement followed by photo. In the future it seems likely that parties will mirror one another via heavy video content, given that parties mirrored each other in photo use before the rise of video. However, we are not there yet, as it is the Labour page that is currently innovating via a near all video approach. Overall, the changing content approaches seen from 2010-2017 show that parties "will adopt new strategies once they deem them useful enough to spend the money they consume" (Magin et al., 2016, p.1718). As "strategies and political communication are mediated by varying sociotechnical affordances of social media platforms" (Stier et al., 2018, p.72), parties have somewhat been behind the curve in the trend towards video. However, we can see through this chapter that the parties are innovating, now using Facebook akin to their own cable-TV channels.

For smaller parties Facebook offers opportunities and pitfalls. The platform generally shows a normalised environment in both the complexity of content used and in engagement. As one may expect, major parties appear to have considerable power. However, a major theme from 2010-17 has been volatility. Although trends seen in content approaches and engagement suggest the continuing influence of Facebook as a normalising power, previous years have shown the pendulum swing the other way. From 2012-2015 smaller parties featured content approaches and engagement levels closer to the major parties. Smaller parties have also been able to engage millions of users who they would otherwise not have access too. UKIP, a party with tiny financial resources and low membership found great success on Facebook, forcing a referendum all via an active body of virtual members. This is important as social media provides populists with a much more direct link between voter and party (Ernst et al., 2017) and offers smaller parties a "bypassing strategy" for hostile media (Magin et al., 2016, p.1718). Socially mediated content powered through engagement is very powerful. For example, millions of people had the EU

raised as an issue to them through viral UKIP content on Facebook. Continually spreading messages that went unchecked for years, UKIP shows how smaller parties can have big impacts via Facebook, even if not strictly direct. Thus, although we currently see normalisation, with the necessary electoral volatility, on Facebook smaller parties can make impressive impacts.

As Heiss et al. asserted in examining weaknesses of the literature, the “type of Facebook page may play a role in user interaction and thus warrants a more thorough investigation” (2018, p.1498). This chapter has found such evidence. The rise of leader pages has given parties new opportunities for engagement and differentiated content approaches. Leader pages are now the central location of engagement and feature different content approaches. This suggests diversified communications due to internal political differences, differing levels of professionalization or tactics. The personalisation of politics has also played a vital role; Cameron, Farage and Corbyn signal the importance of the leader over party. Satellite campaigns are also shown to be recent but vital new avenues for engagement. All these potentials and novel approaches are still nevertheless powered by virtual members engagement. Thus, when we appreciate engagement, it is vital to remember that individual virtual members, with their own ideas, backgrounds and ways of thinking are behind this activity. Virtual members and their engagement are now essential to the success of party campaigns on Facebook, with parties succeeding when they appreciate, cultivate and activate this new group through enticing content.

The 2015 and 2017 General Elections: The ‘traditional’ Facebook campaign?

6: The 2015 and 2017 General Elections: The ‘traditional’ Facebook campaign?

6.1: Introduction

Alongside high levels of engagement and a new body of online support, Facebook features new communications approaches to information and participation. At parties’ fingertips are innovative ways to communicate and organise beyond traditional campaign tools such as election broadcasts, posters or leaflets. The question of how Facebook is used has not received great interest from the academic community. This is because most studies examine information or adoption and subsequent effects on voting, participation or engagement. This chapter instead focuses on supply side approaches, examining across the Labour and Conservative party and leader pages, how Facebook is used as a campaign tool and the unique aspects it is offering to party campaigns. Information and participation are the supply side themes used to orientate study. Overall, across the chapter, elements of research question one, two and three are examined through three key questions:

1. How is Facebook used to send information?
2. How is Facebook used to generate participation?
3. Are we seeing a ‘traditional’ campaign on the platform?

Conceptualising the party and leader page Facebook campaigns

Facebook’s social nature, it’s capacity for information flow and the use of engagement to deliver political information, present inherent uniqueness compared to other tools. However, we may see a traditional broadcast style campaign from the parties on the platform, with a traditional style campaign benefiting from both the abilities of Facebook and the generalist capabilities of a broad political campaign. The sociological nature of Facebook means that even traditional style content can receive the powerful benefits of social location, social message transmission, peer influence and network flow. Thus, when conceptualising party and leader page campaigns on the platform, the platform is understood both within the wider set of

traditional and e-campaign tools, as well as within the potentials of Facebook itself. Thus, what we may now today consider a 'traditional' Facebook campaign is still a fundamental development over previous tools.

The core presences the parties' have on Facebook are their party and leader pages. These pages have the largest numbers of followers and receive the greatest public attention. How these pages are used to campaign during an election is not clear, with novelty or conservatism demonstrating the wider impact Facebook is having on party campaigns. Three types of potential Facebook campaigns are conceptualised in Table 22.

Table 22. Conceptualisation of potential Facebook campaign approach

Type of campaign	Overall balance	Information	Participation
Traditional campaign	A focus on information over participation	Focus on broad information, simple content forms & core topics, use of personalisation and leadership in figurehead style, news media used in traditional form, depiction of core groups	Focus on participation as voting, little effort placed into other participation
Transitional campaign	A focus on information over participation, but greater interest in activating virtual members	General focus on broad information, but use of more partisan topics/information to activate virtual members, novel use of content forms, use of personalisation beyond leader presence, some focus on depiction of interest groups, news media edited	Focus on participation as voting and engagement, limited online and offline participation of official/virtual members
Novel campaign	A focus on participation over information	Information approaches are novel, use of internet-style structural forms such as humour/memes/edited news, content will be personalised with high levels of depiction, information focuses on engagement	Participation heavily promoted both online and offline, little interest in whether an actor is an official or virtual member, or public

Across information and participation, how party and leader pages are campaigning is examined within a framework that covers three approaches. The least novel campaign approach we may see from the pages on Facebook is the *traditional campaign*. Here the party and leader page focus on broader topics of public concern, there will be focus on information rather than participation, with any participation content centred upon voting. Secondly there is the *transitional campaign*, here the parties push for participation and the use of virtual members, however there is a clear overall focus on a broad information campaign. Finally, there is the *novel campaign*; this approach is without precedent within the campaign toolkit, information content is adventurous, and participation heavily pushed without a care for traditional membership boundaries.

Alongside the wider trends seen across Facebook use, approaches to information or participation may vary across; political parties, structural content forms, time periods and page types. Equally, Facebook approach may have become homogenised due to professionalization and technological development, or there may be divergence in approach as the Conservatives and Labour have separated ideologically over time. There is also the potential that different page types are used to engage in different approaches. For example, leader pages may focus more on information than party pages, this Janus-faced approach shows nuance within how parties are campaigning on the platform. These important aspects are examined throughout the chapter across the studied elements.

The balance between giving information and encouraging participation

Conservatism in approach is understandable given slow party adoption and the innate risk in novel approaches. At the core of political campaigns is a desire to send information to inform supporters and influence the public's positions (Foot & Schneider, 2006). For example, we may see Facebook used as a pure information dissemination tool focused on broad communications to the public rather than activating virtual members, an approach similarly seen in leaflet materials. However, it is expected that across the elections the use of more novel capabilities of Facebook will increase. The increasing technical skills seen within the parties means there is the potential for innovation over traditional campaign approaches. The parties may favour participatory content over pure information, utilising their

unique pools of virtual members in new ways to alter the top-down style of traditional campaigns. Finally, we may see a middle ground, with top-down information used to inform the general public in a traditional manner, but also novel approaches to public engagement and the activation of virtual members.

Political parties are likely to push online support towards online and offline participation. Both parties may be attempting to use their virtual members for online and offline campaigning, generating a cyber-party framework and a real revolution in how parties campaign. The parties may be pushing for both online and offline activism, from online engagement to doorstep campaigning, utilising the unique pool of virtual members at their disposal. We may see participation content centred on voting as the focus, with little effort placed into harnessing the power of virtual members or dissolving activism barriers. The parties may thus utilise Facebook in a way to which they are accustomed, using the platform to replicate offline tools in an online setting. The parties may even ignore participatory content forms altogether, instead concentrating on using Facebook solely as an information tool. There is a third position, that the parties are using the platform to push for online activism and content engagement such as sharing, rather than offline participation. This approach shows Facebook to be an evolutionary tool with unique capacities, but not yet revolutionising campaigning.

The wider abilities of Facebook can impact how parties organise and use virtual members. Two utopian conceptions in the vein of Margetts' Cyber Party (2001), are from Chadwick (2007, 2013) and Gerbaudo (2018, 2019). Chadwick argues that the internet has fostered a period of organizational change, as parties that were once strongly hierarchical can use social media to apply the strategies and more horizontal systems of social movements (2007). This "organizational hybridity has resulted in the formation of new structural forms that use digital media to provide innovative forms of mobilisation" (Dennis, 2019, p.99). As such we should see parties using the fluid opportunities for participation and organisation Facebook offers, rather than a central focus on information. Gerbaudo takes an even broader view. In what he describes as the *Digital Party,* he states that for political groups social media has not only become a mode of communication but is now intrinsically linked to their structure and tactics (2019). This idea is very similar to Chadwick and Margetts' ideas. These conceptualisations of central party campaigns need to be examined across actual campaigns. Finally, it is important to note that the use of

Facebook as a participation tool depends on the potential partisan nature of the reached audience. As such, participation for this study is understood as content either meant for virtual members or the general public. A second conceptual split is used across content designed for online participation and offline participation, as innately these are both mobilising actions but differ in activity.

New sociological avenues for information and participation

Facebook is a network that recreates many social aspects seen offline but in a new more fluid environment. Through the different groups seen online; party members, virtual members and the general public, Labour and the Conservatives have new opportunities. The parties can utilise new human resources through activating party/virtual members to campaign online and offline, creating new avenues for communications flow into the public domain. The large size and scale of engagement and the number of virtual members seen, means the parties have a real potential to break through to wavering, undecided or even disinterested voters. Facebook is thus offering a new volatile avenue for communications. However, this volatility doesn't mean Facebook is not effective for persuasion, because powerful sociological characteristics are embedded within how information flows. Thus, although the networks created online are not as rigid as those offline, the parties do have new opportunities to develop and support genuine social networks. These abilities are however potentially more fluid, as connections are more easily built across the old orders of class, wealth and location. Finally, this chapter (alongside the Momentum chapter) requires a *caveat emptor*. Given this study's descriptive focus, claims as to intents and effects are self-limited, as impact could be equally political or external to Facebook.

6.2: How is Facebook used to send information?

Given different numbers of posts across pages, all post data is analysed as percentages. To appreciate the scale of what the data represents, in Table 23 the number of posts analysed for each page is shown. It shows what each graph's data represents when using averages across 2%, 25%, 50% or 100% scales. In order to create a fair comparison, all data across Chapters 6 and 7 uses 25%, 50% or 100%

scales. Not all graphs are set at 100%, because using the different scales allows the viewer to 'zoom in', allowing for easier comprehension of less common content forms. Table 23 displays a 2% scale lens as this is the lowest possible denomination, it represents 1 post for Theresa May (50 total), or 6 for the 2017 Labour Party page (278 total).

Table 23. Percentage representation of each post

	Number of posts	2%	25%	50%	100%
2017 Labour Party	278	6	70	139	278
Jeremy Corbyn	144	3	36	72	144
2017 Conservative Party	95	2	24	48	95
Theresa May	50	1	13	25	50
2015 Labour Party	237	5	59	119	237
Ed Miliband	78	2	20	39	78
2015 Conservative Party	188	4	47	94	188
David Cameron	138	3	35	69	138
Leader average	410	8	103	205	410
Party average	798	16	200	399	798
2015	641	13	160	321	641
2017	567	11	142	284	567

Novel approaches to structural content

Chapter 5 found that over time parties' campaigns have become more professionalised, with a narrower band of content approaches used. Although photo and video have become dominant, the type of photo and video content sent is still unknown. Overleaf in Set's 1 & 2, examples of the content forms can be seen. Table 24 subsequently shows the average prevalence of features for video content across party, page type and election year. The video forms coded for accounted for a total of 58% of the video content seen in 2015 and 47% in 2017. The video content not described in the data were more general approaches that featured activists, the public, celebrities, experts and leaders in documentary or presentational formats.

Image Set 1: Post examples – Content form

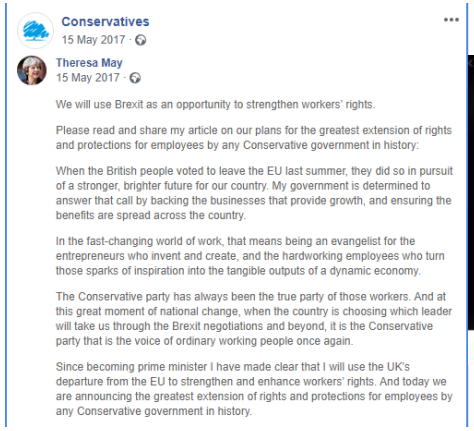
Poster

Image

Video - PEB

Text only image

Text only message



Use of mainstream media

Facebook live video

Infographic video

Image Set 2: Post examples – Information approaches

Praise of party campaigners

Use of celebrity / alternative media

Use of opposition leader

Link to party website / features relevant worker

Use of policy detail

Use of opposition MP

Use of party MP / ordinary campaigners

Table 24. Video content use by page and grouping (n=1,208, n of video posts = 621)

	n	Video content according to Facebook	Video uses Mainstream Media	Video is PEB	Is infographic video	Is Facebook live video	Video uses Alternative Media	Video is alternated opposition PEB
2017 Labour Party	278	100%	3%	6%	58%	2%	0%	0%
Jeremy Corbyn	144	68%	18%	3%	8%	2%	0%	0%
2017 Conservative Party	95	40%	15%	0%	5%	1%	0%	0%
Theresa May	50	46%	2%	4%	2%	2%	0%	0%
2015 Labour Party	237	44%	22%	0%	4%	0%	0%	1%
Ed Miliband	78	6%	4%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
2015 Conservative Party	188	27%	7%	2%	0%	0%	1%	0%
David Cameron	138	20%	4%	2%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Leader average	410	35%	7%	2%	3%	1%	1%	0%
Party average	798	53%	12%	2%	17%	1%	0%	0%
2015	641	24%	9%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%
2017	567	63%	10%	3%	18%	2%	0%	0%
Average of pages		**44%**	**9%**	**2%**	**10%**	**1%**	**0%**	**0%**

Across the pages during the 2015 and 2017 campaigns, 51.5% of content sent (622 of 1,208 posts) were videos. The high amounts of video content show that Facebook stands as a tool apart from traditional campaign materials. Party approaches to the platform focus on the most visual forms, with content principally bespoke for Facebook. Infographics have seen the largest rise in use, this is primarily driven by the Labour Party page with 58% of their 2017 content infographics. It is apparent that the Labour Party page replaced posters with infographic videos, with the form having a clear broadcast campaign learning role. This is clearly an evolution in information provision given videos capacities for more information, greater interactivity and visuality. Infographics were not commonly seen on Corbyn's page, instead the page used the public, activists or Corbyn to convey information. The differences between these pages show a divergence between leader and central party office strategy, as well as nuanced appreciation of page audience.

Image 1. 2017 Corbyn's use of the Labour Party PEB[35]

PEBs are a traditional campaign material seen on the platform, use of PEBs increased from 1% in 2015 to 3% of content sent in 2017. Parties will inherently want to re-use expensive and well-crafted content online, even if made for traditional

[35] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10155437165448872 accessed 1/04/2020

communication mediums. However, it is surprising to see parties utilise PEB's in a traditional 'spotlight' manner on the platform. For example, Labour's 2017 approach was through 'premiering' Loach's long-form documentary film on Facebook the same day as the PEB was released on TV. This use of Facebook like broadcast TV shows some hangover of a traditional campaign approach. Recently tactics may be shifting, the 2019 election saw a novel approach to PEBs, in 12 Questions for Boris[36] the Conservatives crafted a PEB for TV that clearly had social media in mind. This more revolutionary approach realises that social media engagement (even negative) trumps any traditional TV audience.

Image 2. 2017 Labour's use of Facebook Live video[37]

Facebook Live is a novel form of video, although uncommon even in 2017 (2%) it is rapidly growing in importance. Facebook Live allows the parties to broadcast live political campaign events. For example, Theresa May's ITV news interview (famously interrupted by Jeremy Corbyn) or Labour's 2017 rallies. In 2017 Labour utilised a novel approach informed by the Bernie Sanders campaign. Powered by virtual member engagement, the party broadcast its rallies live into millions of people's news feeds, adding to the Corbynmania that marked the campaign. The party showed the early markings of an innovative approach to

[36] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=97zPDojMWiQ&t=2s accessed 1/04/2020
[37] https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=10154513870102411 accessed 1/04/2020

information that appreciated the interactive and visceral nature of Facebook Live, as well as the potential of accessible socially spread content. Facebook Live offers to parties a powerful new tool for public and virtual member outreach, with the format now becoming common in the USA within Trump's campaign rallies, and in the UK as part of Johnson's 'People's PMQs'[38]. Examining news use, Table 24 shows the use of mainstream media is popular, remaining stable from 2015 to 2017 (9% to 10%). In contrast, alternative media is not common for the party pages (Appendix 10). The use of media content is examined later in the section upon news media.

Image 3. 2015 Conservative poster example[39]

Examining photo content in detail across the elections, approach was centrally via posters and images. Posters are graphical mediums that convey information, an example can be seen in *Set 1*. The main difference from images is the use of larger amounts of text and/or graphics. From 2015 to 2017, poster use declined from 19% to 11% of content. The fact that only 19% of 2015 content was posters is important. The data shows that Lee & Campbell's (2016) poster analysis was only scratching the surface of Facebook content. Any potential for posters to

[38] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1k4q3nDQLiQ accessed 25/08/2019
[39] https://www.facebook.com/conservatives/posts/10153029862269279:0 accessed 25/08/2019

have a “role relating to parties trying to maintain relationships with existing online supporters”, is far outweighed by other content forms (Lee & Campbell, 2016, p.313). Posters appear to be a party page (22%) not a leader page approach (7%); campaigners thus view party pages as the location to deliver this simpler traditional content. Highlighting the difference between party and leader pages. In contrast to Labour’s radical shift to video, in 2017 the Conservative Party page increased their use of posters, signalling a cautious campaign that failed to adapt. The continued use of posters highlights the unadventurous side of information provision. Despite the form being more limited than video, the two parties still believe that posters have function for promoting simple messages.

Image 4. 2017 Conservative example of text only image[40]

[40] https://www.facebook.com/conservatives/posts/10155015984739279:0 accessed 25/08/2019

Table 25. Photo content forms by page, year and party (n=1,208, n of photo posts = 404)

	n	Photo content according to Facebook	Is image collection	Is text only image	Is poster	Is meme	Is Infographic	Image was defunct
2017 Labour Party	278	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Jeremy Corbyn	144	26%	1%	1%	8%	1%	2%	1%
2017 Conservative Party	95	47%	4%	2%	33%	0%	0%	0%
Theresa May	50	38%	1%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%
2015 Labour Party	237	55%	1%	18%	29%	0%	1%	0%
Ed Miliband	78	31%	3%	9%	10%	0%	0%	5%
2015 Conservative Party	188	43%	5%	6%	28%	0%	2%	6%
David Cameron	138	48%	0%	3%	7%	0%	1%	0%
Leader average	410	36%	1%	3%	7%	0%	1%	1%
Party average	798	37%	3%	7%	22%	0%	1%	1%
2015	641	44%	2%	9%	19%	0%	1%	3%
2017	567	28%	2%	1%	11%	0%	1%	0%
Average of pages		**36%**	**2%**	**5%**	**15%**	**0%**	**1%**	**2%**

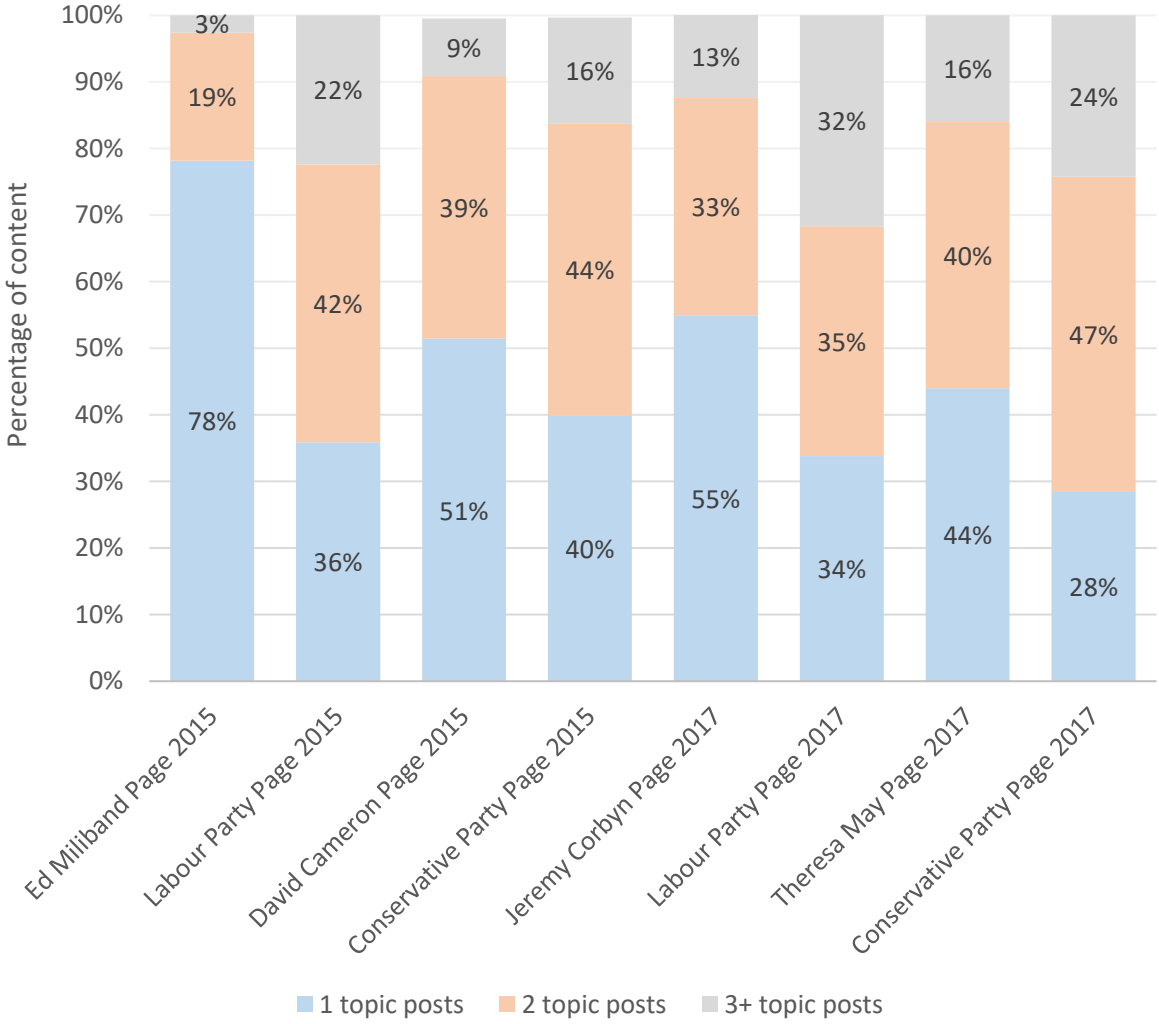
Other image forms were not common. The reuse of newspaper front pages was not seen, showing that interest in merging traditional media with social media is not a key tactic unless the content can be edited. Although Bene (2017) found memes to be common across Hungarian Parliamentary candidates, negligible rates of use are seen across the Conservatives and Labour. Only Jeremy Corbyn's page used memes, showing a limited interest in applications of daring content. The parties showed a general lack of interest in memetic internet-infused communications strategies. This contrasts with Momentum, as well as the Conservative's 2019 approach, where memes were very common. Of the other forms, only image collections, infographics and text only images are also of note. The decline in these forms by 2017 shows the evolutionary professionalization that has occurred.

Overall, we are seeing parties utilising more novel approaches over time, however there is still a clear interest in simple broadcast style communications. Technical development has occurred as shown with the rise of video and Facebook Live. However, these new capacities are used to improve previous approaches to content, rather than utilise new stylistic and structural forms. There was clearly limited interest in more adventurous novel approaches. Nevertheless, around the edges of the campaigns (especially Labour in 2017) there was evolution beyond the traditional, with this reflected in trends seen more recently.

How are topics used, higher frequency and greater diversity?

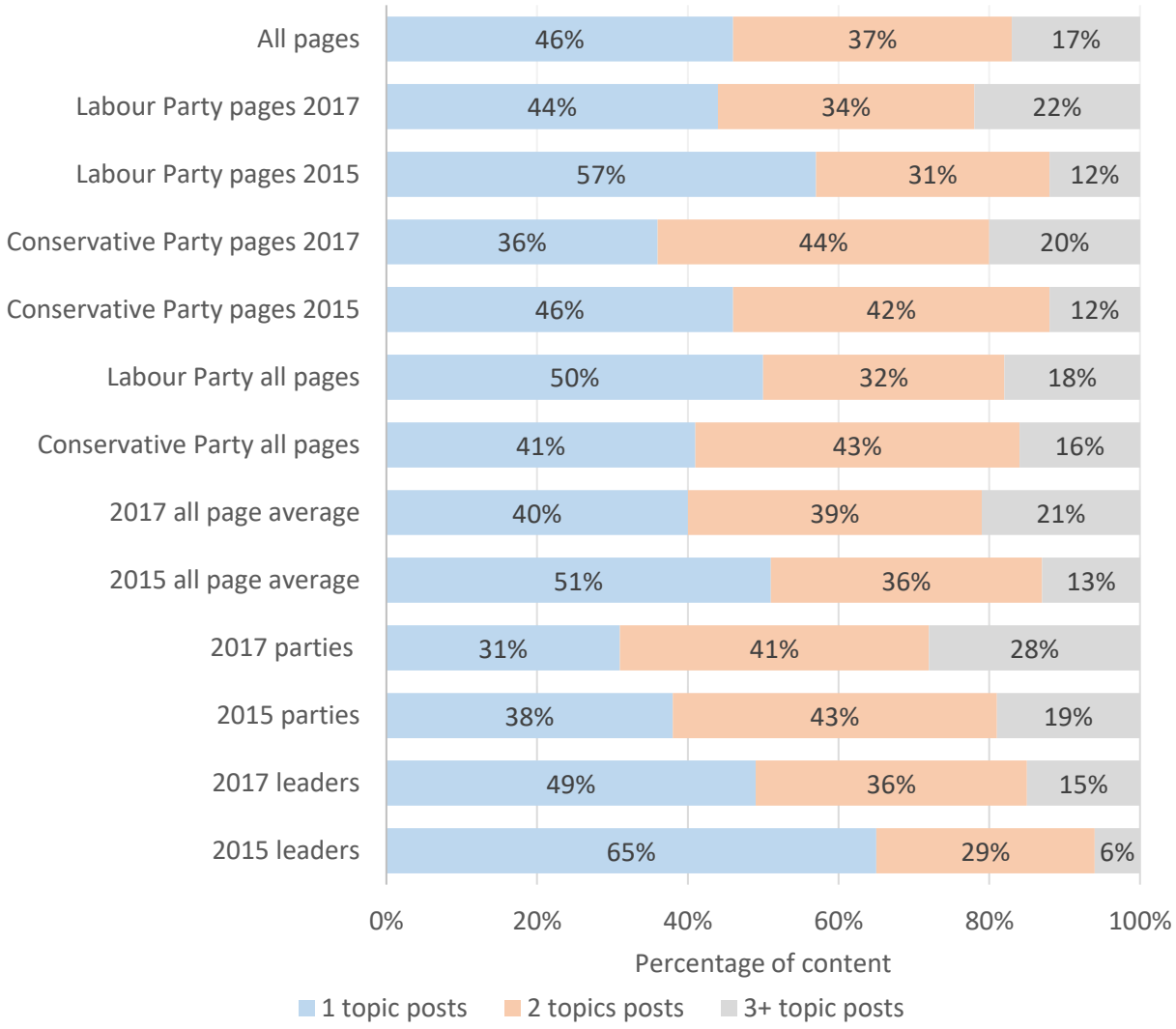
Content topics – frequency of information

Through Facebook parties can send more political information representing a shift in how parties can campaign. This greater complexity may be due to professionalization from improved use of technology and/or political change. To examine this each post's topic frequency was coded, the scheme operated a triple system permitting primary, secondary and tertiary topic modelling. The reason for this is that many issues are incorporated with one another, whilst given the changing nature of communications through the rise of video, the potential of content to send multiple messages within one entity has increased. To engage in a more concise analysis, the original 37 topic variables were merged into 12 (see Appendix 3).



Graph 32. Topic usage, total posts and average number of topics used by party (n=1,208)

Graph 32 shows the average frequency of topic usage; parties are now consistently using more than one topic in each post. In 2015 the all page average saw 51% of posts using only one topic, with this reduced to 40% by 2017. This decline was due to minor growth in the use of two topics (+3pp) and major growth in three topic posts (+9pp). Coding schemes that have examined Facebook posts for only one topic (e.g. Bene, 2017; Larsson, 2014) fail in accurately representing campaigning on Facebook. Leader pages are used to cover a smaller number of topics while party pages are utilised to offer a greater diversity of information. 2015 leaders' pages averaged 1.4 topics per post against party pages at 1.81, this trend was mirrored in 2017 with leaders' posts containing 1.7 topics against 2.01 for party pages.



Graph 33. Percentage topic by analytical grouping (n=1,208)

Examining whether this increase in information is due to technological development, Table 26 shows the structural content forms behind this shift. Although there has been a real term drop in the average number of topics used in video content across elections, video does feature more topic information than photo or link content (although not status posts[41]). Video is a marked change as it has swept away all other content forms, it is now so widespread that it is being used to repurpose the level of complexity previously seen across other content forms. This sees videos being used to push single messages like with posters, as well as complex multi-dimensional videos with multiple messages. Video is thus used in an

[41] It is important to note that only nine posts were status updates in 2017.

evolutionary not a revolutionary way, due to the parties' appreciating their audience's capacities for campaign learning and the benefits of simple content.

Table 26. Average number of topics per post by form (n=1,208)

	2015	2017
Link	1.6	1.7
Photo	1.6	1.6
Status	1.5	2.1
Video	2.0	1.9
Average	**1.7**	**1.8**

Given structural content forms are only partly behind increased topic frequency, political circumstances and events are likely at play. This is clarified because we have seen an increase of topics used in Labour and Conservative leaflets. Using Milazzo et al.'s coded dataset of 2,411, 2015 and 2017 election leaflets, the Conservative Party saw a +7pp growth in topic use, with Labour seeing +5pp (Milazzo et al., 2017). This increase of message complexity mirrors the fundamental political change that has occurred within both the parties between the elections, as well as within wider politics. Alongside a de-alignment of the two party's politics, the Conservatives by 2017 were a party who had been in power for three years on their own, rather than in a coalition. The circumstances of standing against an existing government record likely played a major hand in how the campaign evolved. Unfortunately, this thesis cannot dissect ideological change or wider campaign circumstances from the Facebook data. As such, we must presume both technological as well as political factors influence topic complexity.

Content topics - diversity of information

Given political changes seen between the elections, as well as the unrestricted capacity of Facebook for multiple messaging, the parties may see value in utilising a wider diversity of political topics. However, parties realise that an election is a conjunction between getting out the core vote and converting undecideds. Thus, it is expected that parties will utilise a mixed structure; via a diversity of topics alongside an interest in repeating policy areas of public concern,

especially *owned* issues such as the NHS for Labour, or defence for the Conservatives (Green & Hobolt, 2008).

Table 27. Popularity of content forms by use; accumulated data across triple topic coding system (n=2,147)

		2015 General Election	2017 General Election	Change	Average	Average accumulated total
Core	Leadership	18%	19%	1%	18%	**18%**
	Economy	30%	16%	-14%	23%	**41%**
	EU	0%	15%	15%	8%	**49%**
	Party action	18%	14%	-4%	16%	**65%**
	Health and social care	17%	12%	-5%	15%	**80%**
	Protection	3%	9%	6%	6%	**86%**
Subsidiary	Education	2%	5%	3%	4%	**89%**
	Social identity	2%	3%	1%	2%	**92%**
	Young people	3%	3%	-1%	3%	**95%**
	Apolitical	4%	2%	-2%	3%	**98%**
	Immigration	1%	2%	0%	2%	**99%**
	Environment and energy	1%	0%	0%	1%	**100%**
	Government practice	0%	0%	0%	0%	**100%**
	n	1,085	1,062			
	Total Change			**52pp**		

Table 27 shows that a range of topics dominates the one-month period before the elections; economy, leadership, party action, social care, EU and protection make up 86% of the content seen across both election years. These core topics are central to how parties are using Facebook to campaign, showing a general interest from the parties in addressing the biggest issues of public concern. This data shows a traditional style campaign from the parties, with the platform used to address key core issues in a manner akin to leaflets or PEBs. However, some elements of novelty are seen; there is a subset of more diverse content aimed at virtual members, for example party action, social identity and apolitical content.

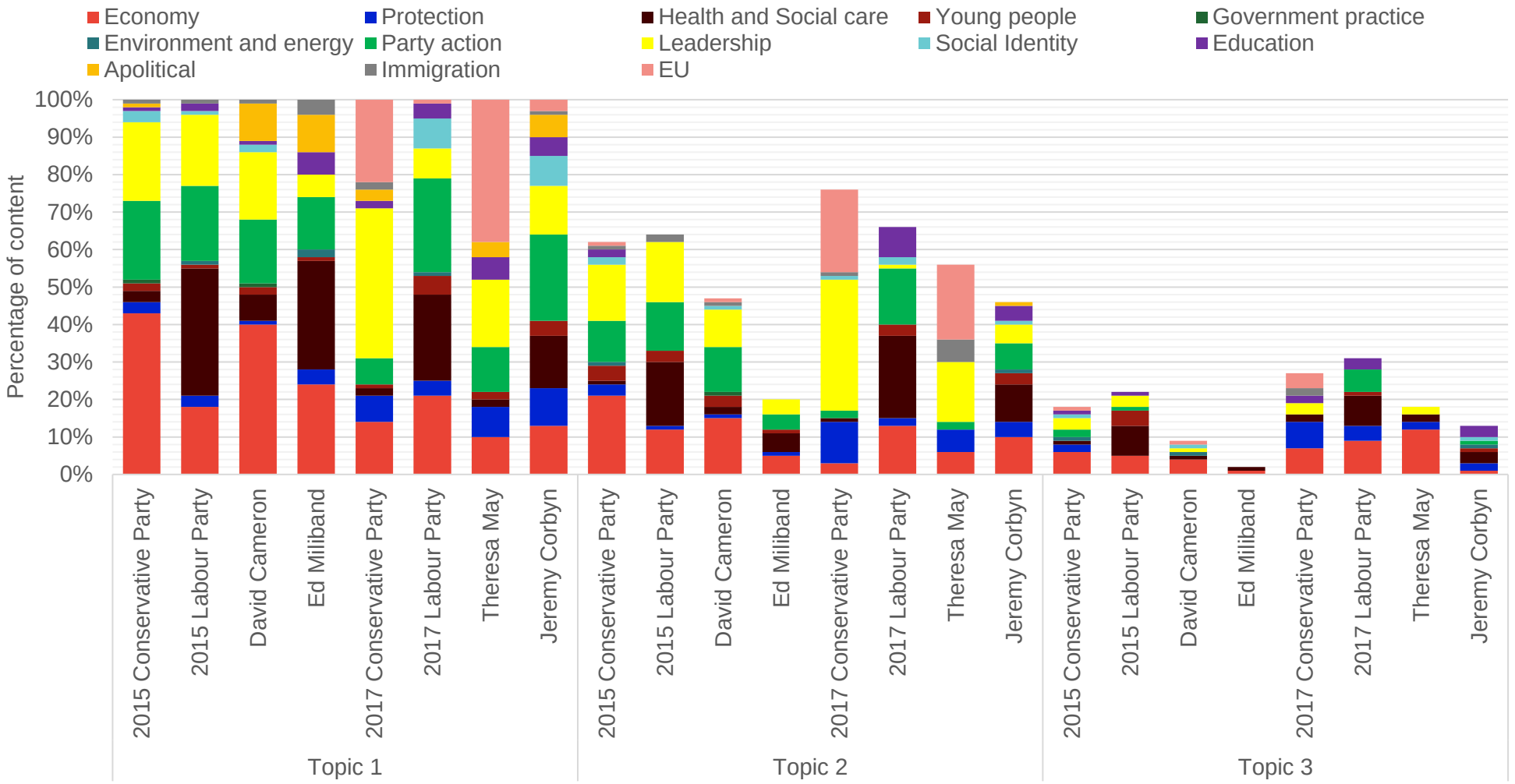
Table 27 shows changing trends for content topic between each election. There has been a 52pp churn in topic choice from 2015 to 2017 showing that the parties have markedly changed their approach between elections. Many of the

topics in decline are previously core topics used during the 2015 General Election; the economy, party action and social care. The data shows that parties' topic approaches are diversifying. In 2015 the four biggest topics made up 83% of content sent (economy, leadership, party action and social care), however by 2017 six topics made up 85.5% (leadership, economy, EU, party action, social care and protection).

Image 5. 2017 Conservative example of primary topic leadership content[42]

Examining the parties, Graph 34 shows the Conservatives changed topics across elections more than Labour, while Labour diversified their content more expanding on the number of different topics pushed. The Conservatives saw a total 96pp change in approach from 2015-17, against Labour's 45pp change. The Labour 2017 campaign saw growth in areas including education (+5pp), party action (+5pp), protection (+4pp), social identity (+6pp) and young people (+2pp). In contrast, the Conservatives used the EU (+28pp), leadership (+9pp), protection (+8pp) and immigration (+2pp) more in 2017. Brexit clearly played a central role in Conservative content changes. In contrast, Labour focused on other areas of public concern deliberately ignoring Brexit, only 1% of 2017 Labour Party content and 2% of Corbyn content mentioned it.

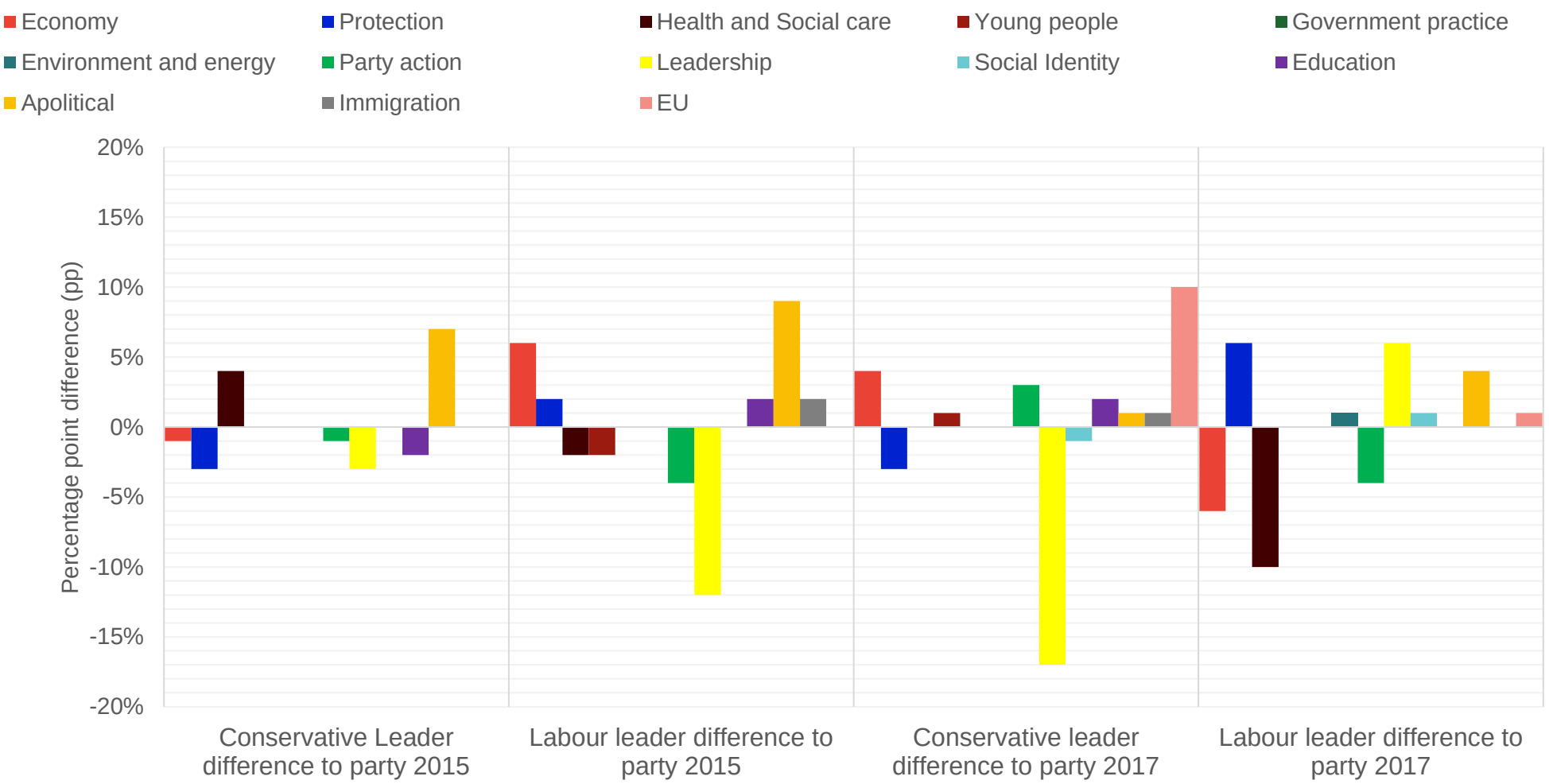
[42] https://www.facebook.com/conservatives/posts/10155014451714279 accessed 25/08/2019



Graph 34. Topics sent by pages across triple coding system (n=2,147)

Examining page types, approach shows the parties' appreciation of each page's differing audience. Graph 35 shows 2015 party leader content was a total 31pp different to party pages, however by 2017 this had risen to 41pp. Party pages' generally focus on a broader array of information for the public, especially voting information and leadership. Conversely, leader pages have a role focussed on a few core areas especially the apolitical.

Image 6. 2015 Ed Miliband use of NHS post

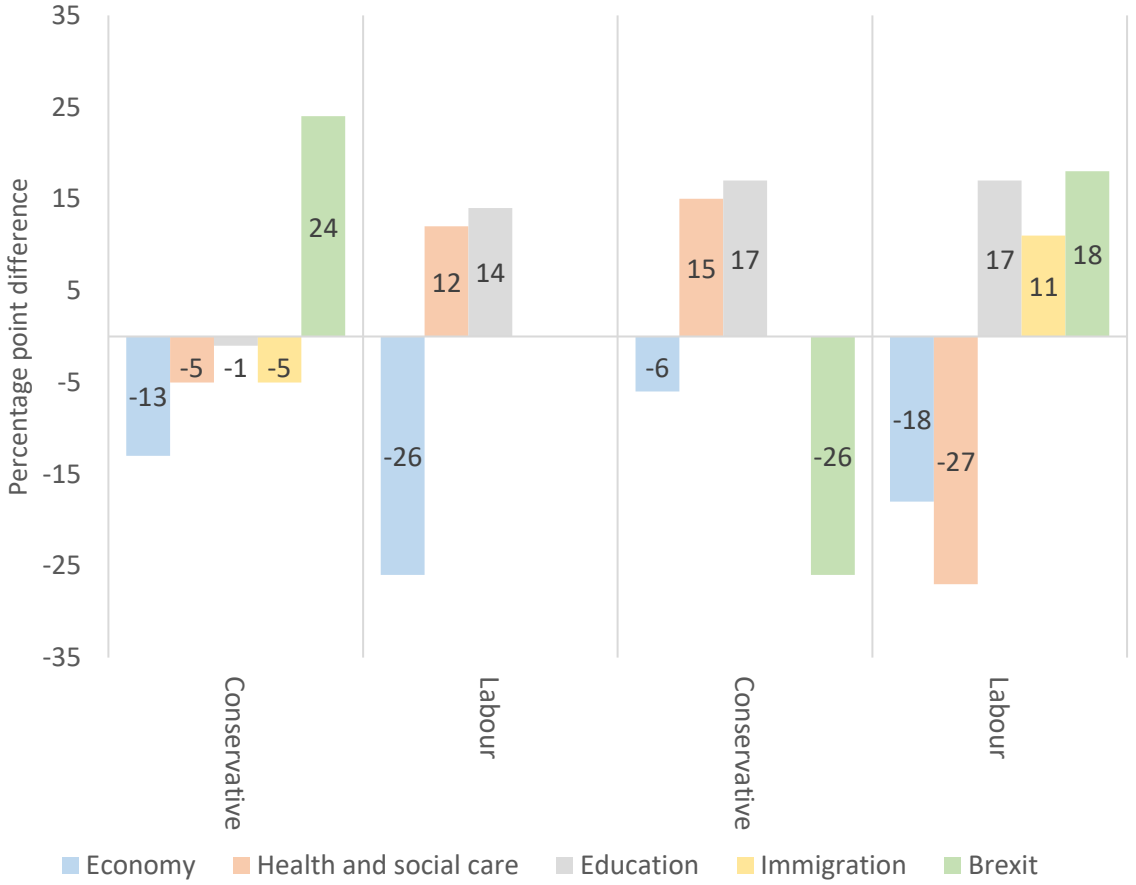


Graph 35. Percentage point difference of leader content to party page content (n=1,208)

We are seeing the parties engage in more diverse topics, but is this volatility due to Facebook's organic capacities or wider political factors? Examining 2017 campaign content from Labour and Conservative party pages across; Milazzo et al.'s coded dataset of 772 election leaflets (2017), Anstead et al.'s coding of 412 targeted ads (2018) and 425 organic posts. We can appreciate whether Facebook is unique in topic approach. Only strictly comparable codes across all three data sources were used, with analysis proportioning incidence to 100%.

Table 28. 2017 percentage point difference of organic post topic content to other structural types (n=1,609, n of Facebook posts = 425, n of targeted ads = 412, n of leaflets = 772)

	Conservative	**Labour**	**Conservative**	**Labour**
	PP difference paid-for adverts to organic posts	PP difference paid-for adverts to organic posts	PP difference leaflets to organic posts	PP difference leaflets to organic posts
Sum	**48pp**	**52pp**	**64pp**	**90pp**



Graph 36. 2017 percentage point difference of organic post topic content to other structural types (n=1,609)

There are noticeable differences in topic choice between paid-for advertisements, organic posts and leaflets. Examining targeted adverts against organic posts, Conservative Facebook advert content was 48pp different to organic content, while for Labour this was 52pp. For the Conservatives Brexit was featured much more heavily in paid-for content than organic content (+24pp difference), with ads featuring the economy far less (-13pp). For Labour major differences were seen in adverts featuring far less economic content (-25pp), but far more health and social care (+12pp) and education content (+14pp). In terms of topic choice Facebook is a very capable middle ground tool. Facebook adverts feature higher specificity focusing on a narrower band of information, in contrast leaflets are more diverse and try to cover more areas of public concern. This suggests that parties view organic Facebook as a middle-form traditional style mass communication tool, but one with unique capacities. The platform can speak to the masses (as with leaflets) about core issues, reach key voters with more specific key information (as with targeted adverts) but also engage with virtual members.

Overall, across topic frequency and diversity we have seen a large degree of volatility across elections, parties and page types. Facebook is offering parties an avenue for greater numbers and a wider band of topics especially through video. However, the shift may reflect the electoral context rather than how Facebook pages are being operationalised, with both factors likely explanations. Thus, political as well as technological factors are behind the shift in approach, with different pages used in a nuanced manner to deliver more topics. Alongside the radical impact of video, we have seen topics chosen shift, with the decline of areas of competence visible. Areas such as the economy have been replaced by more ideological areas such as Brexit. Party political differences are also visible with Labour being more adventurous in approach, but both parties still utilise levels of topic frequency and diversity seen in other tools. Facebook offers more capacities, but these are not fully utilised, because Facebook is used by both parties as a mass-broadcast generalist tool. As such, the platform is used in an evolutionary way to improve topic messaging rather than re-writing the rulebook.

Is all content sent complex?

As seen with the increase in frequency and diversity of topics, the use of high detail within an interactive social medium is a novel avenue for campaigning. However, complex policy detail is seen less commonly than political information of a less complex nature. Not all the information sent on the platform was political, although 90% of posts featured this broader category of political information, some posts centred on apolitical areas such as personal news. 2015 and 2017 saw similar levels of political information, with party and leader pages engaging in the form at comparable rates. Differences are apparent in the sentiment of the political information sent, with Labour generally more positive than the Conservatives, sentiment is examined fully in the section on framing.

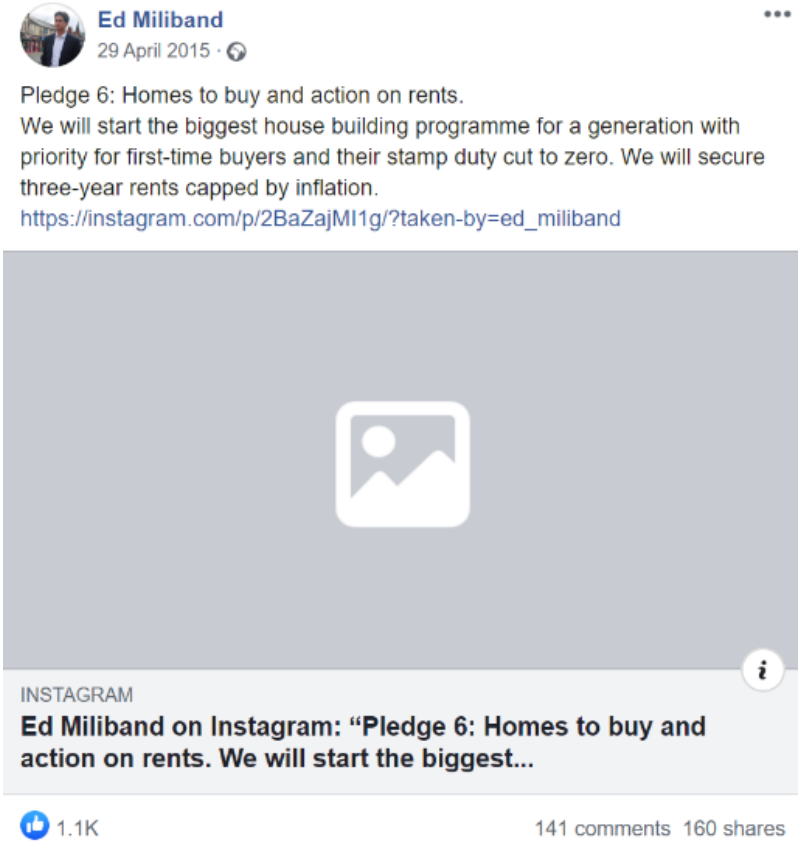
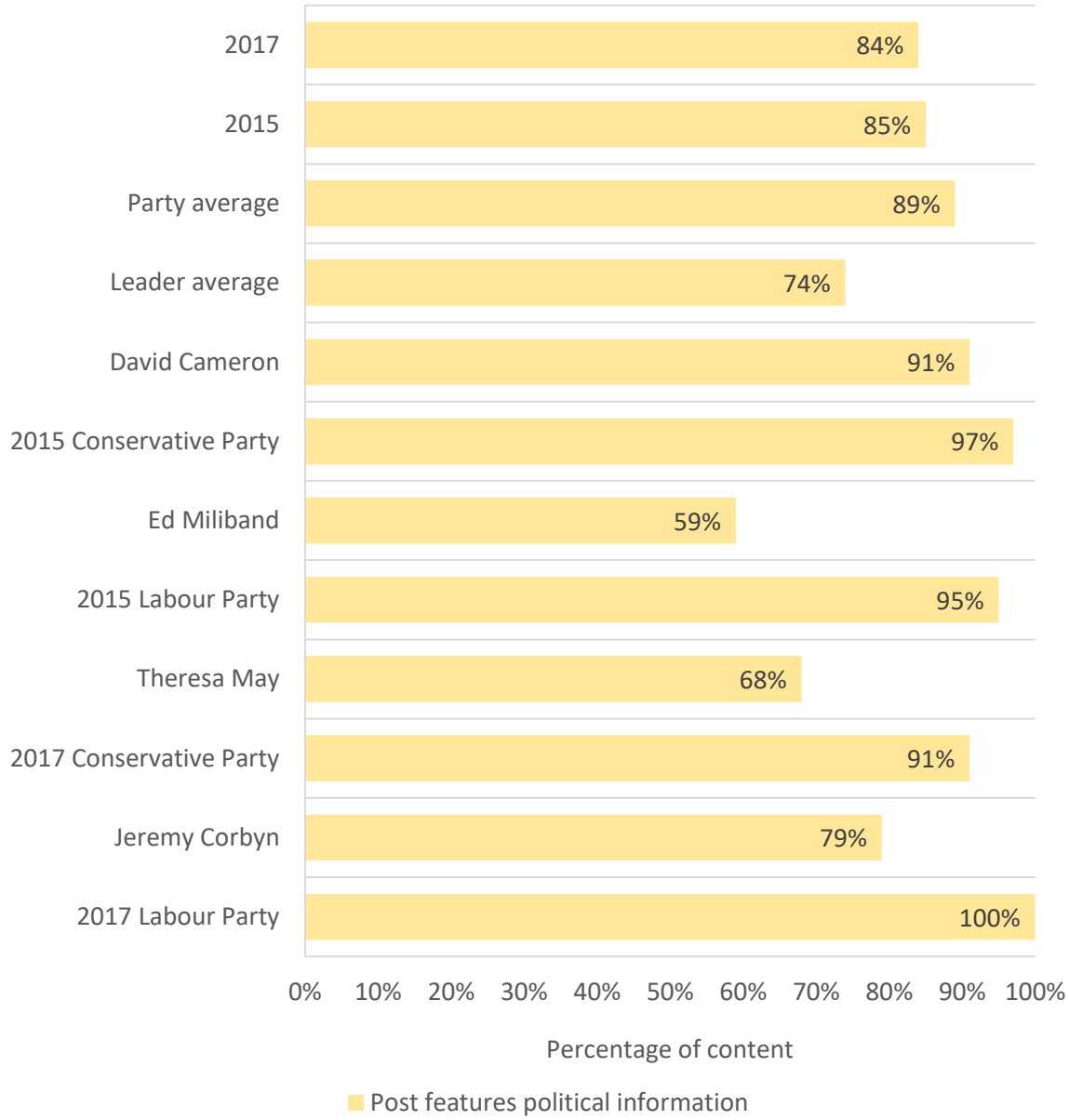


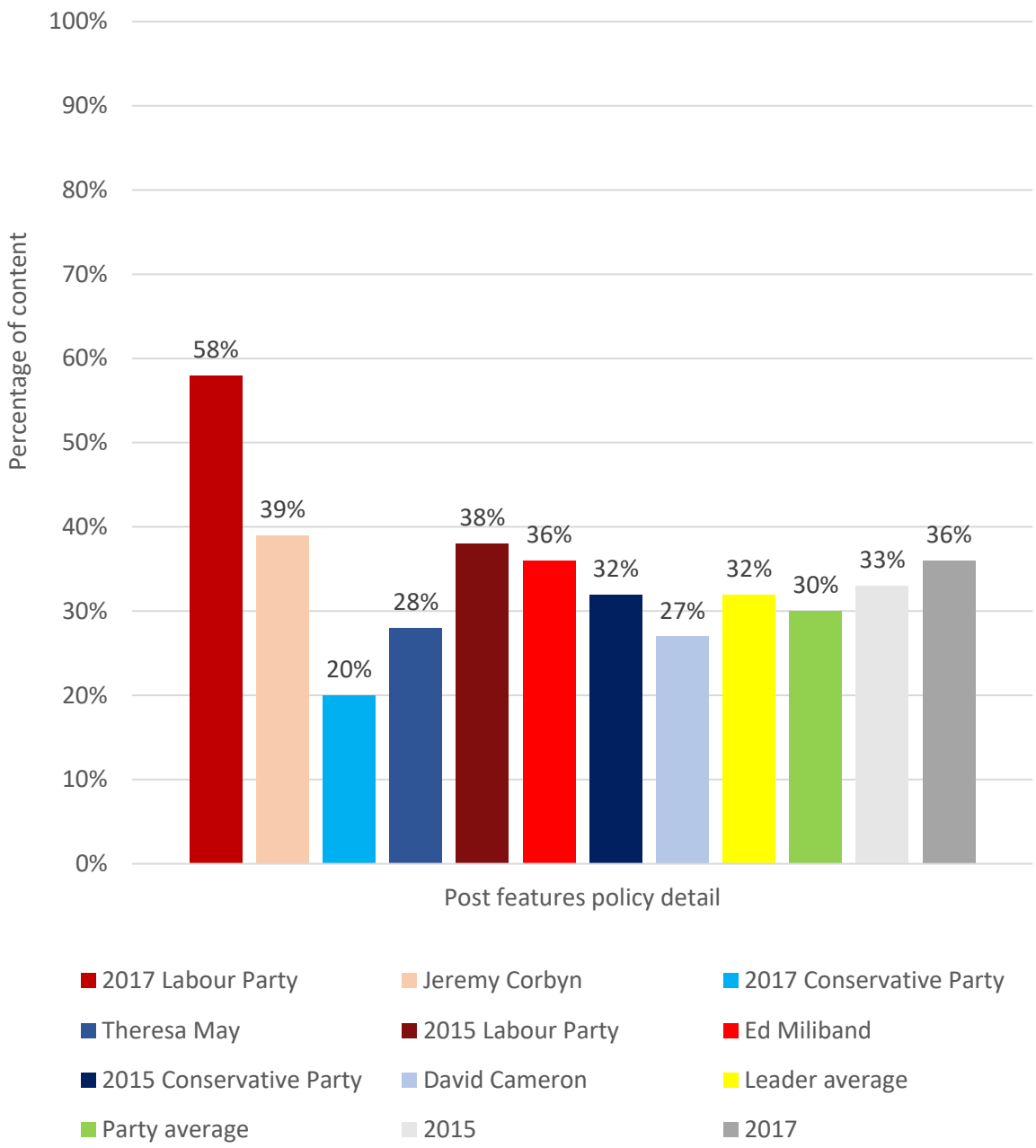
Image 7. 2015 Ed Miliband example of policy detail[43]

[43] https://www.facebook.com/edmiliband/posts/953626531322975 accessed 27/6/2020



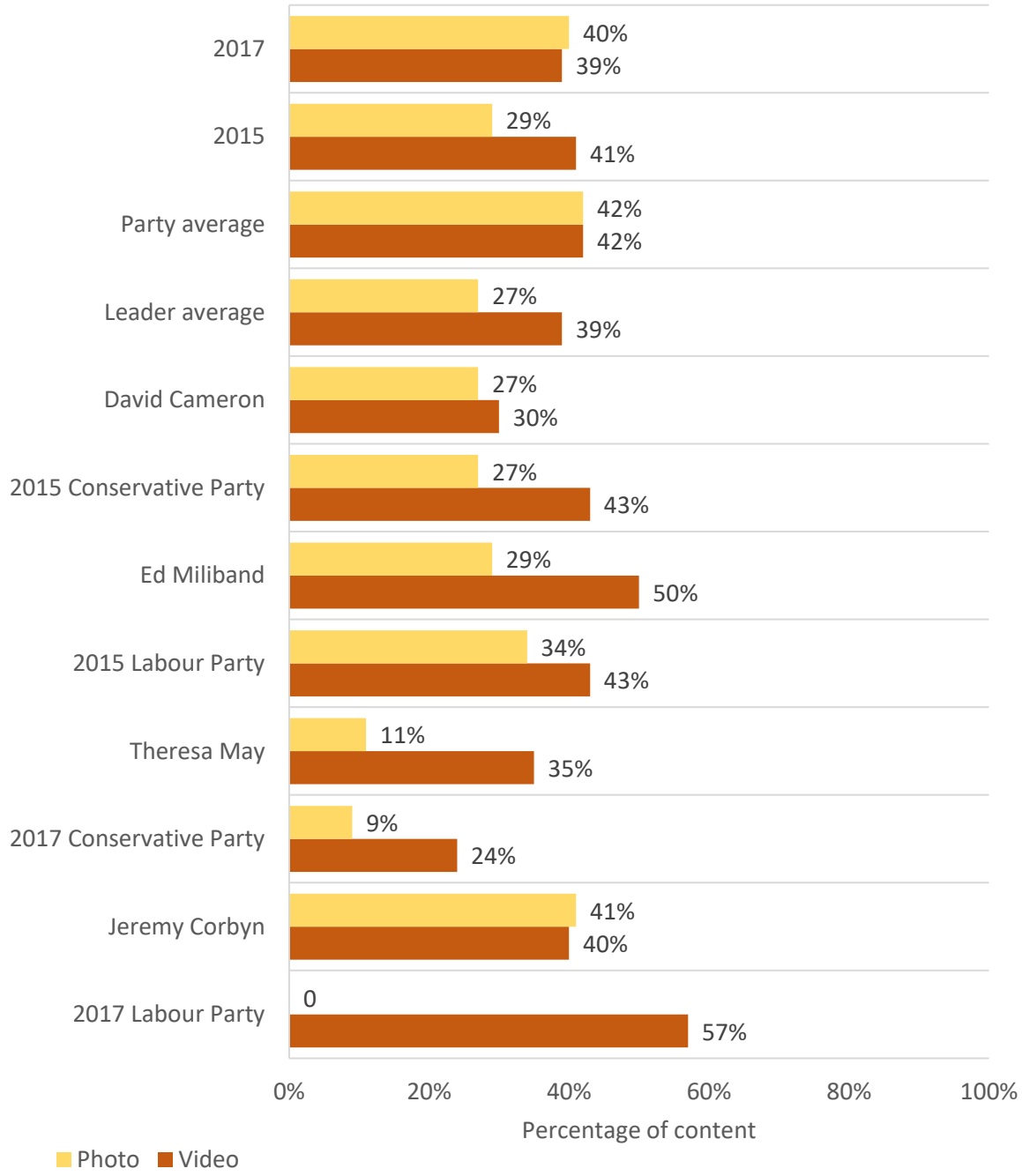
Graph 37. Political information (n=1,208)

38% of posts featured policy detail, with use rates different across party and page type. Policy is clearly central to how parties are using Facebook to campaign, increasing from 2015 to 2017. The differences between leader and party pages show that for Labour (but not the Conservatives), the party page is used more to increase campaign learning, while the leader focusses on other areas such as personality. Overall, Labour has become more detailed and the Conservatives less, only 20% of 2017 Conservative Party content featured any policy detail, a sharp contrast to Labour at 58%. The very high level of policy detail seen speaks to Labour's revitalised platform and the novel way it was sold to the public.



Graph 38. Use of policy detail (n=1,208)

Examining policy detail across structural content form it is through video that we have seen parties deliver this more complex information. 40% of video content included policy detail against 25% for photo.



Graph 39. Policy detail by photo or video form (n=1,025)

Policy detail is very common showing the campaign learning potential of the platform, however not all content sent is complex with high levels of policy detail. Overall, Facebook allows for a large amount of political content informality mixed with complexity that we do not see in other traditional campaign materials. The platform is being used in a nuanced manner, with the parties trying to speak both to the general public and virtual members. Different levels of content complexity are used in order to influence a diverse audience via the content. The parties are

appreciating that the generalist audience of Facebook offers wide campaign learning possibilities. Unique campaign capacities are observable in the high levels of policy detail seen. Through subsequent Facebook engagement, high detail complex content offers parties a powerful avenue for complex socially located campaign learning. Information sent could be even more complex, but use follows the logic of approach seen within a broadcast campaign. Thus, this measured use of complex information shows parties are using a deliberately limited evolutionary approach, because of audience realities and capacities for consuming information.

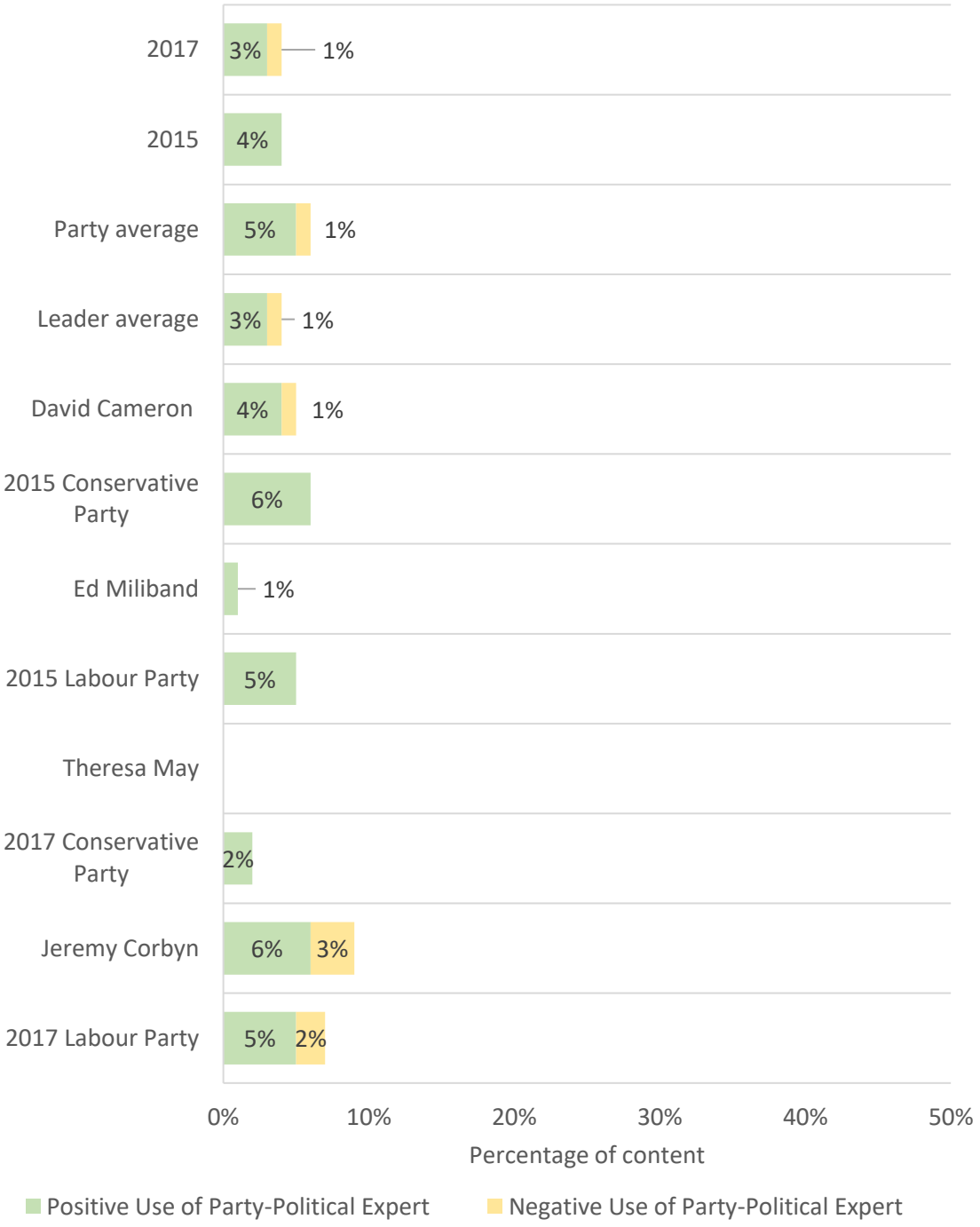
Are experts, celebrities and endorsements used?

One common strategy to enhance information's persuasive power is to either use the legitimising power of expertise or the social power of celebrity. Celebrities are found to have a positive influence on younger people's political engagement (Loader et al., 2015; Austin et al., 2008), but there is a lack of investigation into the general use of celebrities within campaigns. Equally under examined is how parties use party and non-political experts on social media, although "high source credibility is known to increase message persuasiveness" (Housholder & LaMarre, 2014, p.368). Facebook offers unique capacities for the use of celebrities and experts. With the rise of smartphones, greater access to these groups has been opened. Parties can not only use celebrities and experts in traditional style high quality video content, but also in a more organic grassroots way. Celebrities and experts personal videos can be self-recorded and sent in, allowing parties to benefit from more opinion leader networks.

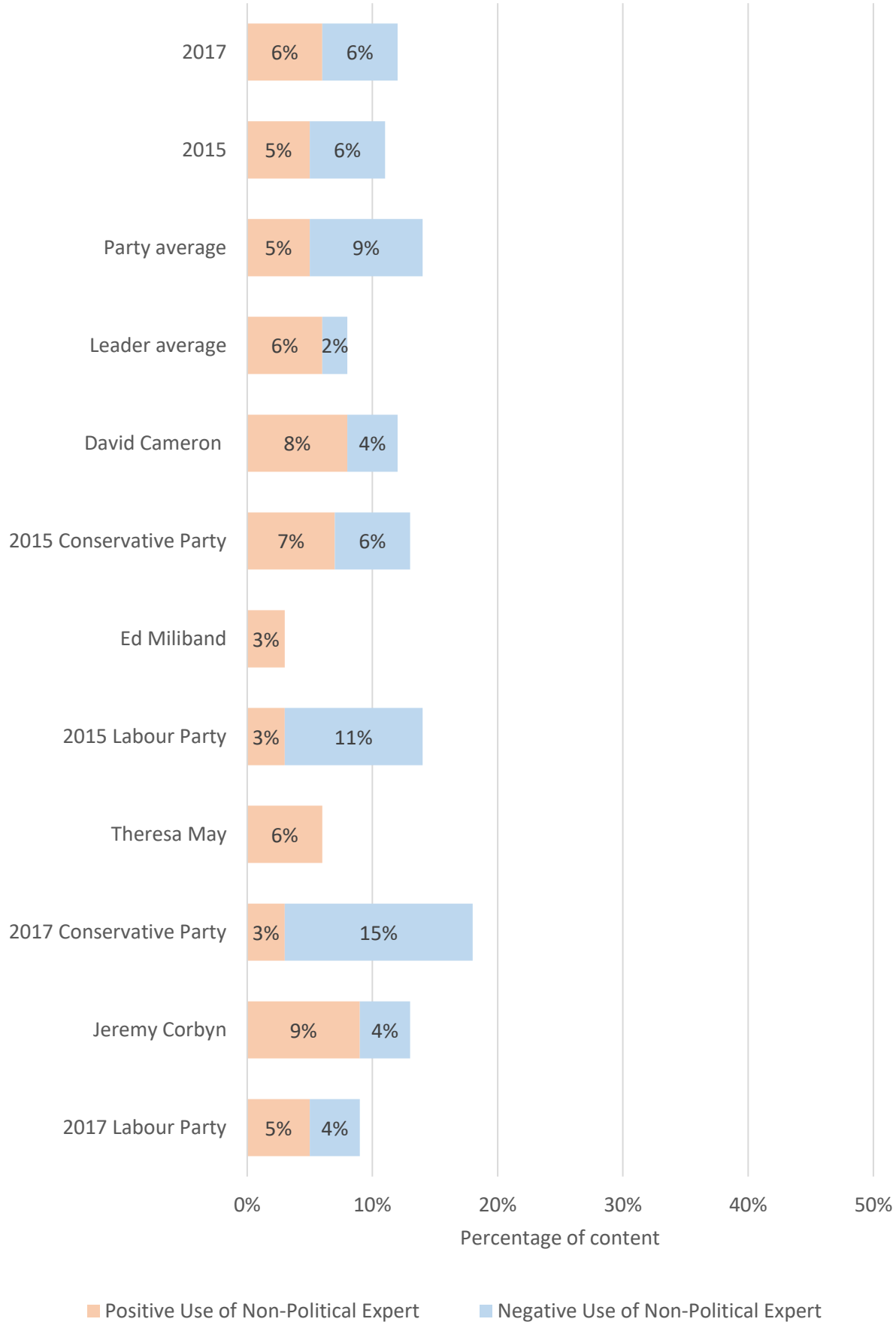
Before social media, celebrities were largely confined to rallies and PEBs, Facebook offers new avenues for personalised celebrity content. Similarly, across PEBs and leaflets the use of expertise was more limited, Facebook now allows for expertise to be both more interactive and visual. Facebook offers new capacities for the implementation of these groups. Experts were classified as individuals clearly chosen to deliver specific information within their field, non-political experts are unaffiliated with the party especially within the post, while party political experts include ministers and highly partisan sources that are displayed as such[44]. Graph

[44] For example, Karen Brady featured as a party-political business expert for the Conservatives.

40 shows the use of expertise is common and has remained stable from 2015 to 2017, however the internal churn amongst the pages shows differences in strategy. Experts are more commonly a party page approach, with negative use of experts more common than positive use, especially by the Conservatives. The use of non-political experts declined across the Labour Party page, but rose across the Conservative Party page, as Labour's interest in party-political experts grew.



Graph 40. Use of party expertise (n=1,208)



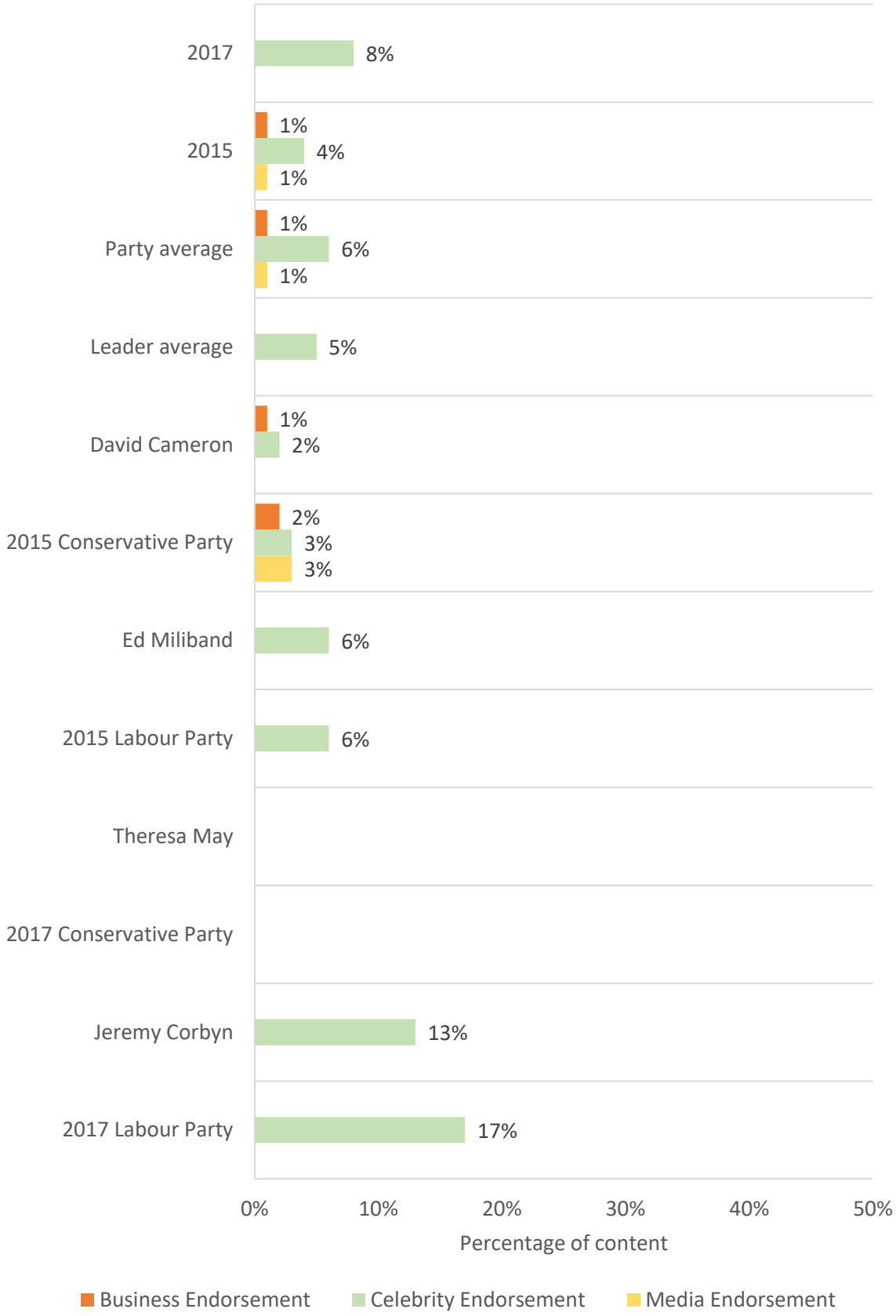
Graph 41. Use of non-political expertise (n=1,208)

Image 8. 2017 Corbyn use of non-political expert/s[45]

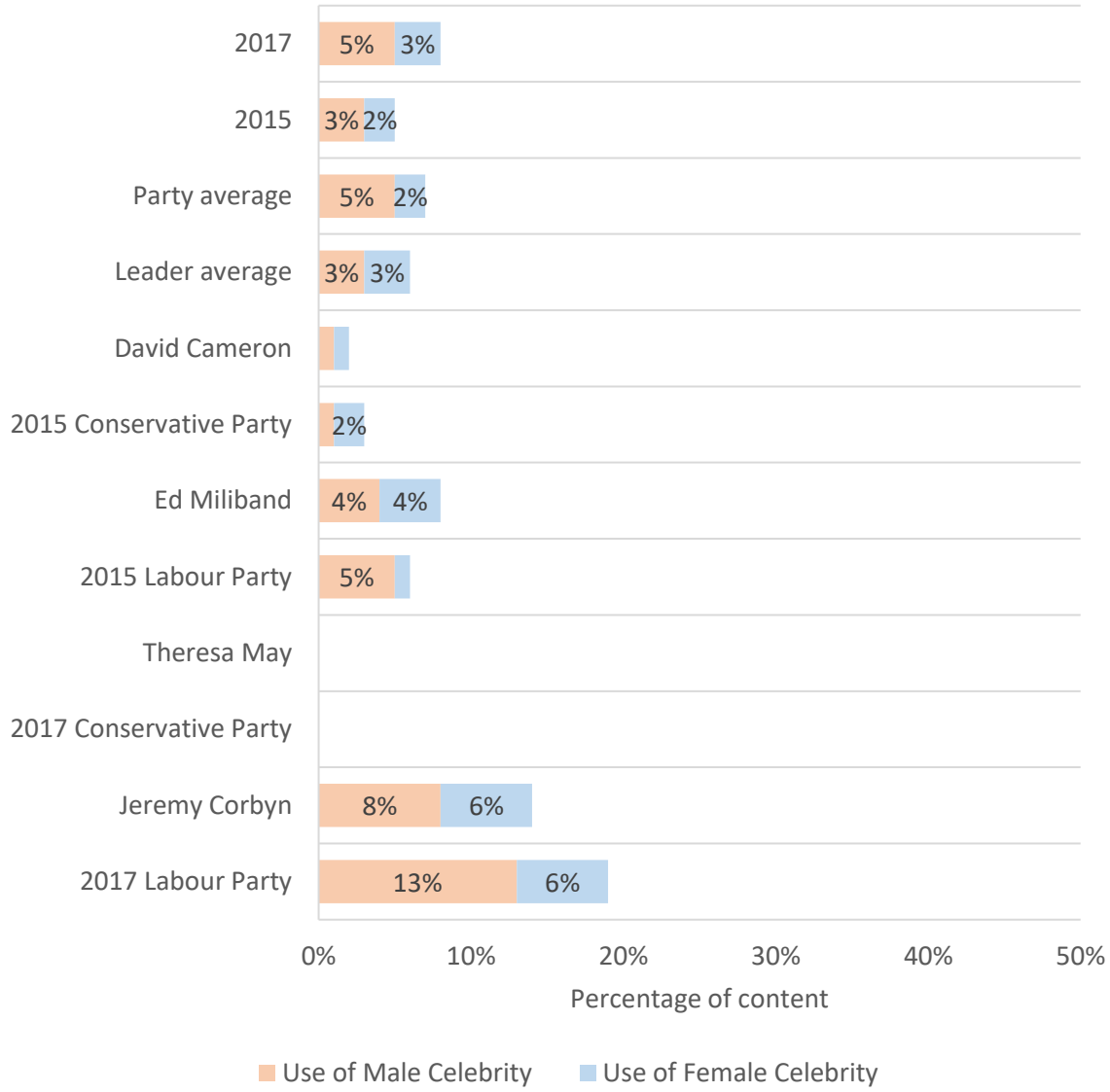
Examining celebrities and endorsements, although media and business endorsements are only used by the Conservatives, celebrity endorsements are a clear Labour strategy. 6% of Labour content sent in 2015 featured celebrity endorsements from individuals like David Tennent and Martin Freeman, this accelerated to 15% by 2017, with a more diverse left-wing cast of celebrities including Francesca Martinez and Michael Rosen. There is a clear preference within Labour to utilise celebrity over expertise, with the majority of these celebrity's male.

Image 9. 2015 Labour use of celebrity endorsement and female celebrity[46]

[45] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10155436776263872 accessed 7/4/2020
[46] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10152742055227411 accessed 11/6/2020



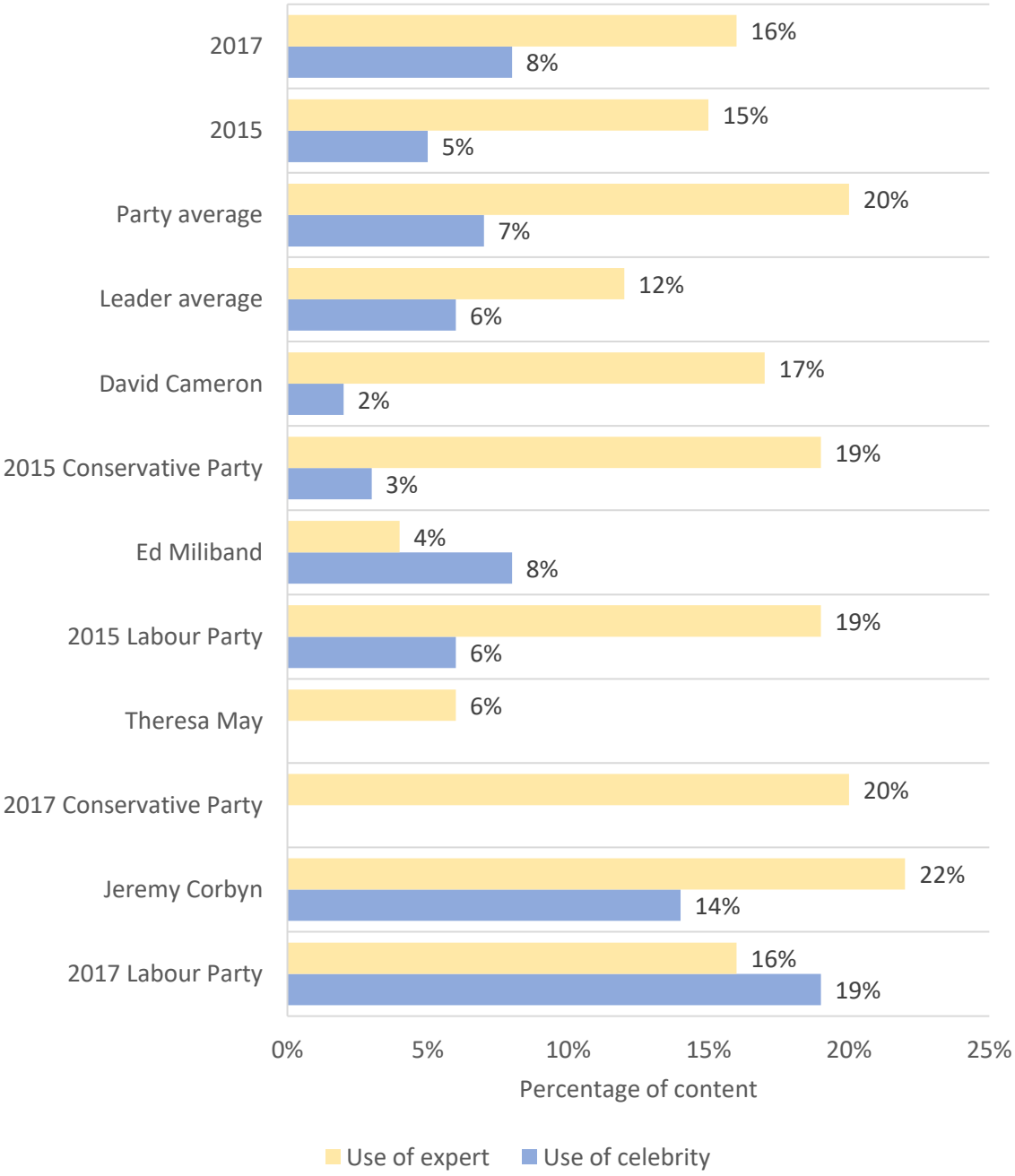
Graph 42. Use of endorsements (n =1,208)



Graph 43. Use of celebrities (n =1,208)

We see parties utilising experts and celebrities, with business endorsements less common. Facebook allows for the novel implementation of celebrities and expertise in a way that other tools have not been capable of. This is a major benefit for parties, an opportunity the parties have taken advantage of, especially those with many celebrity resources such as Labour. The use of celebrities and experts on a novel platform merges two key aspects together, opinion leadership and sociological characteristics. This is a novel power for a campaign tool as opinion leaders shared by Facebook users allows parties to influence certain groups and target messages more effectively, for example, via the 2017 Labour Grime4Corbyn campaign. The development of new technologies, especially smartphones, has allowed for parties to integrate celebrities or experts much more readily within their campaigns. There

are new abilities through celebrities creating quick content for wider distribution through their phones. This new resource has allowed parties to utilise opinion leadership in a much more organic way, with use of celebrities less managed and more visceral than the past. This new capacity offers parties a gateway to greater viral reach as well as the sociological benefits of opinion leadership.



Graph 44. Use of celebrities or expertise (n=1,208)[47]

[47] Worked out from positive use and negative use of non-political and political experts, alongside male and female use of celebrities.

How is news and other media used?

Media outlets offer parties new capacities to legitimise political positions through (nominally) independent sources. Studies have found that “candidates view their Facebook pages as the headwaters of mass media and intermediation” (Lin, 2014), thus one would expect that parties will try to integrate the news with their political information to enhance it. Utilised as a sword and shield, re-using news content can highlight strong political performances, legitimise policy platforms or exploit poor opposition performances.

Image 10. 2017 Conservative negative use of mainstream media[48]

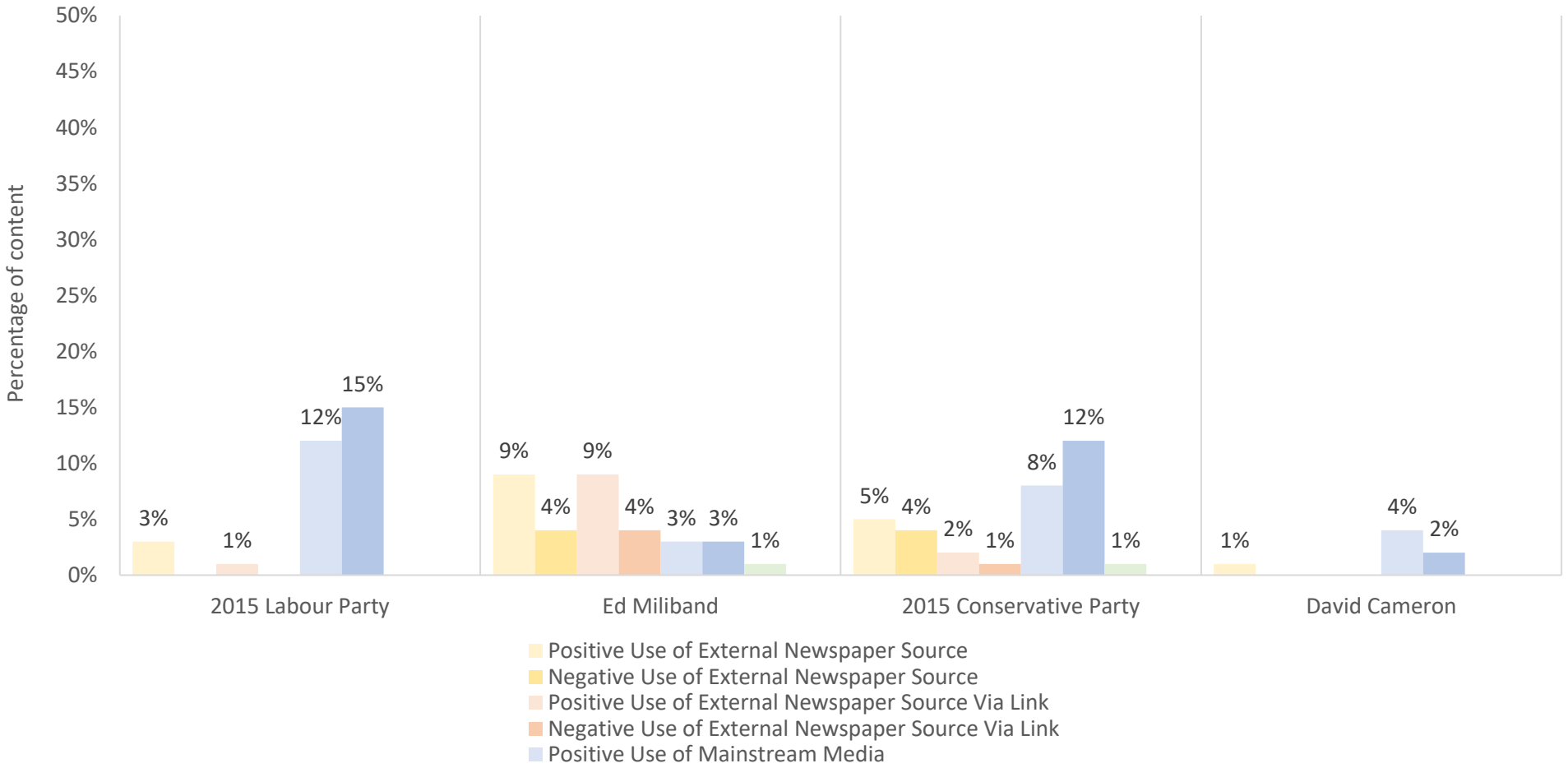
Graphs 45 & 46 show that news usage is transitioning towards content that can be edited, rather than forms that maintain its original narrative. Thus, we see mainstream media use via video very popular, while newspapers front pages are in decline. 2017 use of mainstream media was seen most heavily in Corbyn and the Conservative Party page’s approaches. In contrast, highlighting a more traditional information approach, the Labour Party page saw mainstream media use decline markedly from 2015 to 2017. This dualism is interesting as Labour is choosing the simplicity of infographics for its party page, while Corbyn’s page is used to push mainstream news content. This two-pronged attack shows how the party was using

[48] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10155038725964279 accessed 25/6/2020

the pages to talk differently about issues. Media content is used as both a sword and a shield, however over time use became much more negative. Parties are becoming more partial to select negative stories and edit news in a negative way. Content that is designed to be fair and balanced is reframed by parties in a partisan way. In 2017, 21% of all the content sent by the Conservative Party page was negative mainstream media content.

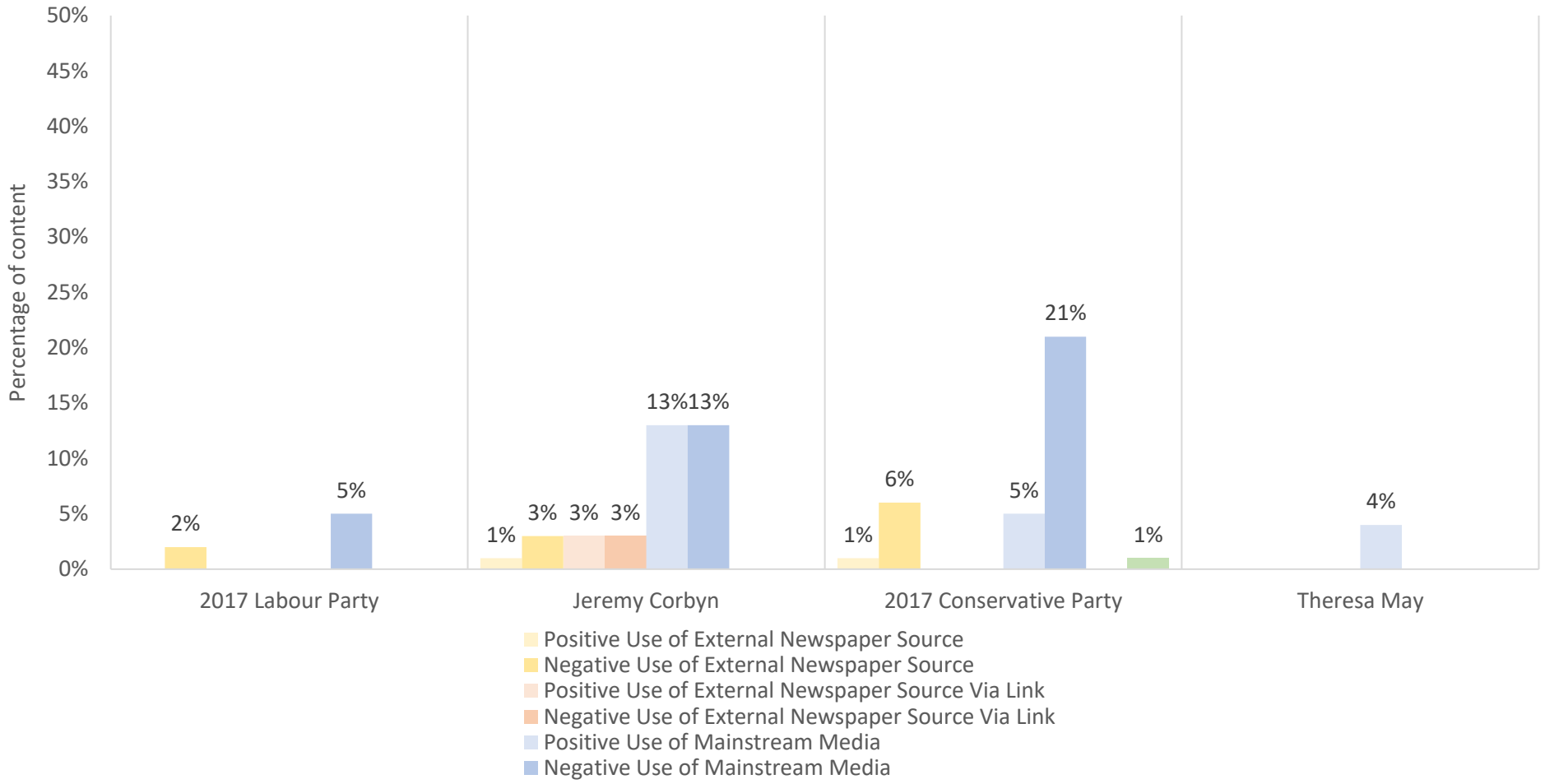
The use of media in this way is novel and important. Unlike the past parties can now use the legitimacy and qualities of mainstream media content within their video approaches; reposting, rehashing or altering mainstream content into their own forms. No prior campaign material offered such an easy gateway to the re-use of news media content. Inherently this ability has created problems given Facebook's lax policy on media misuse[49] (CIPAP, 2020). In 2019 the Conservative party rehashed a Keir Starmer BBC interview altering the original piece's narrative, the BBC made an official complaint[50]. It is however important to note that the practice is common across all parties. In contrast to mainstream news, alternative media sources such as YouTube declined from 1% of all content to zero. This novel source of information is not common but will likely increase in future given younger peoples news media habits. Finally, in examining news links both parties have reduced use, with parties less interested in sending those viewing Facebook content off the platform. The decline of links is an important trend that suggests that parties are not interested in offline/online website/social media hybridity (Chadwick, 2013). Instead, although parties appreciate using others' news content and do so in a hybrid manner, this is not a reciprocal architectural hybridity, as parties are interested in gathering the benefits solely for themselves.

[49] https://t.co/J5WvGNkvUd?amp=1 accessed 1/04/2020
[50] https://tristanhotham.com/2019/12/12/edit-the-win-how-parties-reusing-broadcaster-content-fans-the-flames-of-polarisation/ accessed 1/04/2020



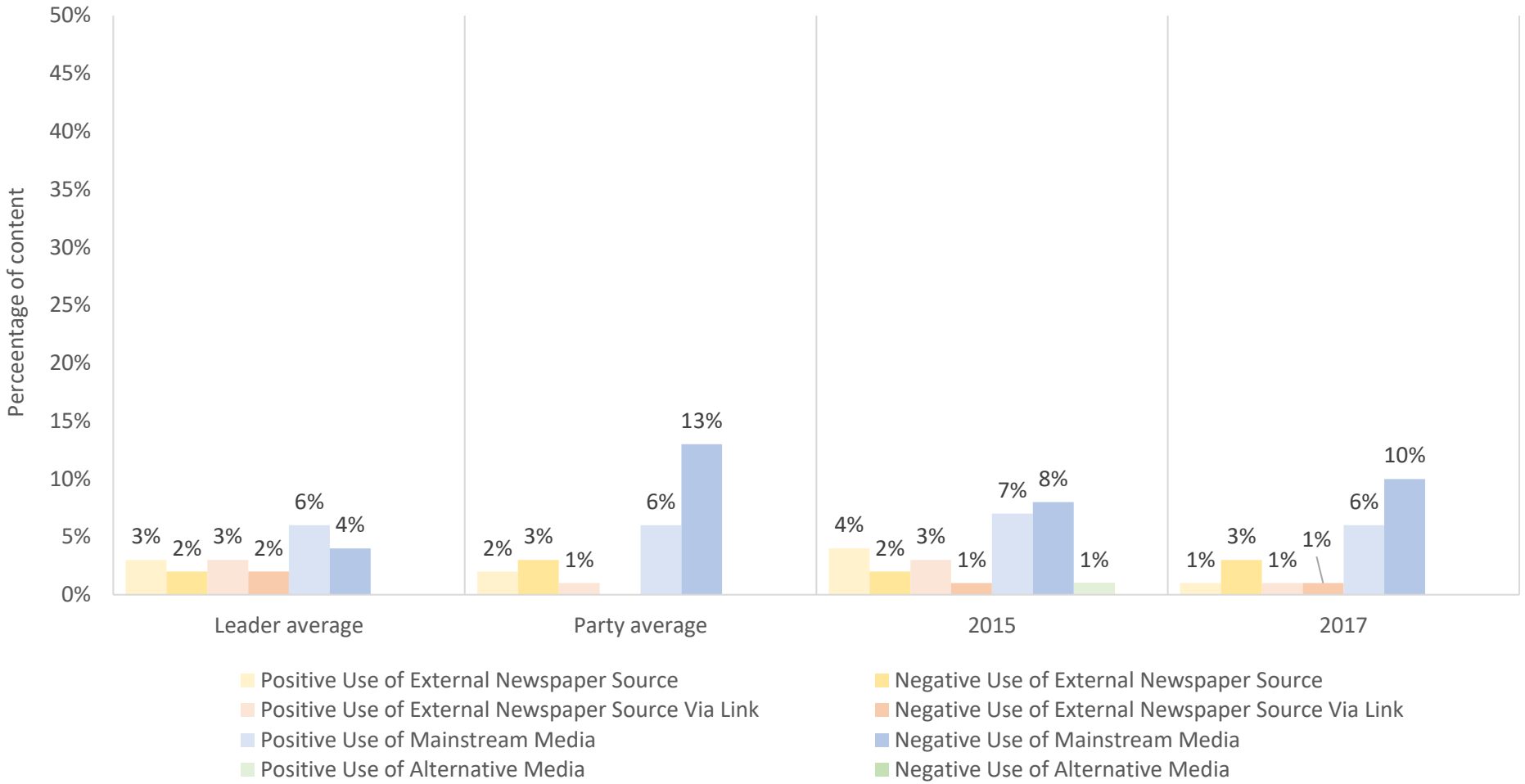
Graph 45. Use of media sources 2015 (n=641)[51]

[51] *Positive use of Magazine* and *Negative use of Magazine* only provided minimal positive results so are in Appendix 9



Graph 46. Use of media sources 2017 (n=567)[52]

[52] *Positive use of Magazine* and *Negative use of Magazine* only provided minimal positive results so are in Appendix 9



Graph 47. Use of media sources by grouping (n=1,208)

Parties are also using other external media content that they repurpose into posters, images and especially videos. From using clips of interviews or talk show segments, the parties are consistently re-issuing or editing content to both legitimise themselves and attack the opposition. As Graphs 45-47 show, an average of 12% of all content sent in 2015 and 2017 used external content in altered ways, with Corbyn's 2017 use very similar to Labour in 2015. A large amount of content is also re-shared content from other Facebook pages, this trend has increased from 3% in 2015 to 8% in 2017. The parties are working hard to promote their own Facebook networks especially their leaders and certain politicians

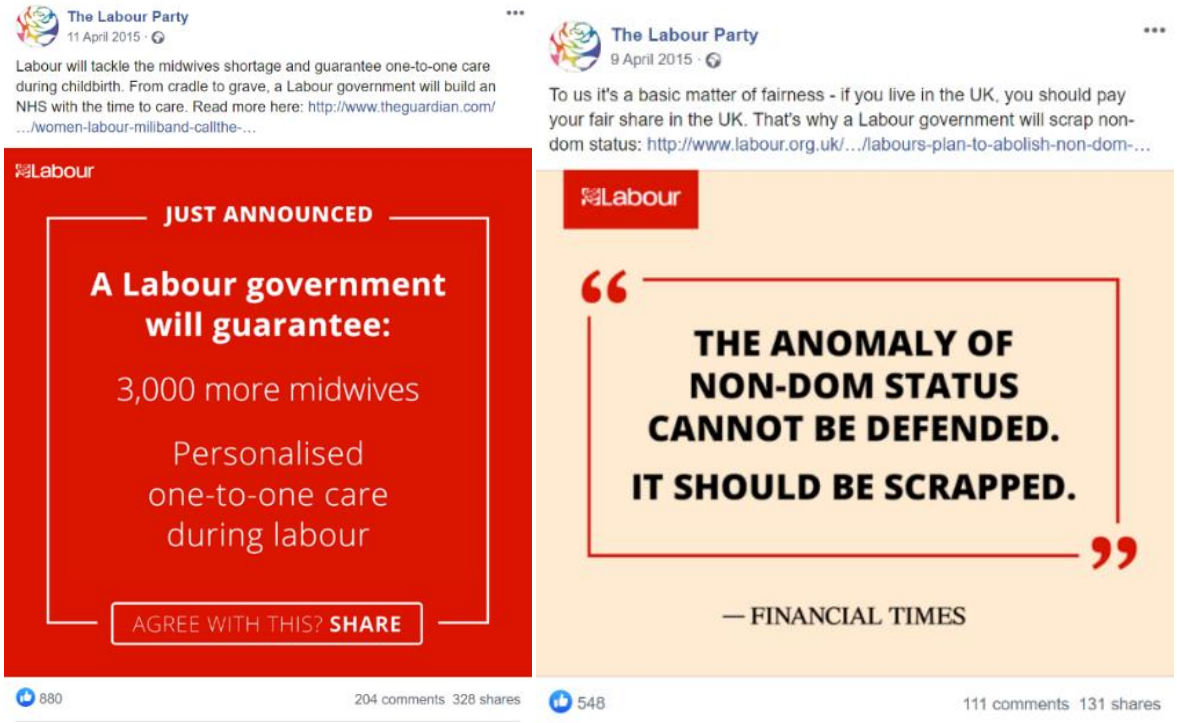
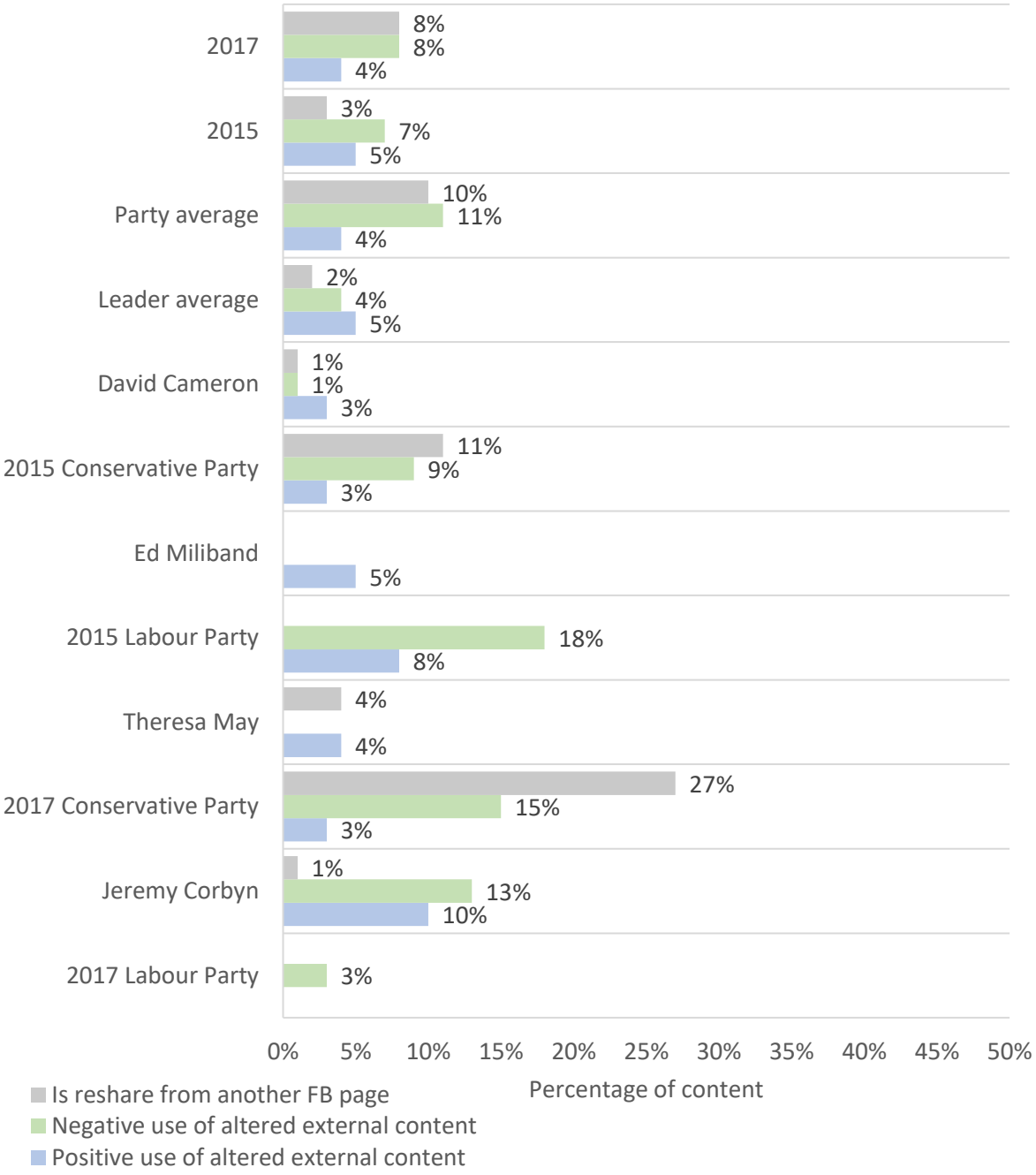


Image 11. 2015 Labour use of newspaper source by link[53]
Image 12. 2015 Labour use of newspaper source without link[54]

[53] https://www.facebook.com/labourparty/posts/10152730888222411:0 accessed 25/05/2020
[54] https://www.facebook.com/labourparty/posts/10152725890322411:0 accessed 25/05/2020



Graph 48. Use of external content (n=1,208)

Overall, we see parties heavily reusing media especially the reuse of mainstream news content with a negative tone. This ability is novel and powerful and is understandably well utilised given its unique capacities. The ability to reframe events or even completely alter content (as we saw with the Conservative Party's use of Keir Starmer's Brexit interview in 2019[55]) is a dangerous unregulated

[55] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAoreomYfQM accessed – 25/05/2020

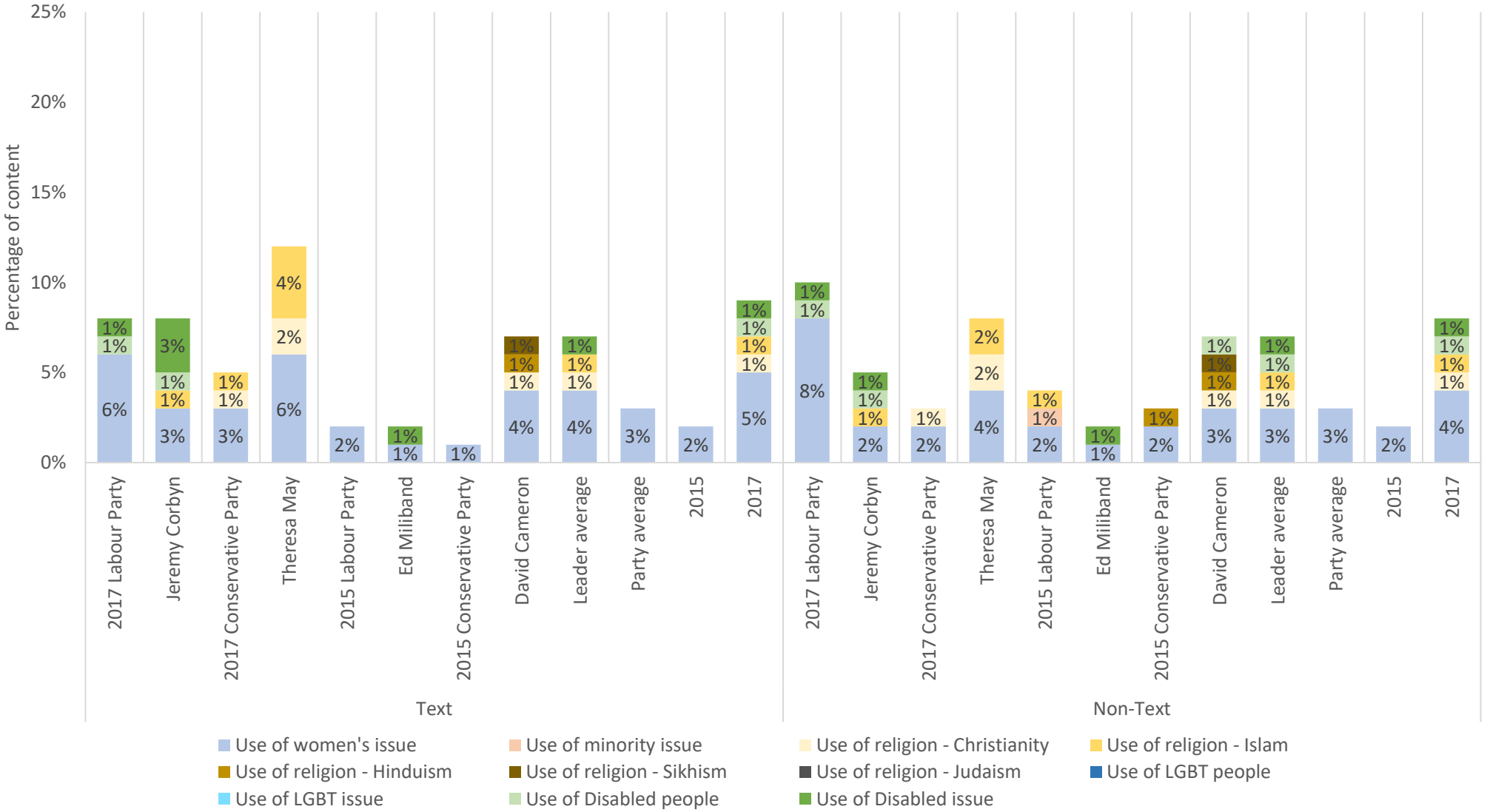
environment that promotes falsehoods and fake news. Thus, a regulatory framework must be developed that both protects the impartial nature of public broadcast content, as well as the ability for parties and voters to use content online.

Is there a focus on depiction?

Another key content strategy is the use of depiction. In photo and video content parties can use imagery of the public to influence those viewing to identify with the content presented. This is important because studies have found that certain types of group representation can increase voters emotional resonance and enhance persuasive power. For example, with female congressional candidates in the US (Plutzer & Zipp, 1996). Equally, a party can use certain issues that have greater resonance with a group to communicate with them more effectively. The use of depiction is important to examine, as the sociological nature of the Facebook platform is so integrated within users' identities. However, when it comes to using depictions and issues associated with underrepresented groups, Graph 49 shows there is little interest from the two parties. Only limited amounts of women's, disabled and religious issues are seen. Both Labour and the Conservatives use Facebook as a broadcast medium, targeting the broadest elements of the general public not special interest groups.

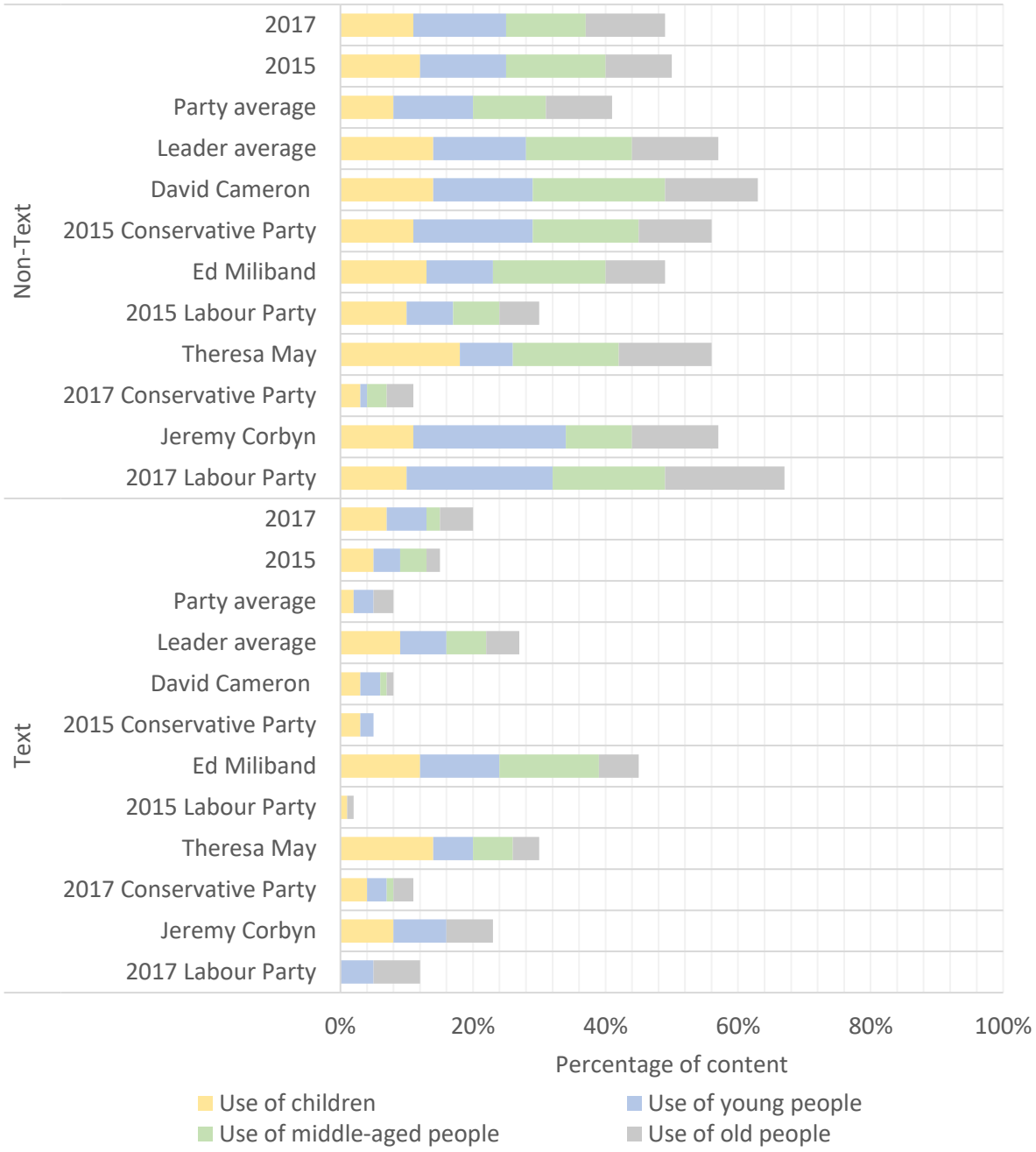
Image 13. 2015 David Cameron's use of religion, Hinduism[56]

[56] https://www.facebook.com/DavidCameronOfficial/posts/978341648856820:0 accessed 4/4/2020

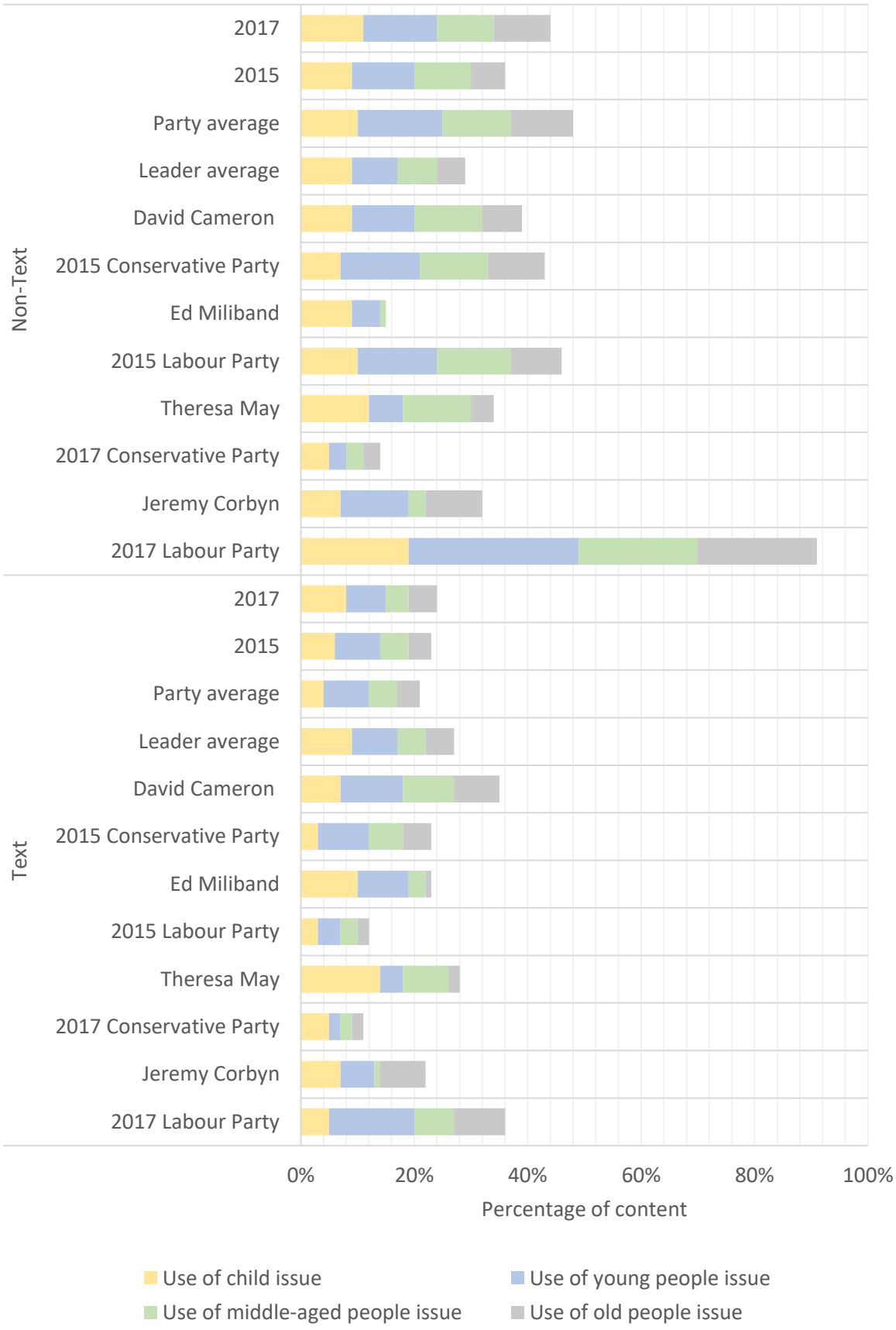


Graph 49. Underrepresented group depiction and issue use (n=2,416, n of text elements = 1,208, n of non-text elements = 1,208)

The trends change when looking at larger core electoral groups in Graph's 50 & 51, these broader core groups of the British public are clearly depicted and campaigned to. This occurs mainly through the non-text elements of posts, within the images or video elements used. The depiction of these groups has increased across the elections and is seen mainly via the leader pages. Although leader pages feature less political information, they are more interested in depicting groups often alongside the leader, showing a clear personalisation – depiction dynamic.

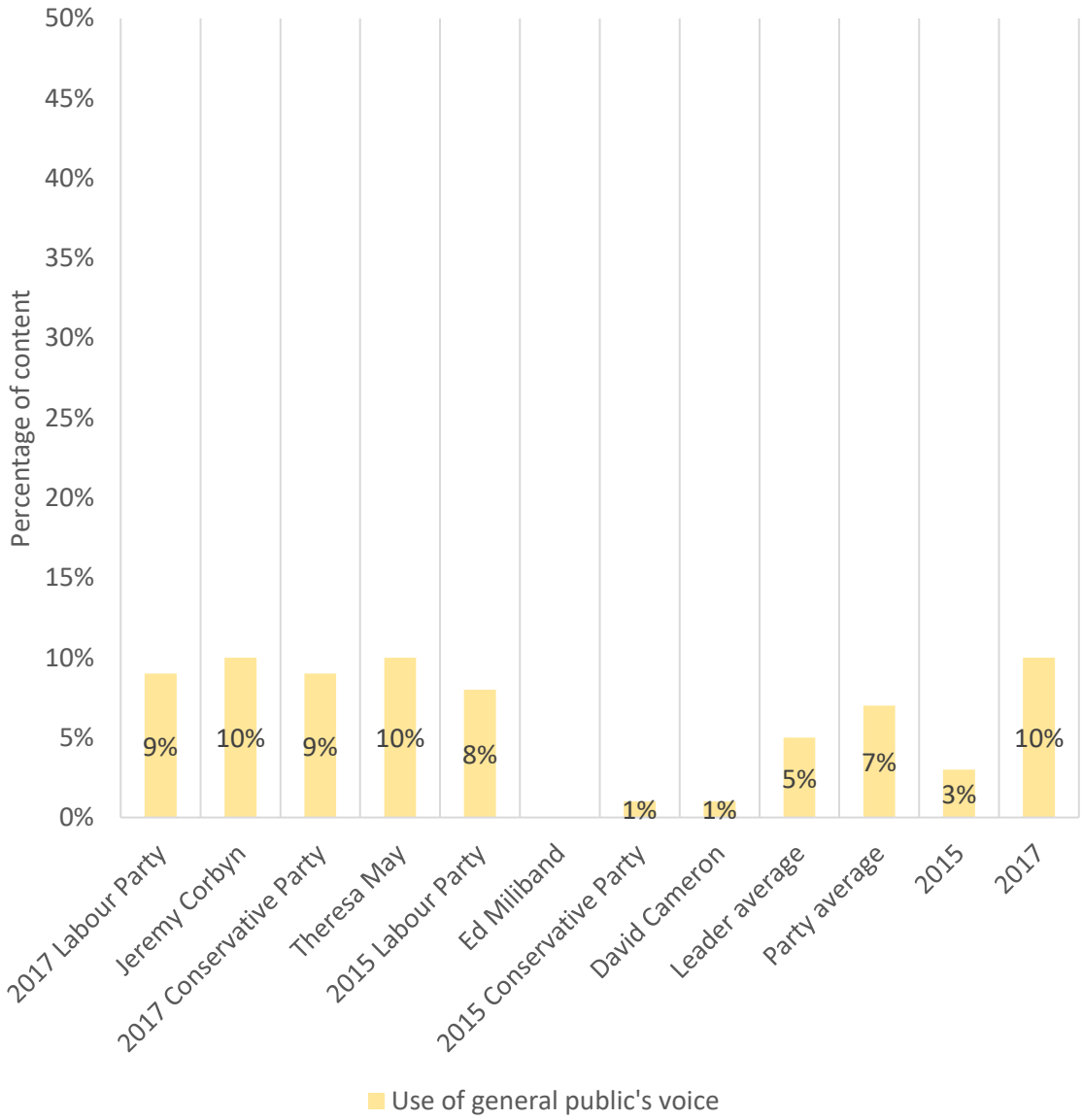


Graph 50. Depiction of age groups (n=2,416, n of text elements = 1,208, n of non-text elements = 1,208)

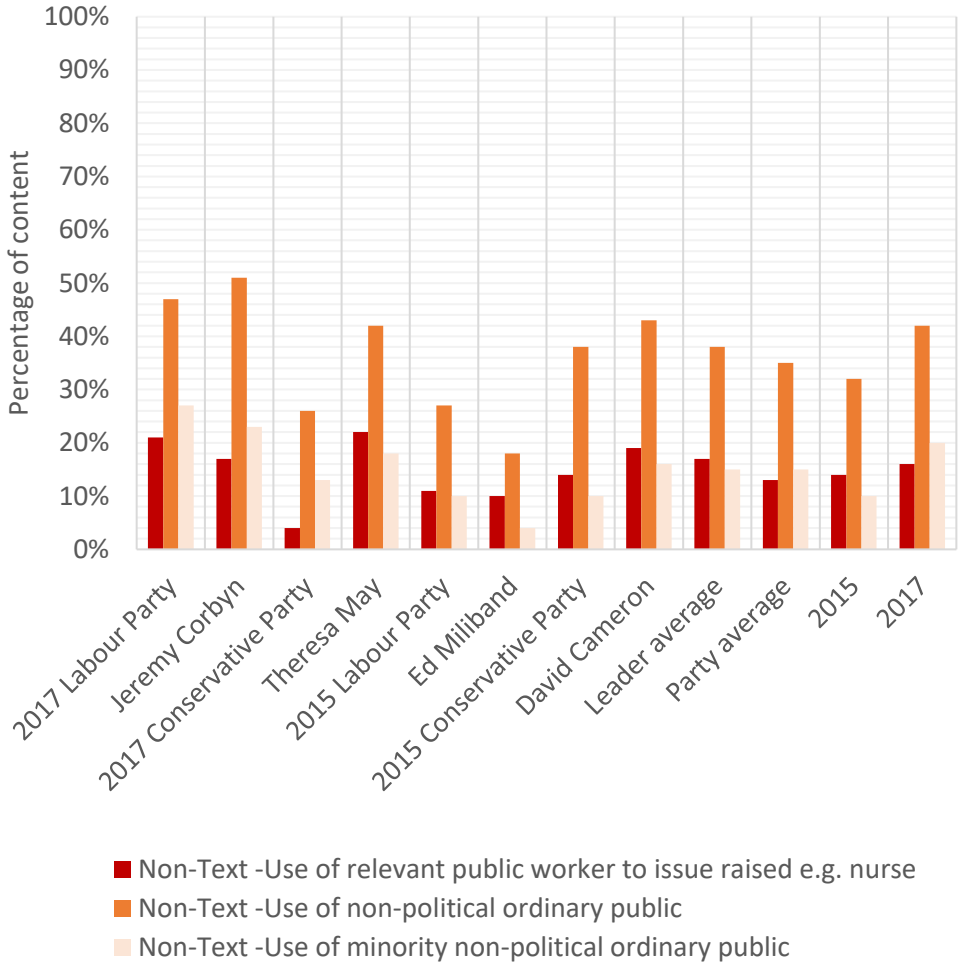


Graph 51. Use of issues associated with depicted groups (n=2,416, n of text elements = 1,208, n of non-text elements = 1,208)

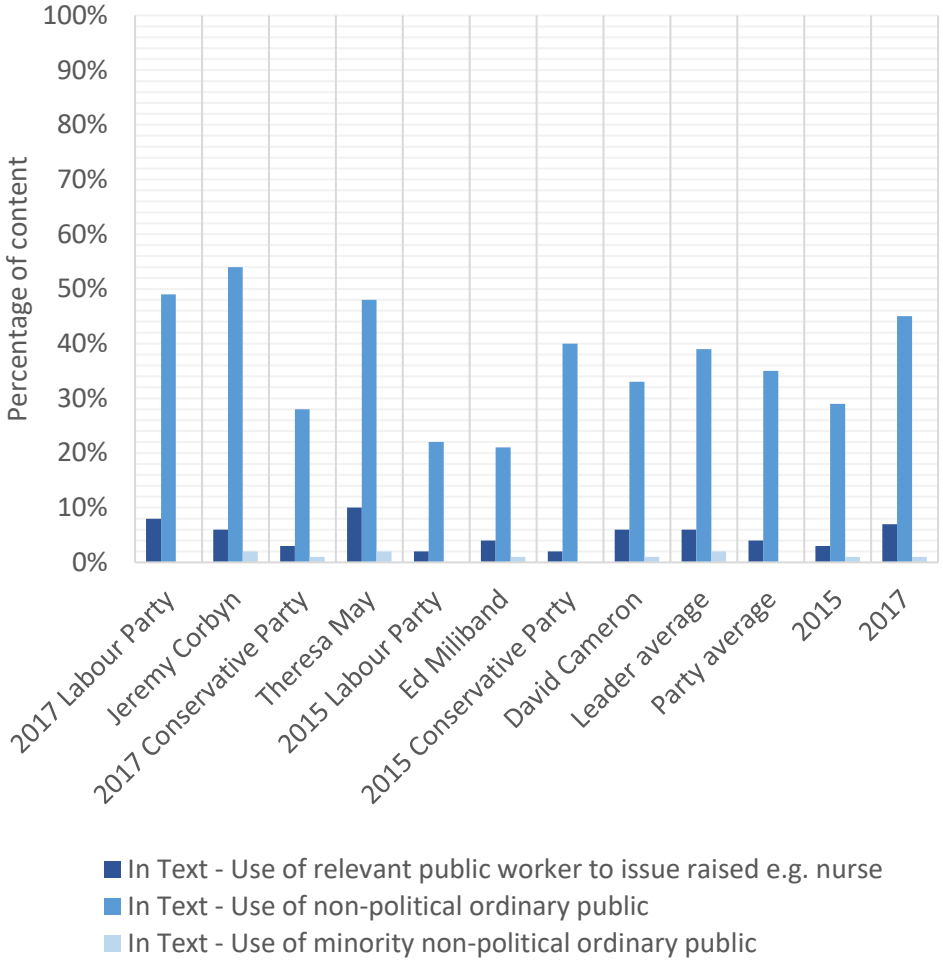
In 2017 Labour successfully linked their manifesto ideas with the people, managing to effectively tie policy to public using the sociological nature of Facebook to improve message impact. Young people were a clear Labour target, but so were older people and the middle aged. Labour thus used Facebook in a clever manner, matching public depiction with policy, utilising the sociological dimensions of Facebook to increase message resonance, what Kreiss et al. call identity ownership (2020). In contrast, the Conservative Party's use of issues associated with age groups declined across 2015 to 2017, the party talked so much about Brexit that other groups and issues of concern were ignored.



Graph 52. Use of general public's voice (n=1,208)



Graph 53a. Depiction of public in content, non-text elements (n=1,208)



Graph 53b. Depiction of public in content, text elements (n=1,208)

Image 14. 2017 Corbyn's use of public's voice[57]

Graphs 53a and 53b highlight that depiction of the ordinary public is well used in text and non-text elements (e.g. video). Labour repeatedly used public workers voices to enhance their messages, incidence increased in 2017 with an interest in using the public more after the rise of Corbyn. Labour also led the way with a large rise in the use of minority ordinary public members from 10% to 20% of content. 2017 thus saw a Facebook campaign that is more reflective of modern Britain. Overall, there is a focus on depiction, however this is only in a broadcast sense. Wide policy agendas covering issues of major public concern are tied with broad identity politics. The platforms' unique capacity to utilise complex sociological characteristics with content is only partially employed, as the data further proves the generalist use of organic communications.

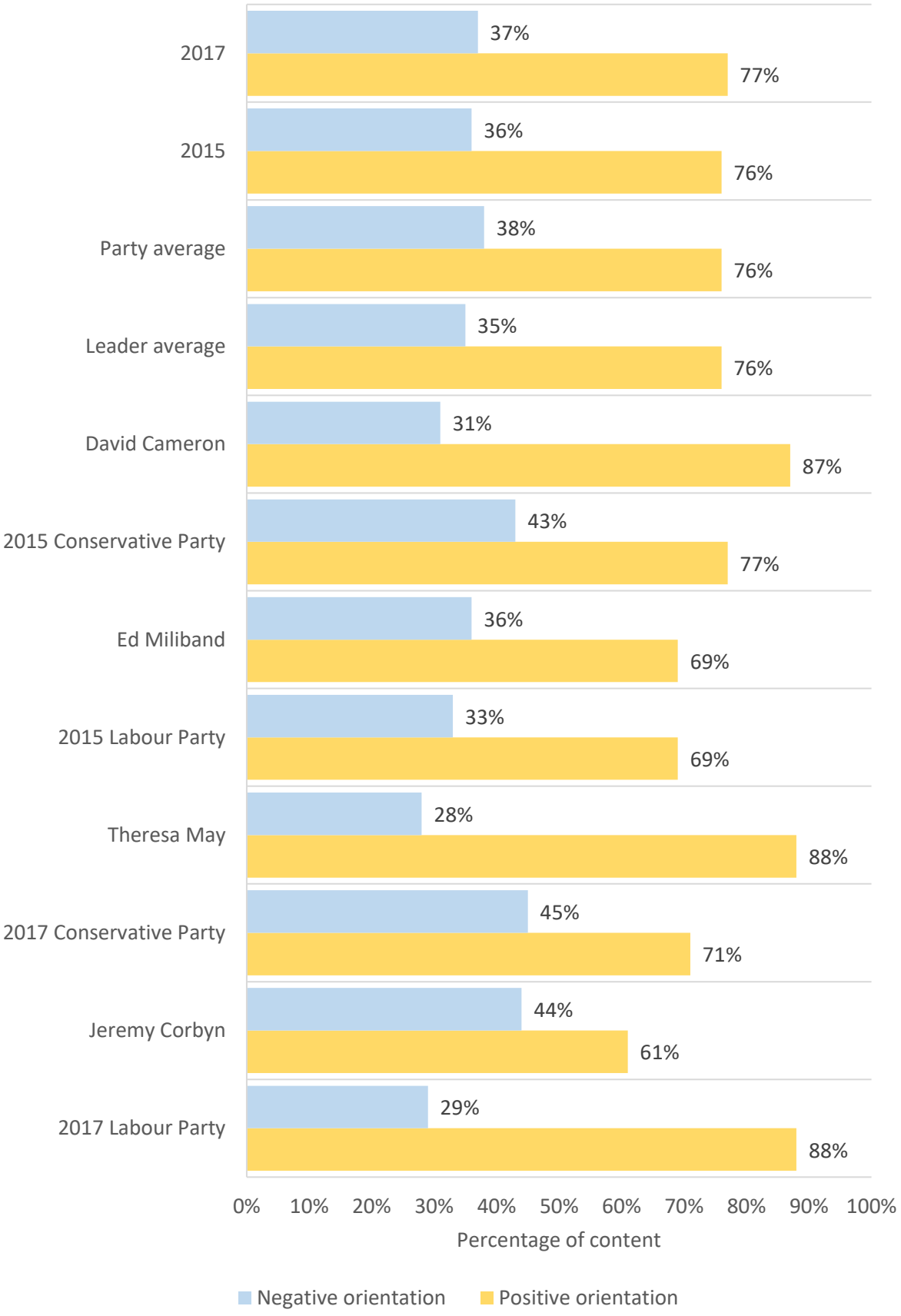
How is content framed?

There are many ways to package the content parties send, including variations in sentiment, narrative forms and positional issues. One would expect to see negative and partisan based approaches utilised, given the nature of how

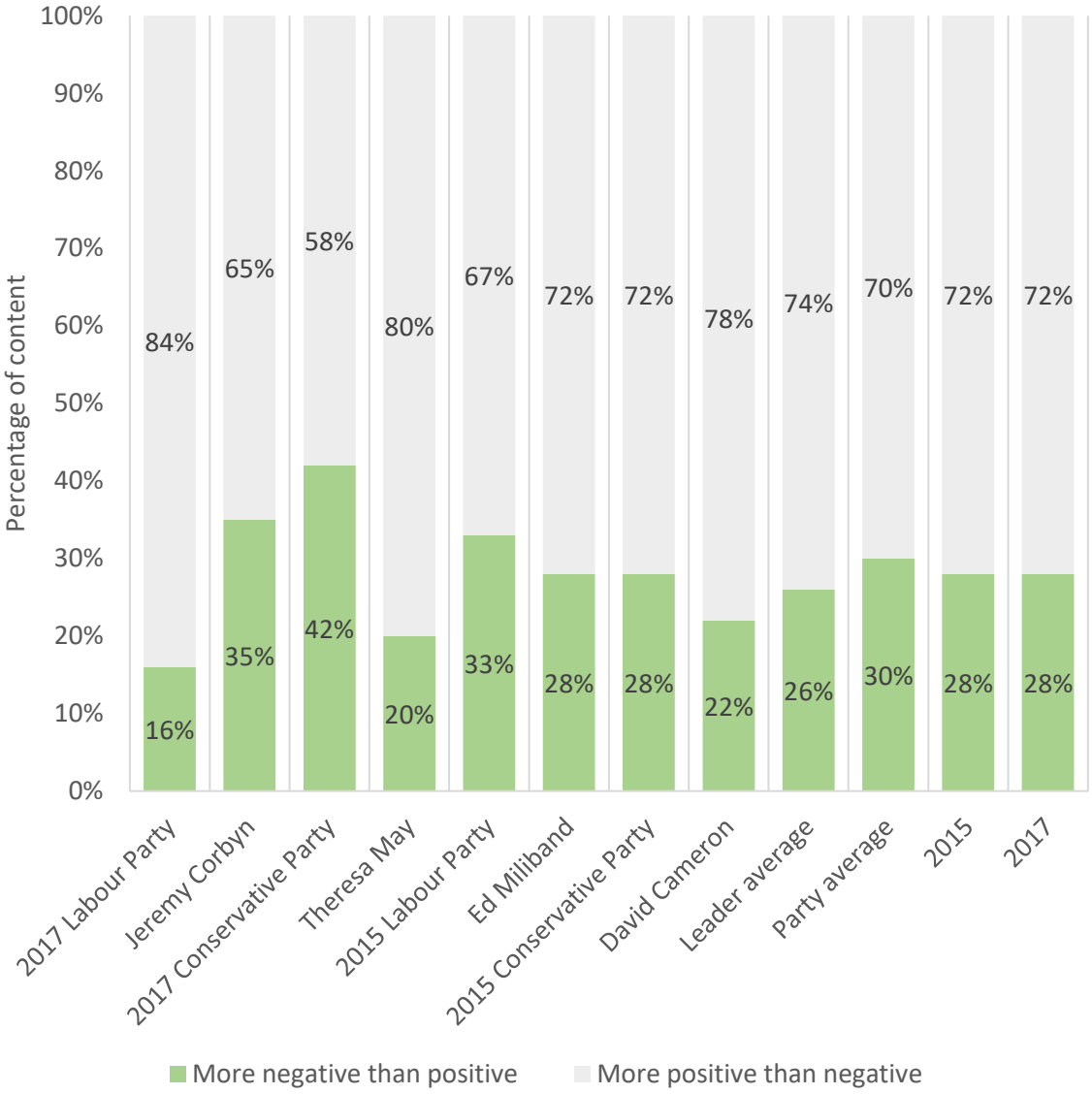
[57] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10155379425508872 accessed 14/5/2020

content goes viral through virtual members. However, given an interest in influencing an audience outside of virtual members, we may see content that is less negative and traditionally partisan. There may also be clear differences across pages given divergent audience roles.

Sentiment affects how users will consume and engage with content. Most studies have found the platform to feature large amounts of negative content that receives greater engagement (Bene, 2017). However, research has found that “political messages with positive emotions evocate positive response from citizens” (Babac & Podobnik, 2018, p.327). Graph 54 shows that positivity is much more widely employed than negativity. There is also stability in sentiment across the 2015 and 2017 elections, as well as between leader and party pages. The Conservatives are more negative than Labour, with the Conservative’s consistently relying on negative personalisation across the 2015 and 2017 (and 2019) campaigns. Examining across structural content forms (Appendix 10) photo content is more positive than video (83% to 73%), with video more negative than photo (43% to 25%).

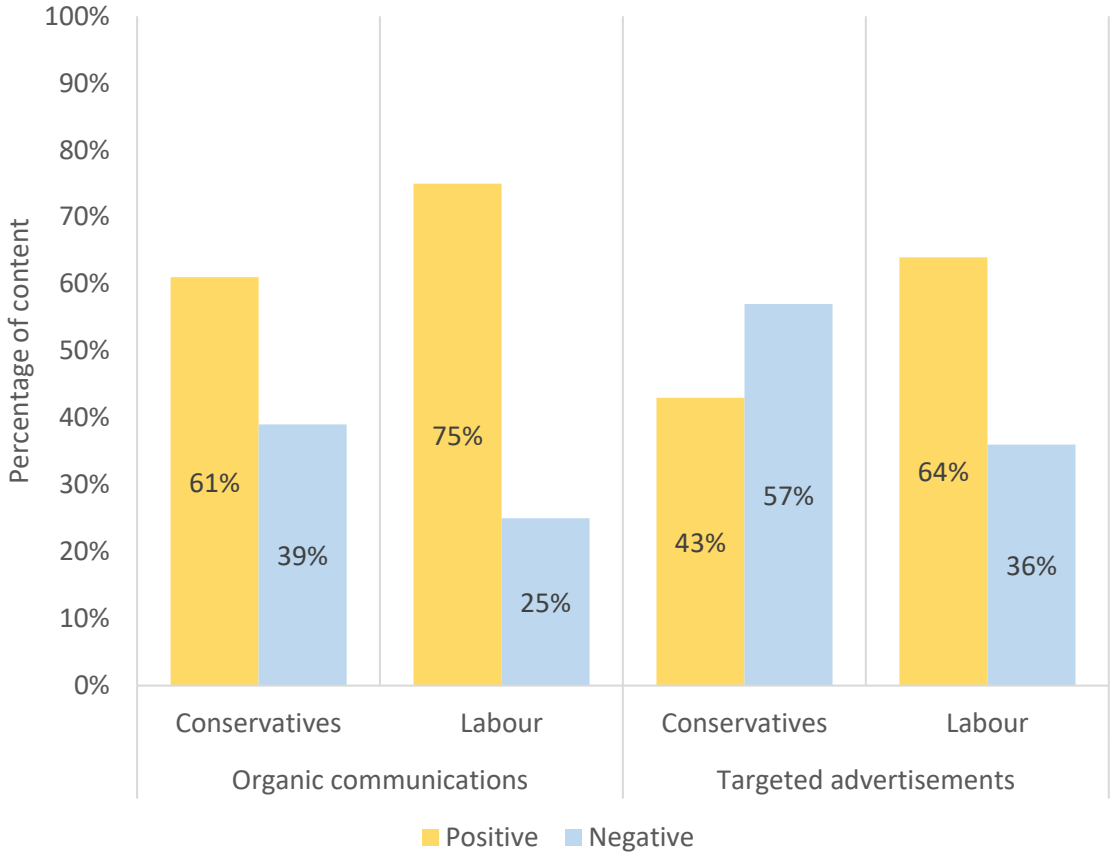


Graph 54. Tone of content using non dichotomous sentiment scheme (n=1,208)



Graph 55. Explicit tone of content (n=1,208)

Using Anstead et al.'s data, sentiment can also be compared across targeted advertisements and organic posts. The parties are generally more positive than negative through organic Facebook, while targeted advertisements are more negative. Labour's targeted advertisements are more like their organic posts in sentiment than the Conservatives. For Labour, what works for organic communications via user engagement, also appears to be the strategy the party uses through advertisements. The data overall suggests differences between the two forms especially from the Conservatives, with negative targeted content intended for key voters and more positive content for the general public.



Graph 56. Sentiment tone of targeted advertising and organic posts (n Facebook posts = 425, n targeted ads = 412)

As well as the tone of the content, parties have capacities to frame their content in different ways. Parties' framing can either be centred upon actions or ideology. This includes the generation of narratives surrounding problems and solutions such as in the use of success framing, or in the use of position issues to highlight different policy positions. Content that features lots of ideological framing is more likely targeted at virtual members. This is because it contains a greater focus on the moral battle between parties thus speaking more narrowly to partisan ideas. In contrast, content that focusses on events and actions is likely for a broader audience. The parties' use of framing is important, scholars have argued there is greater ideological divergence between Labour and the Conservative Party since Corbyn came to power (Goes, 2018; Byrne, 2019). This ideological shift has even been asserted as the reason for Labour's comparative success in 2017. As Liam Byrne argues; the Labour Party's 2017 success resulted from "its construction of a vivid… alternative future… a far-reaching conceptualisation of a different type of society, presented as a realistic alternative" (2019, p.250). When examining the use

of position issues in Graph 57, from 2015 to 2017 Labour's party page use of positive position issues did increase by 13pp, while negative position issues declined by 13pp. There was a clear trend towards position issue communications but sent in a positive manner. Examining Labour's leader pages, the shift was minimal, Corbyn only used 3pp more negative and -5pp positive position issues than Miliband. There was no huge shift in position issue use over time, with the largest shift seen from the more moderate Labour Party page.

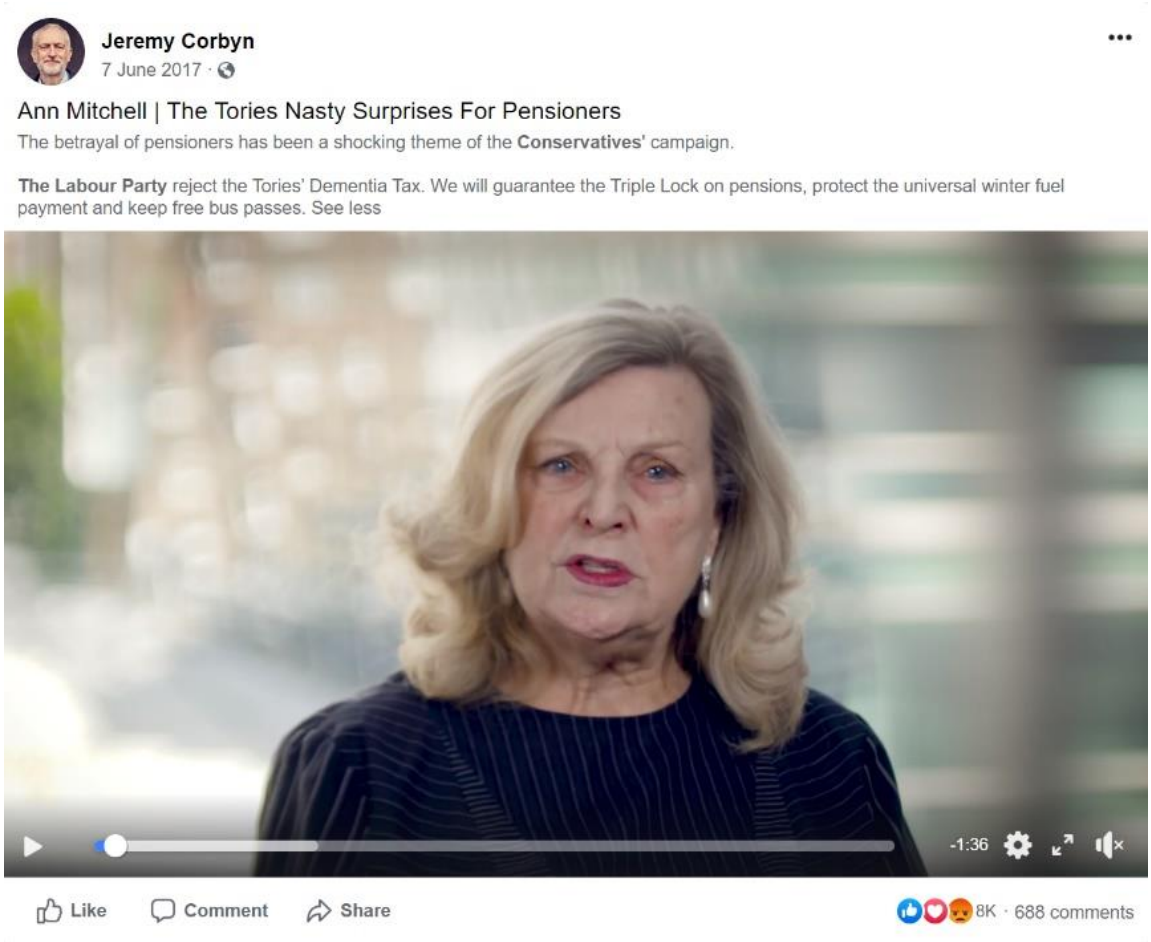
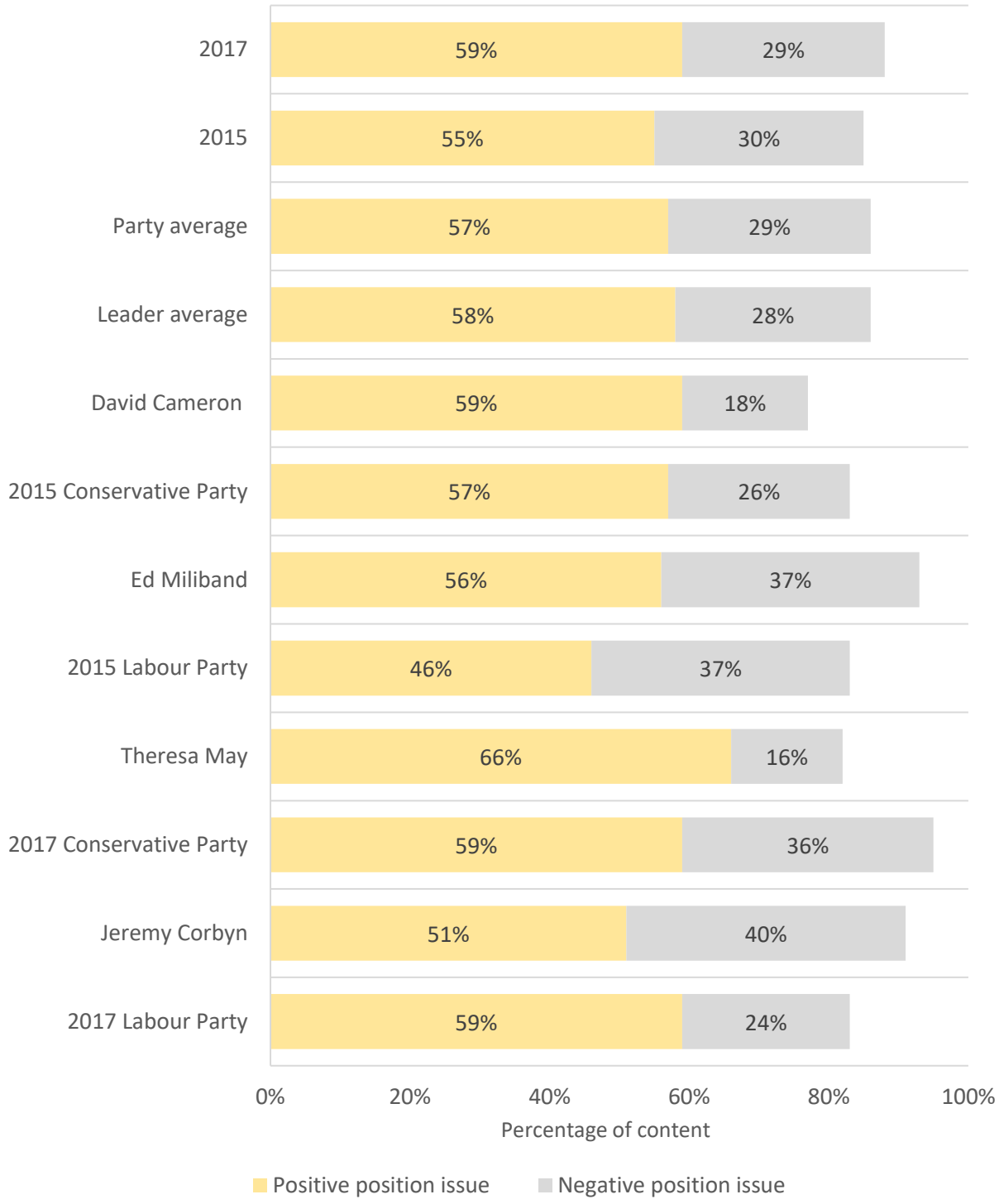


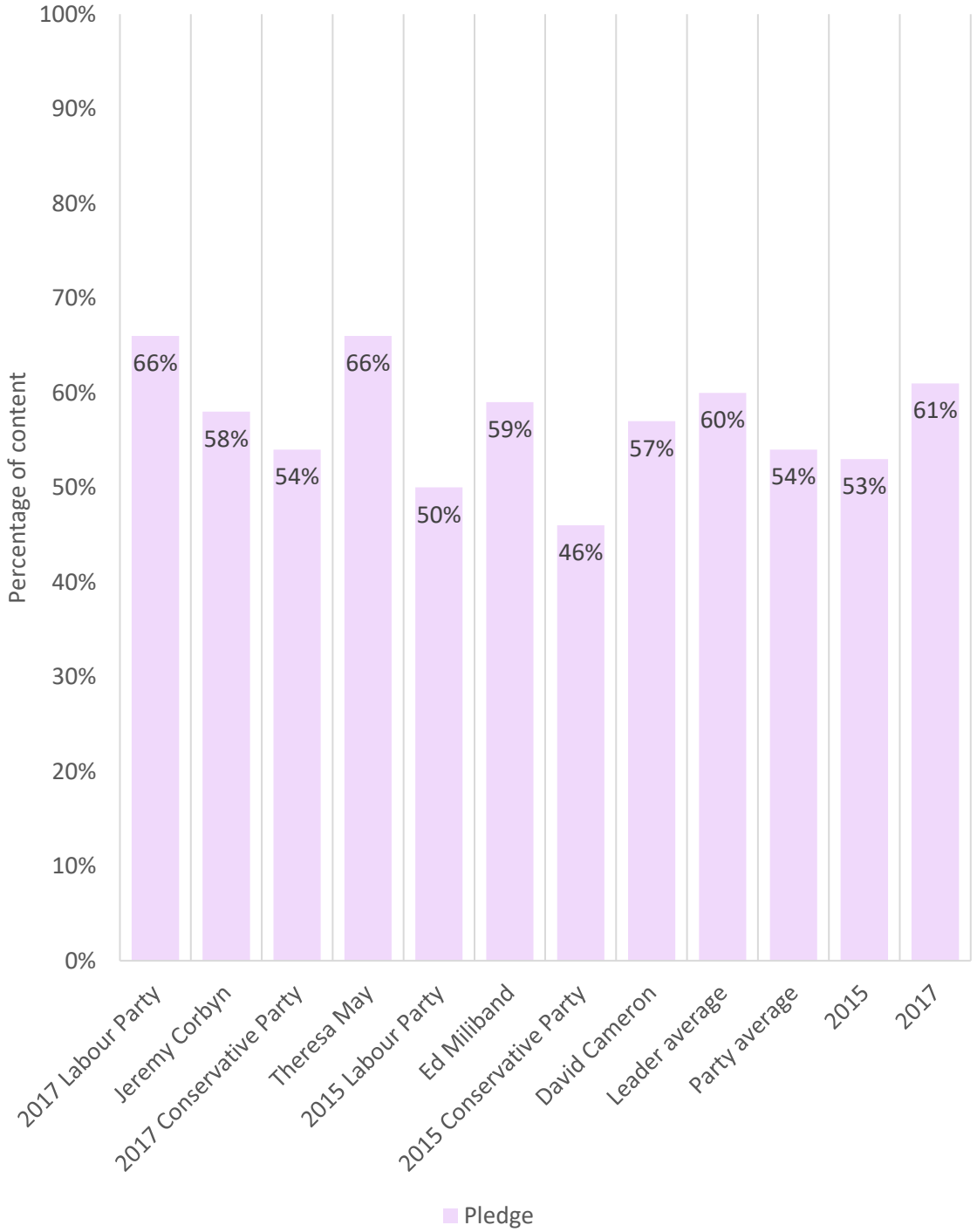
Image 15. 2017 Corbyn's use of negative position issue "dementia tax"[58]

[58] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10155437577018872 accessed 1/4/2020



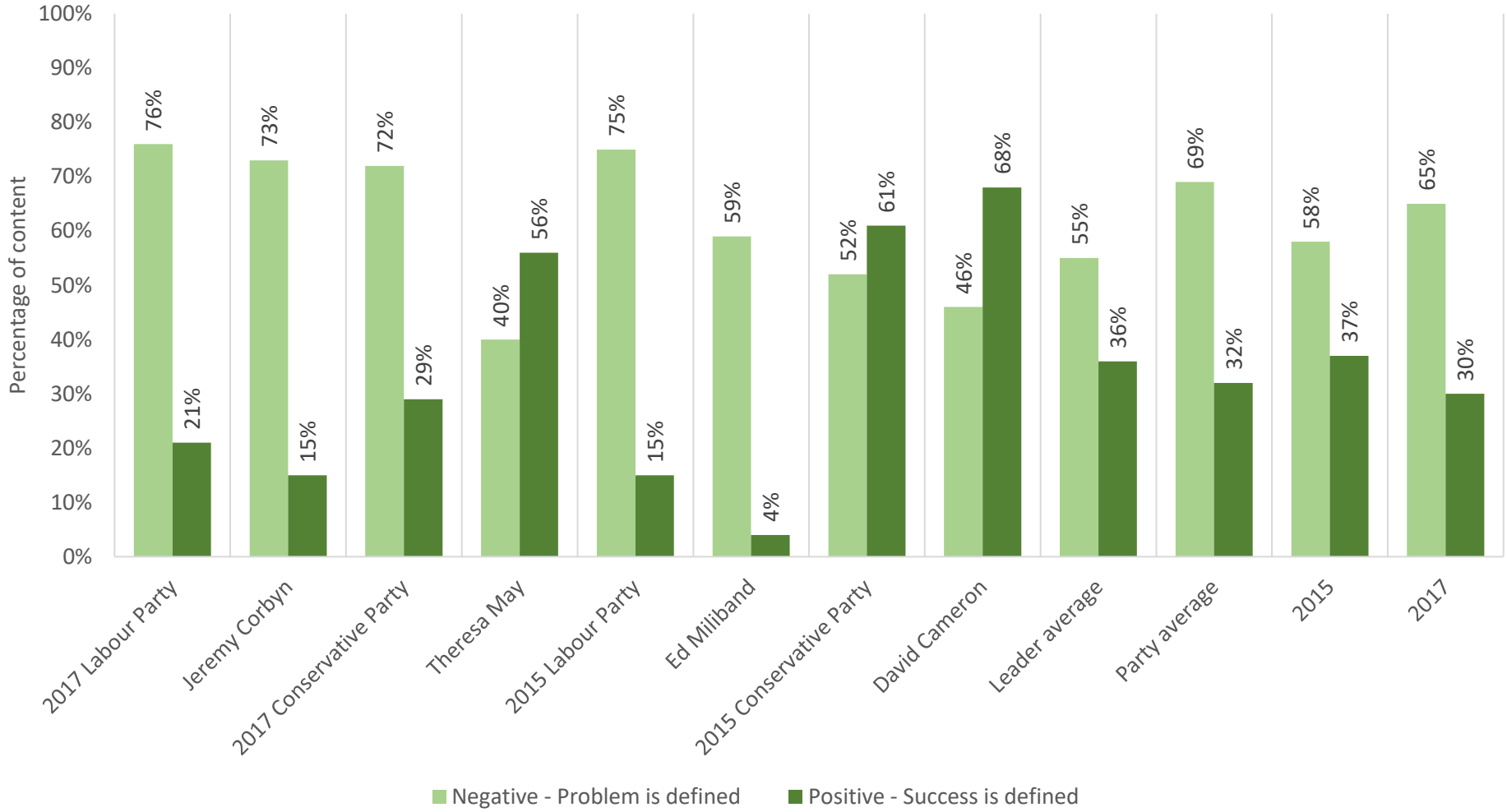
Graph 57. Use of position issues (n=1,208)

Examining approaches to problems and solutions, there has been a clear shift in how Labour presents its content.

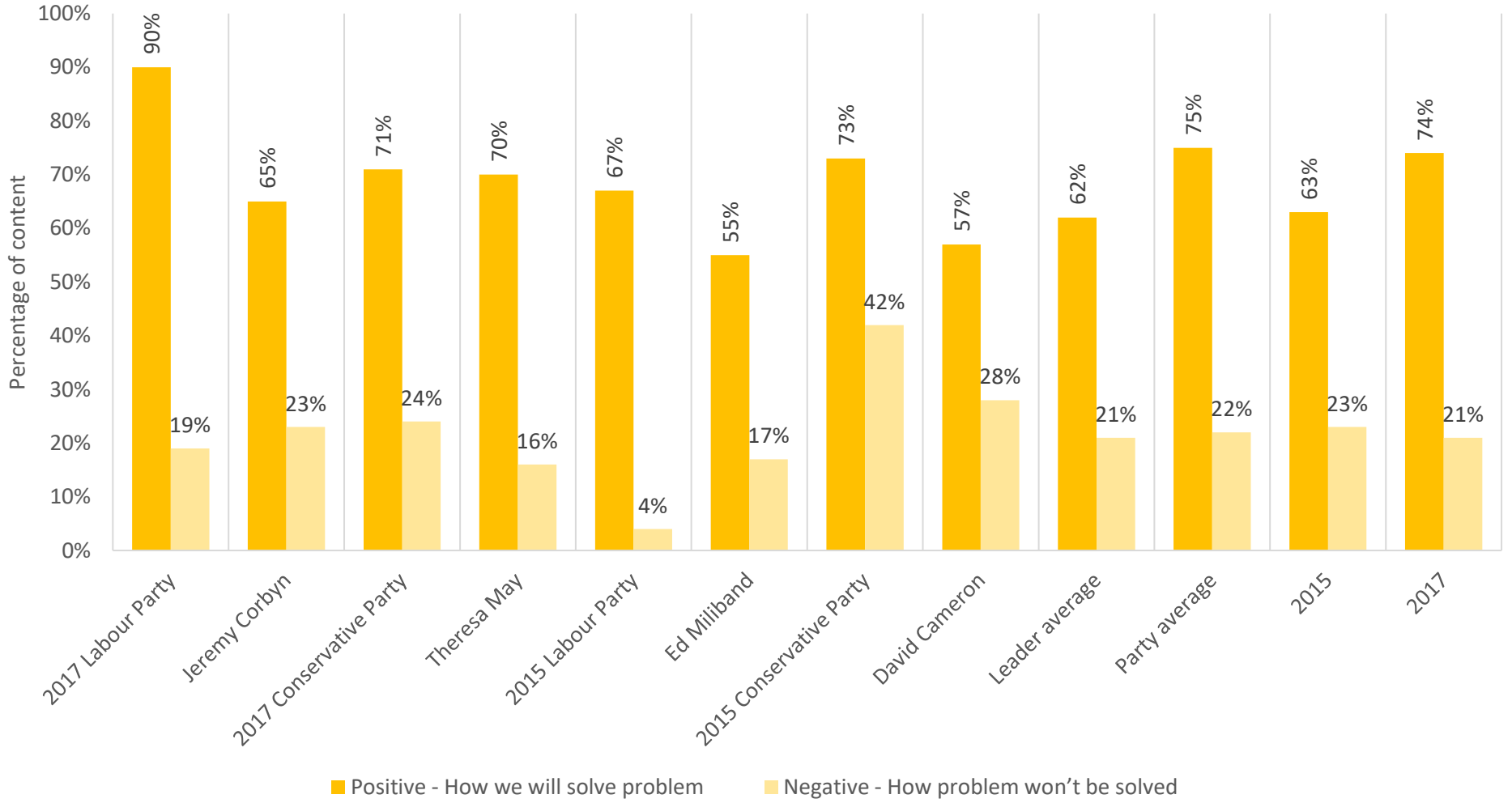


Graph 58. Approaches to problems and solutions, use of a pledges (n=1,208)

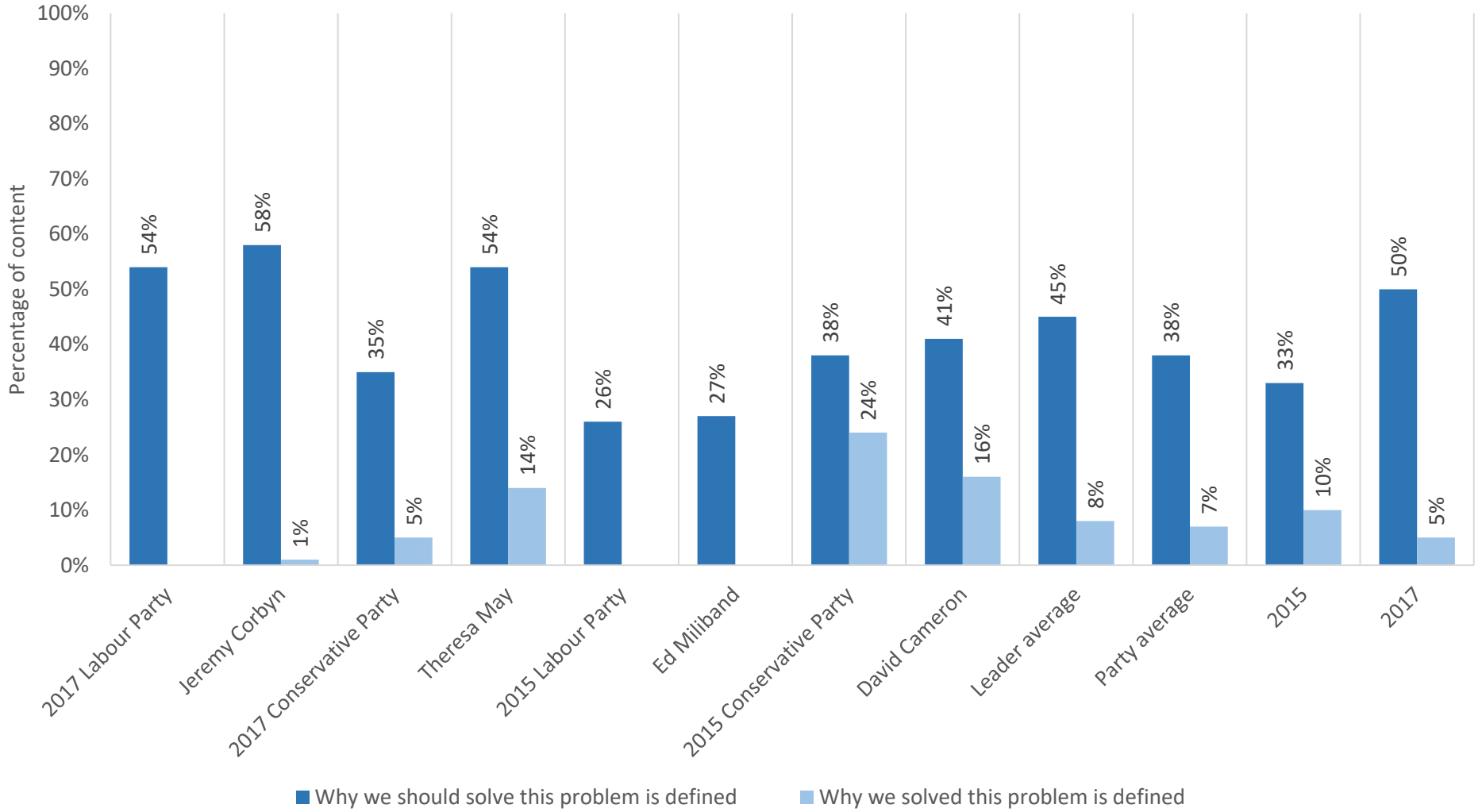
Use of pledges was common especially in 2017, with policy often framed as promises. Use was seen centrally by the 2017 Labour Party page and through Theresa May's page. Across the next three pages via Graphs 59-61, approaches to framing problems and solutions are shown.



Graph 59. Approaches to problems and solutions, use of diagnosis (n=1,208)



Graph 60. Approaches to problems and solutions, use of prognosis (n=1,208)



Graph 61. Approaches to problems and solutions, use of motivation (n=1,208)

The use of motivation via ‘why we should solve this problem’, the code closest to representing elements of ideology, shows that centrally through Corbyn but also through the Labour page, Labour changed the way they talked about issues between 2015 and 2017. Changes were marked, Corbyn’s page saw use of ‘why we should solve this problem’ at 58% up from 27% by Miliband, with similar increases seen by the party page. The framing approach also saw Labour use greater amounts of explanation, especially prognosis (+23pp party page, +10pp leader), pledges (+16pp party page), diagnosis (+24pp leader), motivation (+23 party page, +30pp leader) and positive problem solving (+23 party page, +10pp leader). Although Labour may have been using the same amounts of positional and non-positional moderate policy in 2017 as in 2015, they talked about their politics in a more ideological and explanatory manner. Approach was not necessarily more combative, increases in the use of ‘negative problem definition’ and ‘negative how problem won’t be solved’ forms were limited. Thus, the party were using ideology in an inclusive manner through explaining their positions and educating on why this is the best course to take, rather than using strong ideological framing. Thus, to some extent Byrne is correct in that Labour presented a vision well, however rather than Byrne’s ideas of this being a ‘radical alternative’ it was presented in a moderate manner.

In contrast, the Conservative pages were more static across election years. This reflects a campaign less focussed on motivational ideological content, but that still appreciated the abilities of these forms to create powerful framing. Conservative Party focus was on diagnosing problems (usually leadership), prognosis of what will happen and how they will solve it. Higher rates of problem and solution forms were seen in the 2015 Conservative pages, this is interesting as this is despite the issue of Brexit arguably deepening ideological division between the parties by 2017. Instead in 2015 the Conservatives expended more effort framing their positions and content as part of a narrative of success, however by 2017 the party had instead switched to a more negative tone. The Conservative’s failure to address previous success (party page use went from 61% in 2015 to 29% in 2017) shows how Brexit led to the party ignoring so many other issues.

Overall, Goes’ (2018) thesis of the breakdown of valence politics is not seen between Labour and the Conservatives. This is because Labour still presented a fundamentally moderate vision. Position issues were static in use, with Labour

instead matching issues with a clear vision of what Labour offers[59]. This was achieved through framing their ideas in a more narrative, explanatory and reasoned way. In Labour's approach, Byrne's idea of 'real political choice' in 2017 is therefore only partially seen, as rather than a radical shift, the party in 2017 successfully merged a moderate Miliband position with Corbyn's political vision. Indeed, during the 2017 campaign more experimental ideologically divisive Labour policies, such as a national investment bank did not feature often. Instead the central core of approach surrounded economics, healthcare and workers' rights. When radical ideas were presented, they occurred from Jeremy Corbyn's page, as the Labour Party page was cleverly used to present a more moderate face. This Janus-faced approach allowed the party to reach out to middle-of-the-road voters and energise radicals.

Table 29. Message length of text and video (n=1,208)

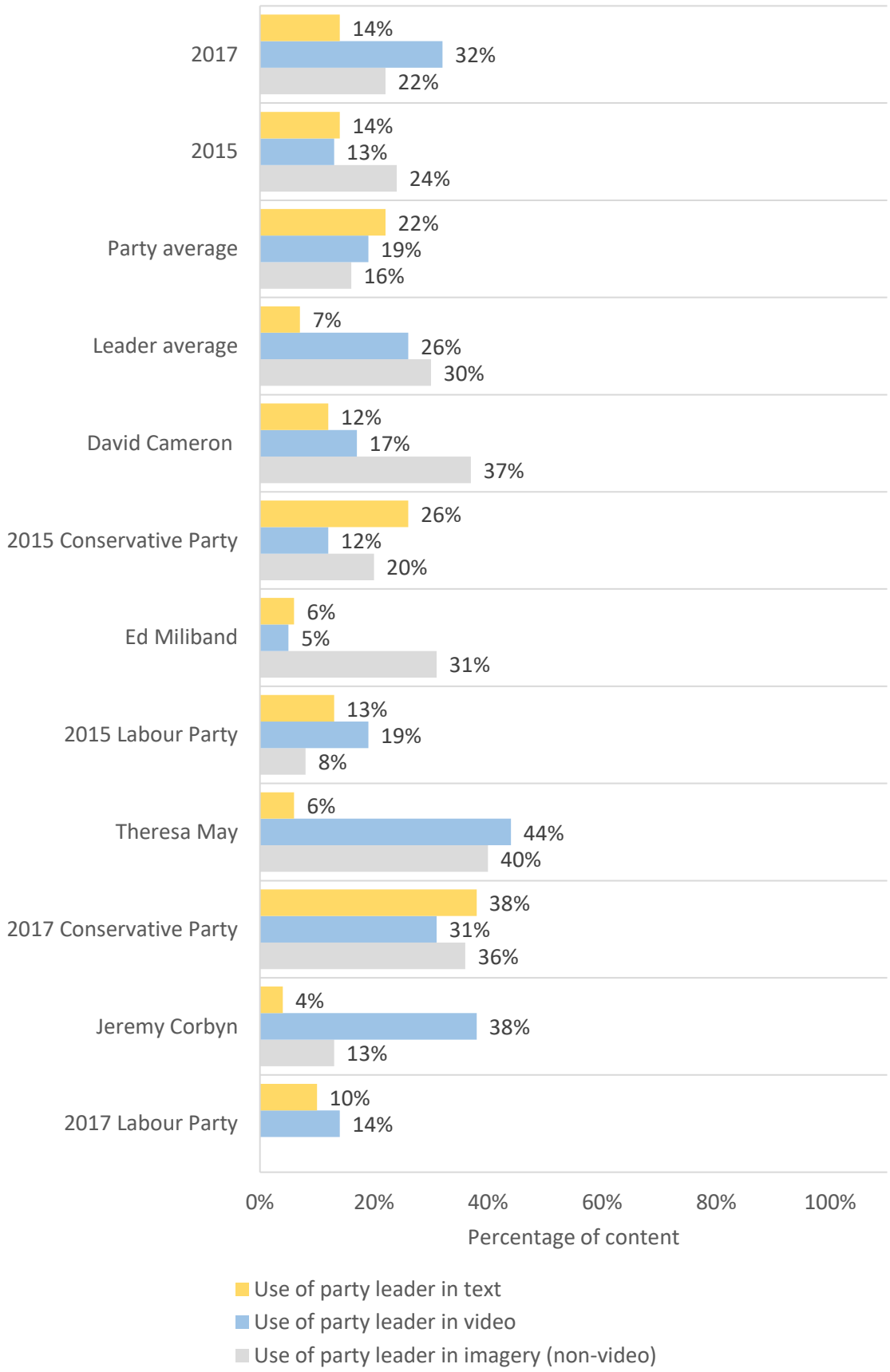
	n	Average message length (words)	n_{video}	Average video length	Video length - short - under 1 min	Video length - medium -1 min - 3 mins	Video length - long ove 3 mins
2017 Labour Party	278	37	277	00:01:45	69%	23%	7%
Jeremy Corbyn	144	50	98	00:01:33	58%	35%	7%
2017 Conservative Party	95	37	38	00:02:35	71%	24%	5%
Theresa May	50	101	23	00:04:12	74%	13%	13%
2015 Labour Party	237	27	105	00:01:37	40%	54%	5%
Ed Miliband	78	100	4	00:01:46	25%	50%	25%
2015 Conservative Party	188	74	49	00:01:36	45%	51%	4%
David Cameron	138	65	27	00:02:21	52%	37%	11%
Leader average	410	79	152	00:02:28	52%	34%	14%
Party average	798	43	469	00:01:53	56%	38%	5%
2015	641	66	185	00:01:50	41%	48%	11%
2017	567	56	436	00:02:31	68%	24%	8%
Average of posts		**52**		**00:01:51**	**60%**	**33%**	**7%**
Average of pages		**61**		**00:02:11**	**54%**	**36%**	**10%**

[59] Also see use of valence issues in Appendix 9.

Finally, Table 29 shows message length across the core communication forms. Videos have become longer over time, although this is largely driven by the Conservatives. Labour's videos have remained similar in length overall, but far more videos are now under 1-minute long. The trends show the evolutionary professionalism that has been seen across information approaches, the parties are appreciating a harder to reach audience. Facebook is evolving as a competitive platform, with parties appreciating average non virtual member users are not keen to watch long videos. As such parties have refined their content, with the radical reduction in video length showing an interest in reaching non-members.

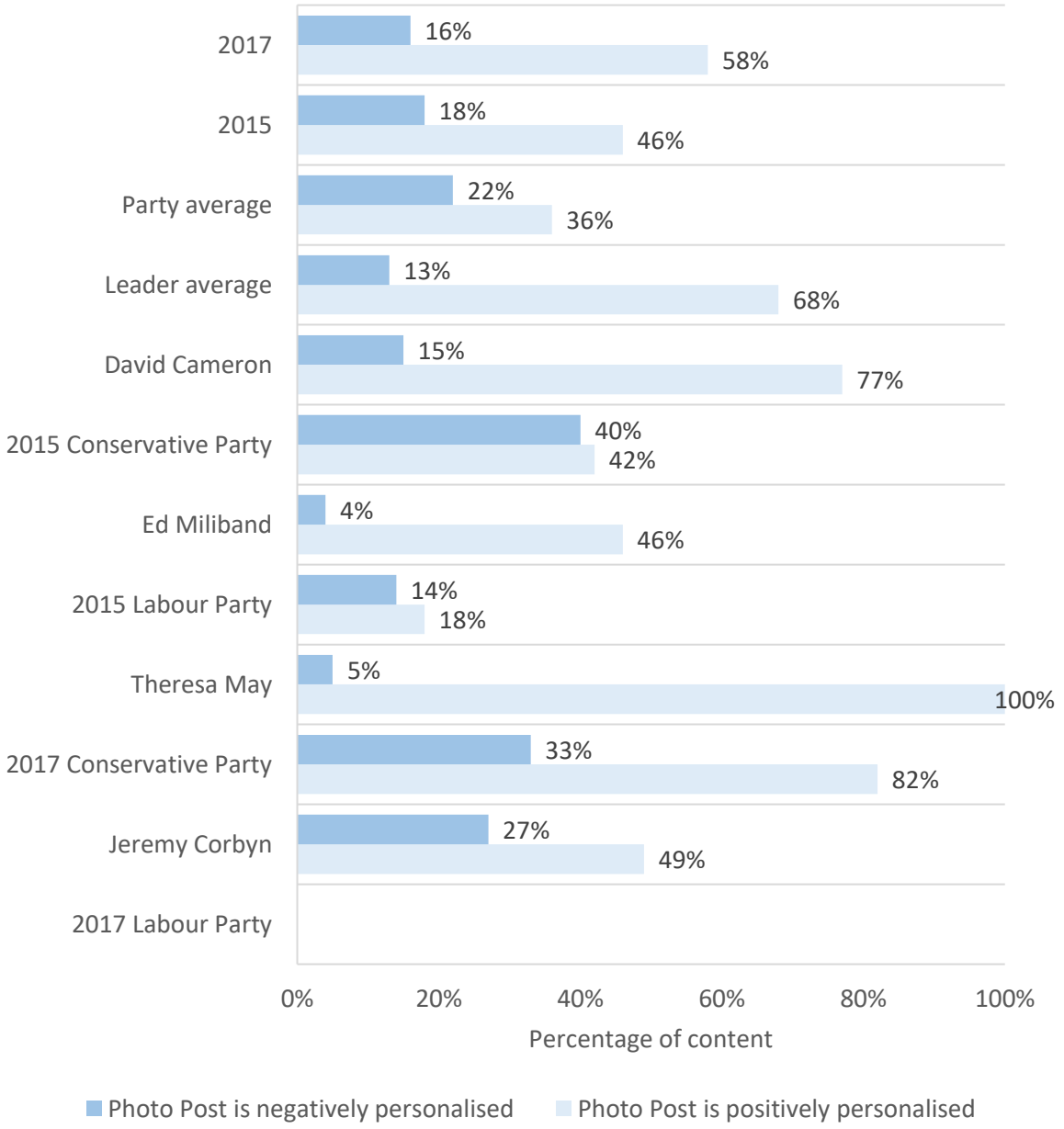
Is personalisation and rhetoric used?

The personalisation of politics is known to be an important political dynamic that sees the rising importance of leaders over parties (Karvonen, 2010; Van Aelst et al., 2011). Given that "highly interactive and personalized online communication increases citizens' political involvement" (Kruikemeier et al., 2013, p.53), personalised communications are an expected feature of parties' Facebook campaigns. The platform is a perfect location for personalised communications, with studies showing extensive use and a positive impact on engagement (Bene, 2017; Enli & Skogerbo, 2013). As seen previously in Chapters 4 & 5, party leader pages are now central to parties' campaigns, but how is personalisation activated and used within posts?

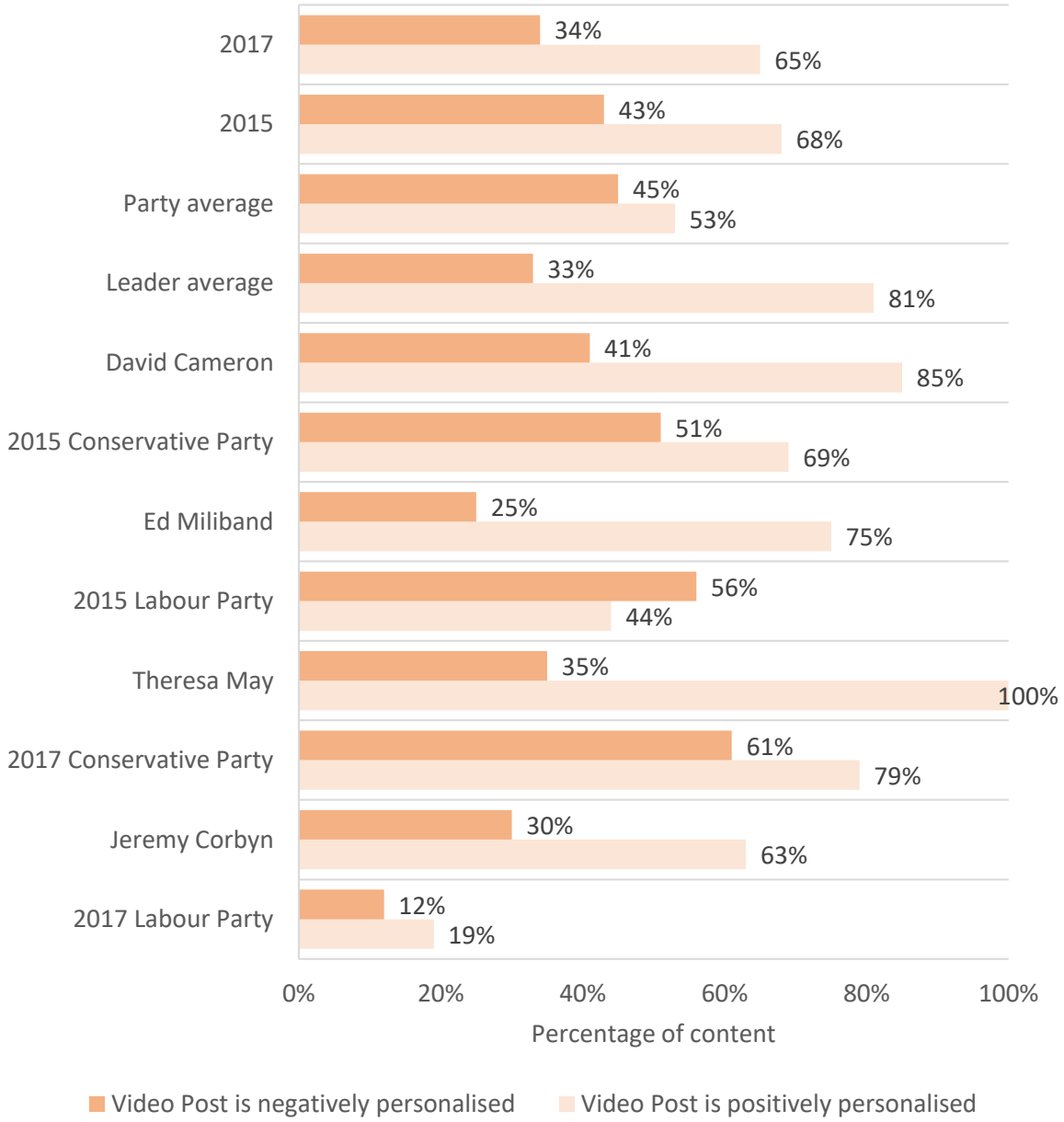


Graph 62. Use of party leader across information form (n=1,208)

Examining representation of the leader across pages and content types, high rates of usage are seen in Graph 62. Conservative pages have become more personalised since 2015, Theresa May was at the centre of the 2017 campaign with 42% of photo or video content featuring her. Leader pages are more personalised, with 2017 being overall a more personalised election campaign despite Labour's party page. Despite the general personalisation trend, the Labour Party page has tactically employed de-personalisation, and is by far the least personalised page seen. This approach is an interesting companion to the difference seen in how content is framed, with Corbyn clearly used to talk to a more radical partisan public.



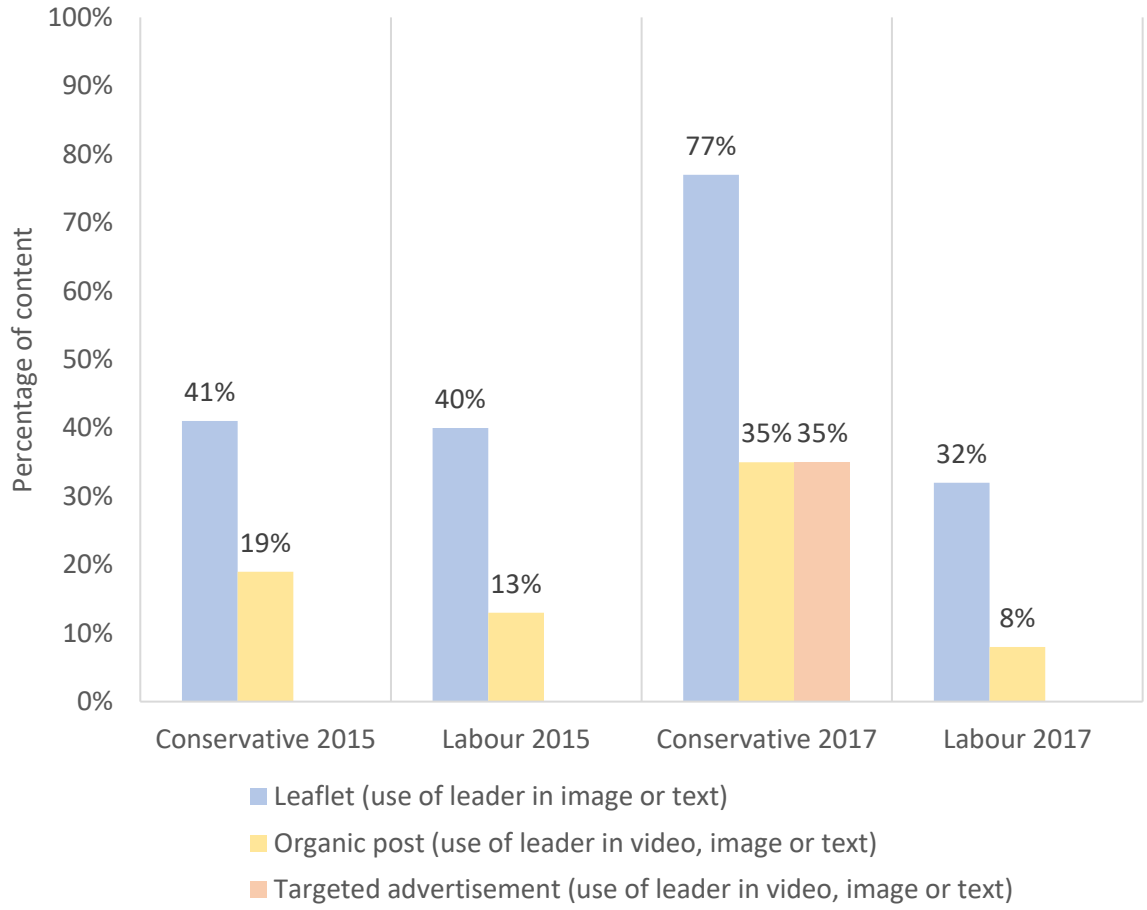
Graph 63. Personalisation in photo content (n=404)



Graph 64. Personalisation in video content (n=1,025)

Graph 63 & 64 analyse the use of leader and opposition leaders in parties' video and photo content. When examining the average of all the pages, video is more positively (67% to 52%) and negatively (39% to 17%) personalised than photo content. Video is a vehicle for greater personalisation with this increasing over time, the form is incredibly popular and demonstrates how leader focused a lot of Facebook content is, with the sole outlier Labour's party page in 2017. Although personalisation is clearly seen on Facebook, as Graph 65 shows the data stands within a wider trend. Personalisation is also widely seen across leaflets and targeted Facebook posts. In comparison, organic Facebook content from party pages is less

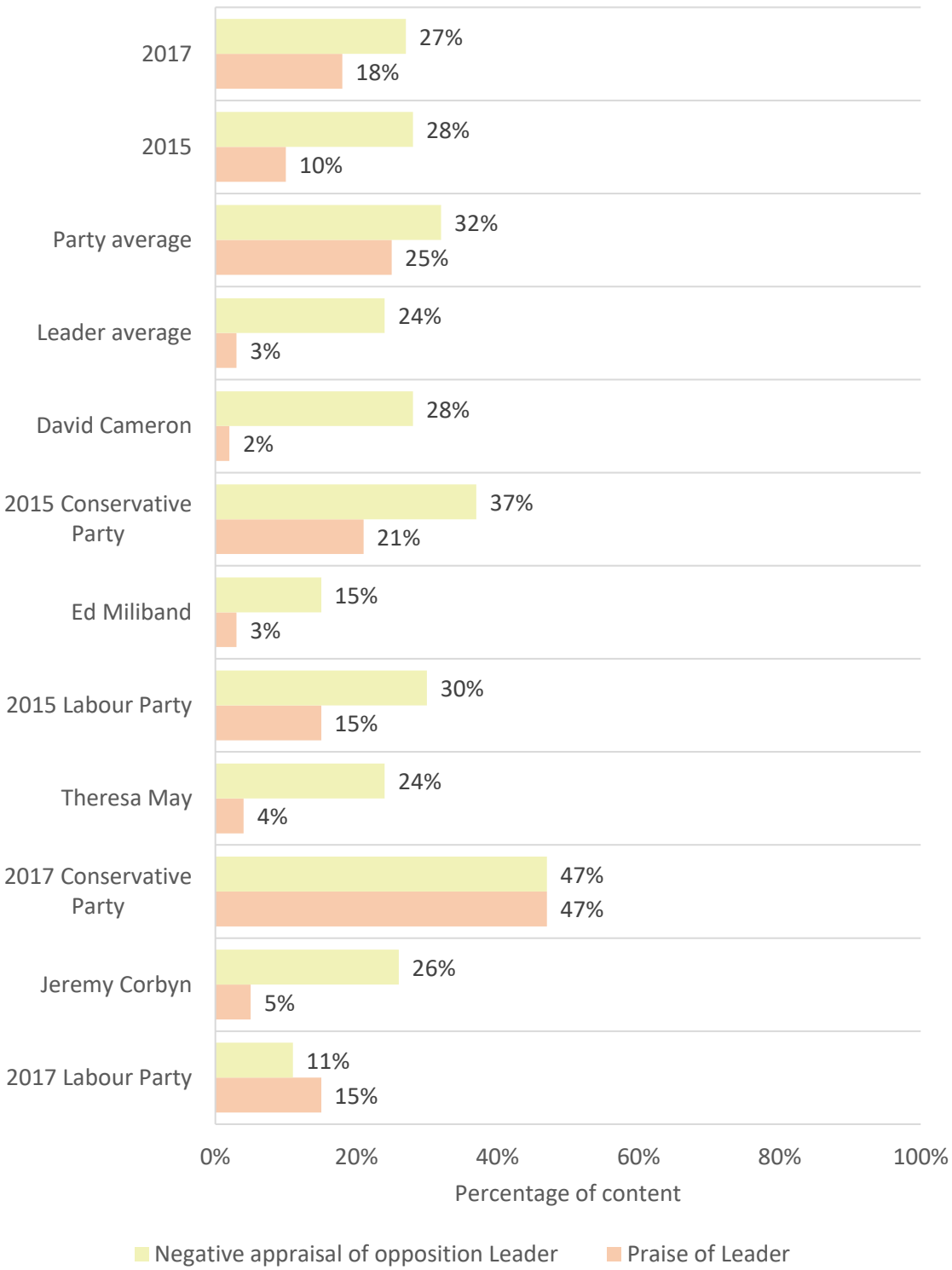
personalised than leaflets, with far closer similarities between targeted advertisements and organic posts than leaflets. The data shows that Facebook is part of a wider trend and not necessarily accelerating the personalisation of politics.



Graph 65. Use of leader in leaflet, party page organic posts and party page targeted advertisements (n=1,609, n Facebook posts = 425, n targeted adverts = 412, n leaflets = 772)[60]

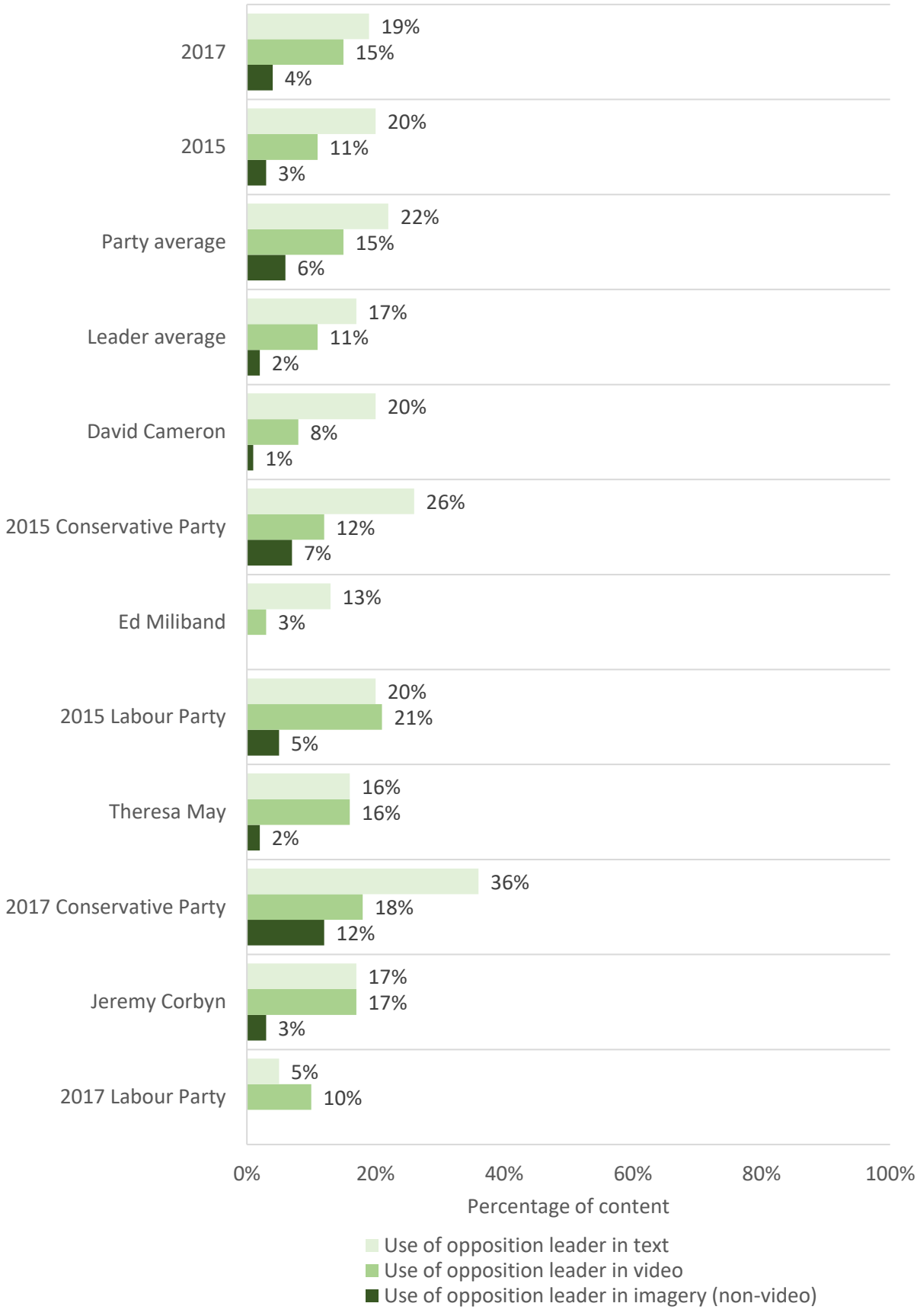
Examining direct praise, a stronger form of direct personalisation, overleaf Graph 66 shows praise to be common especially via the 2017 Conservative Party page. Leader praise is growing, from 10% of content in 2015 to 18% in 2017, however it is important to note that leader pages avoid praising themselves as this would appear egotistical. As for the sentiment attached, Labour has become less negatively personalised, whereas the Conservatives have become more negatively personalised.

[60] Targeted advertising data only available for 2017.



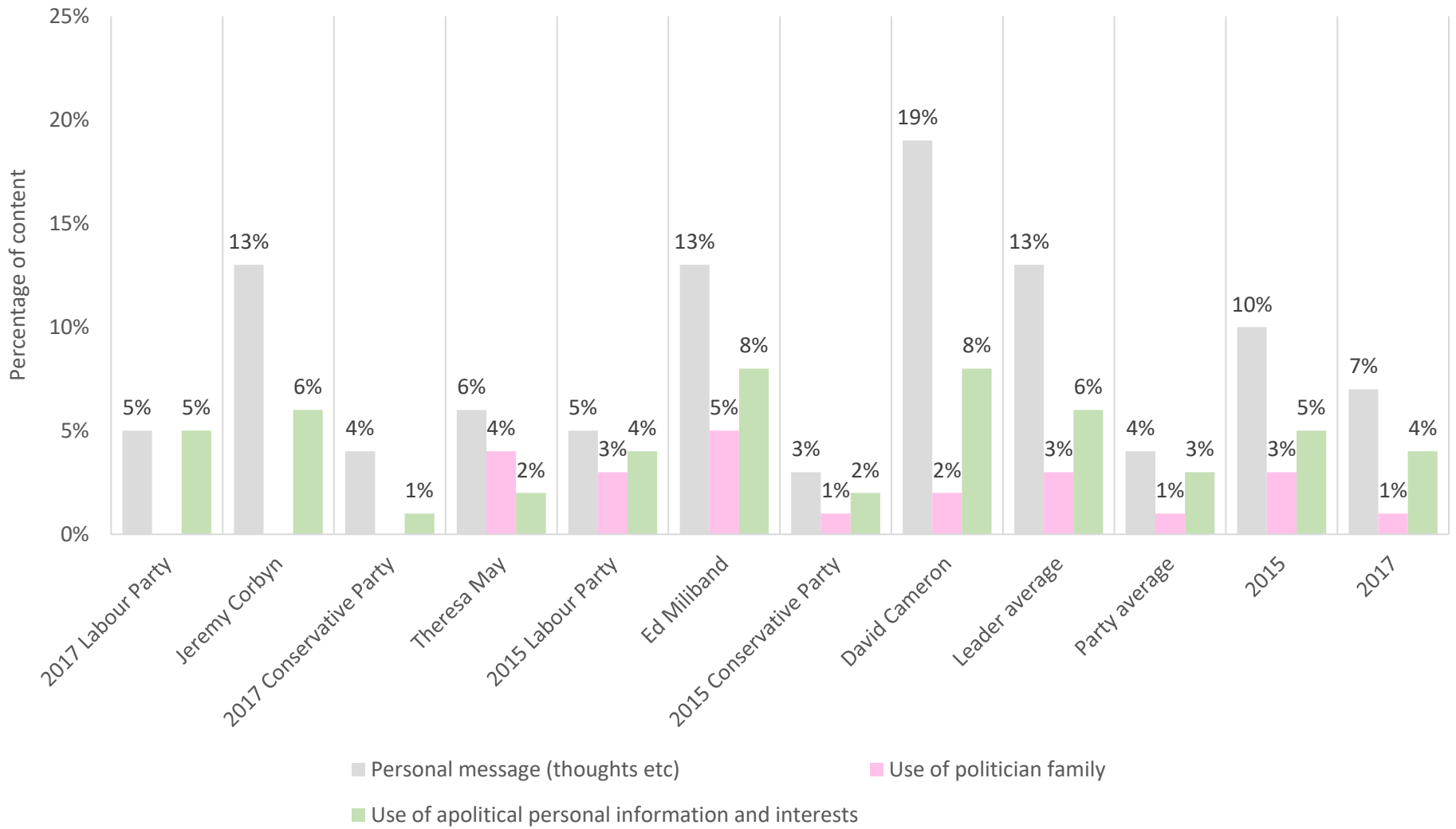
Graph 66. Personalisation via appraisal of leader (n=1,208)

Graph 67 shows that the use of opposition leaders varies across the elements of a post, results show the importance of video and text mentions for negative personalisation.

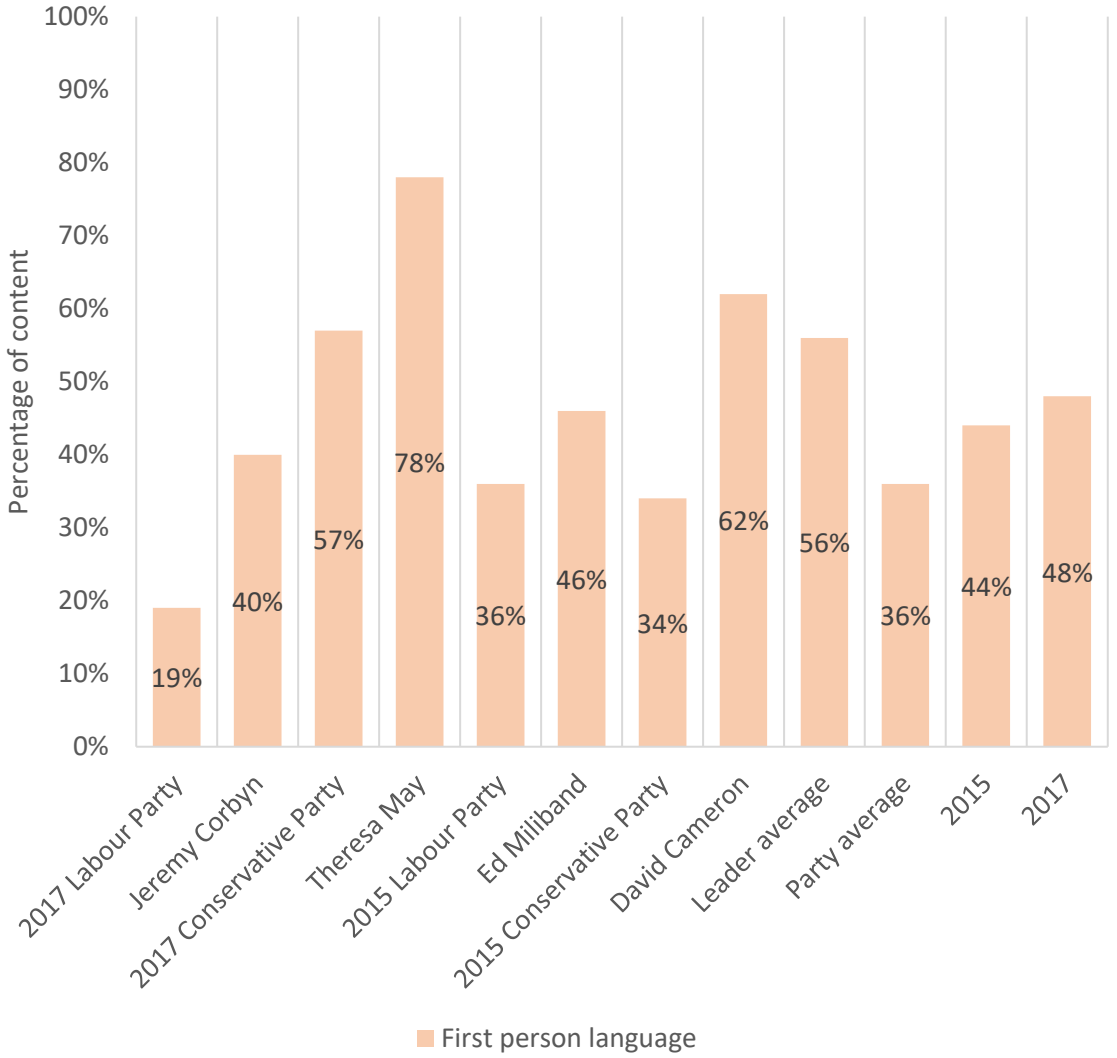


Graph 67. Negative leadership personalisation (n=1,208)

Personalisation also covers communications that prioritise the personal, the use of personalised language and elements that promote personality over policy. Examining the trends in Graphs 68 & 69; as Facebook use has professionalised traditional elements of the personalisation of politics, including the use of family and personal messages, are in strong retreat. Although first person language, the simplest personalised form did see increased use, it is apparent that personalisation today is more related to the use of the leader as a figurehead and symbol, than the actual personality of the leader. For example, Ed Miliband used his family in his page's content (5%) whereas the more private Corbyn did not at all. This reflects that leadership personalisation is increasing, but that personalisation is shifting from utilising actual personality or characteristics, to the use of leaders as figureheads, tokens or the symbolic embodiment of a party's politics.

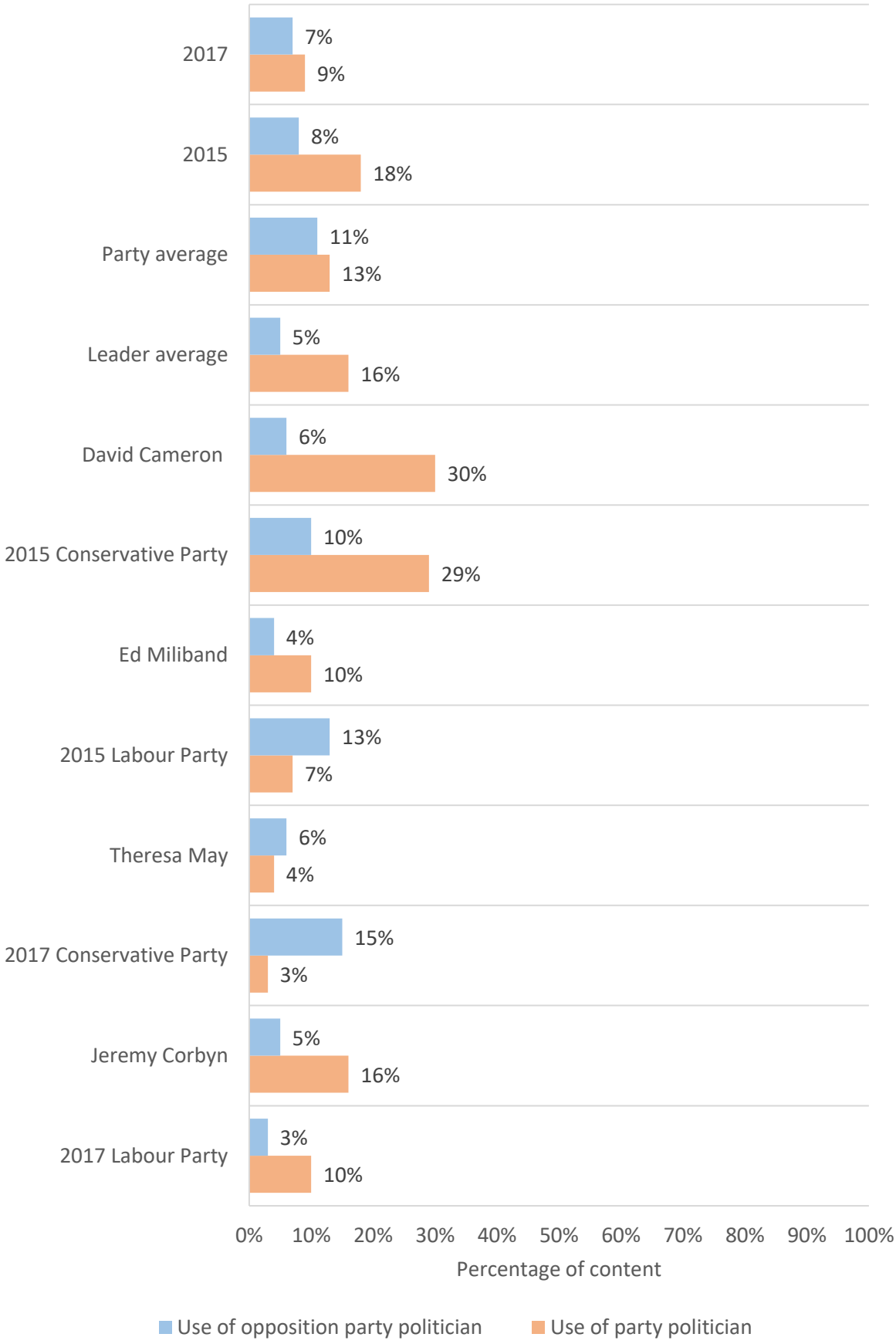


Graph 68. Personalised communication forms used (n=1,208)

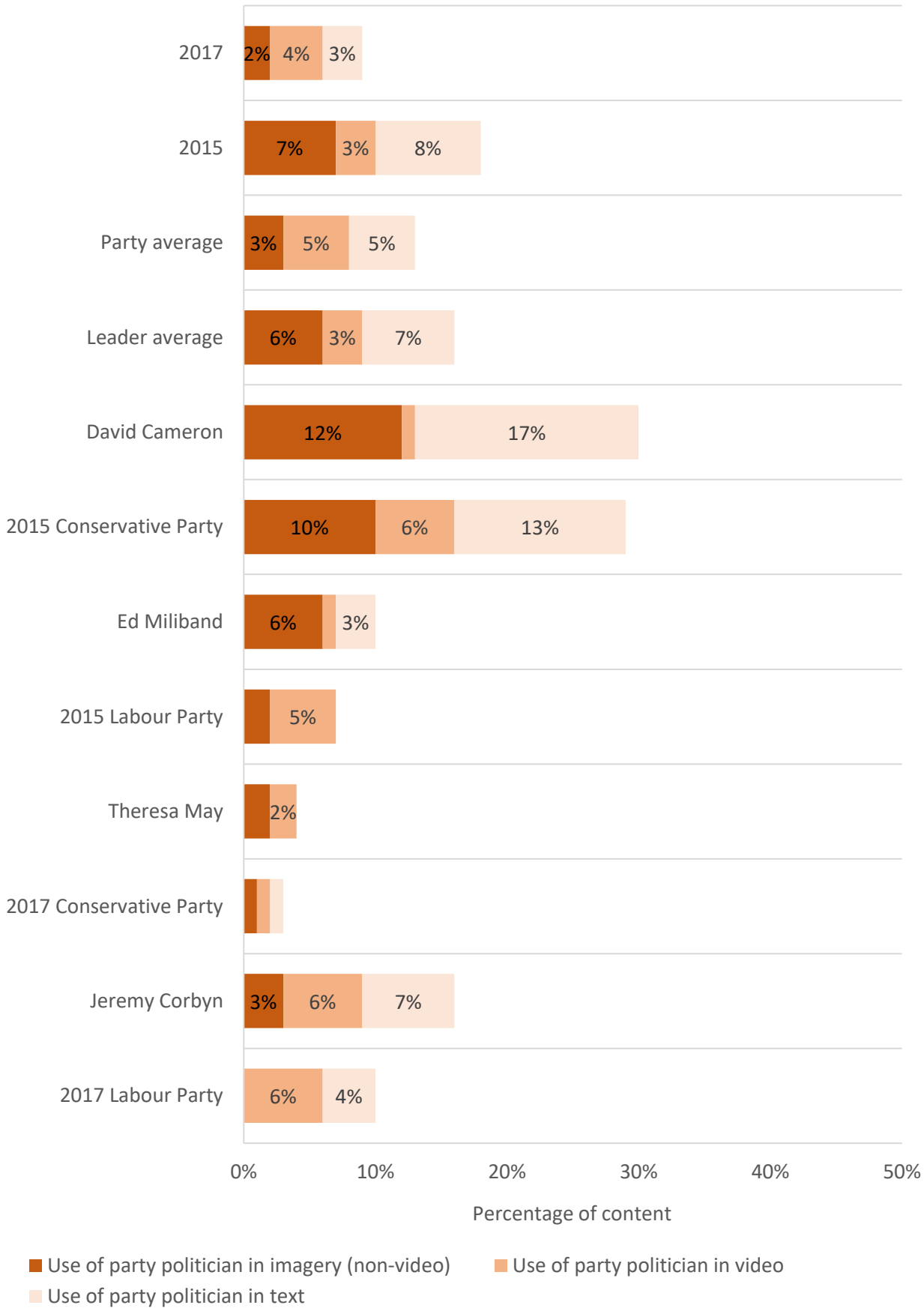


Graph 69. Personalised use of first-person language (n=1,208)

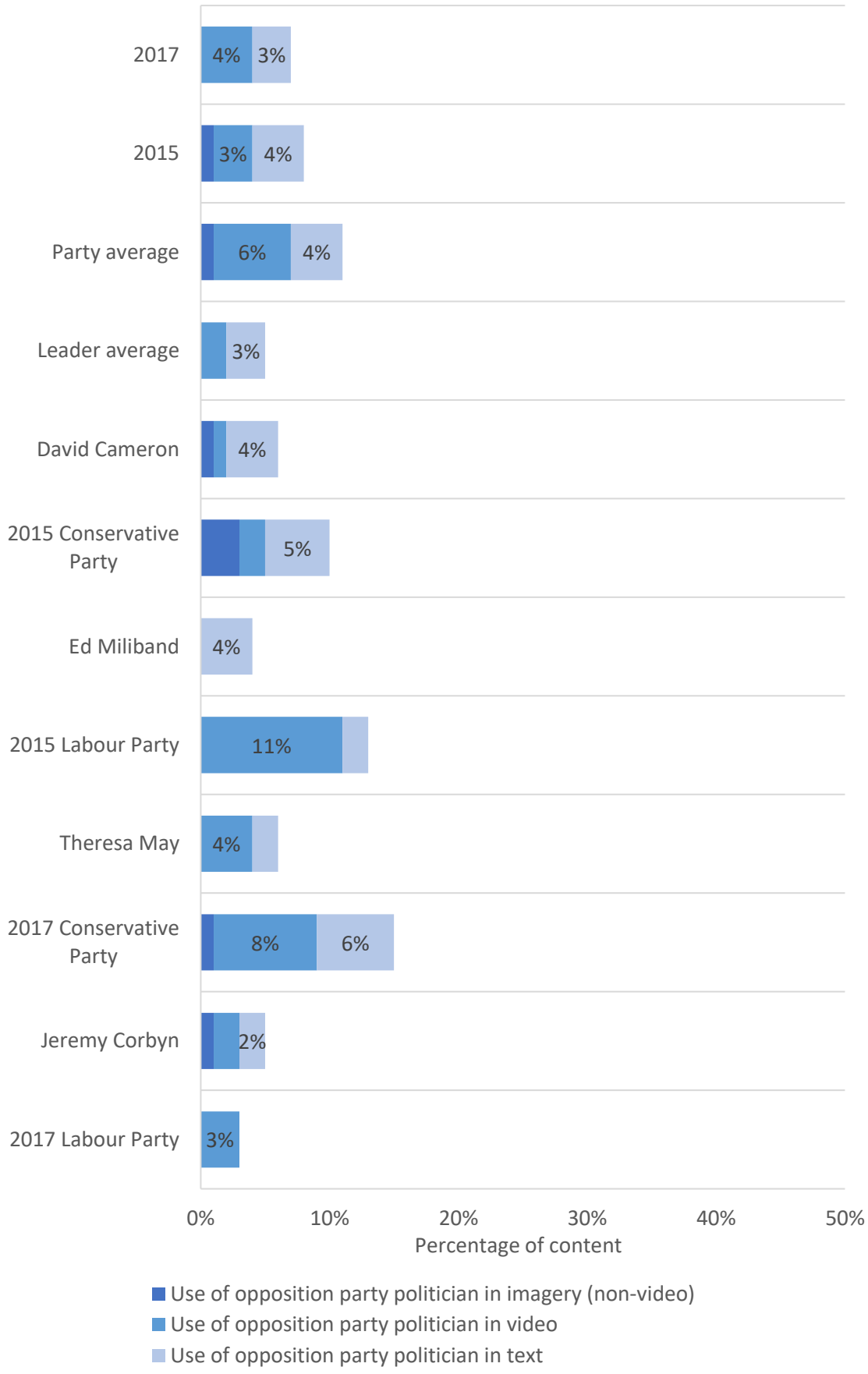
Personalisation is not just limited to the leaders themselves; we have seen the use of party politicians for their positive or negative individual characteristics. As Graph 70 shows in 2015 party politicians were widely used, with this having declined by 2017. For Labour the form has fallen out of favour, while the Conservatives still like to use opposition politicians. Noticeable growth was seen from the Conservative Party page in 2017. The rise of Corbyn and close allies such as Diane Abbott and John McDonnell, saw the Conservatives include these figures in attack posts. However, overall parties are representing themselves more through a leader/public axis than any other system.



Graph 70. Use of party or opposition politicians (n=1,208)

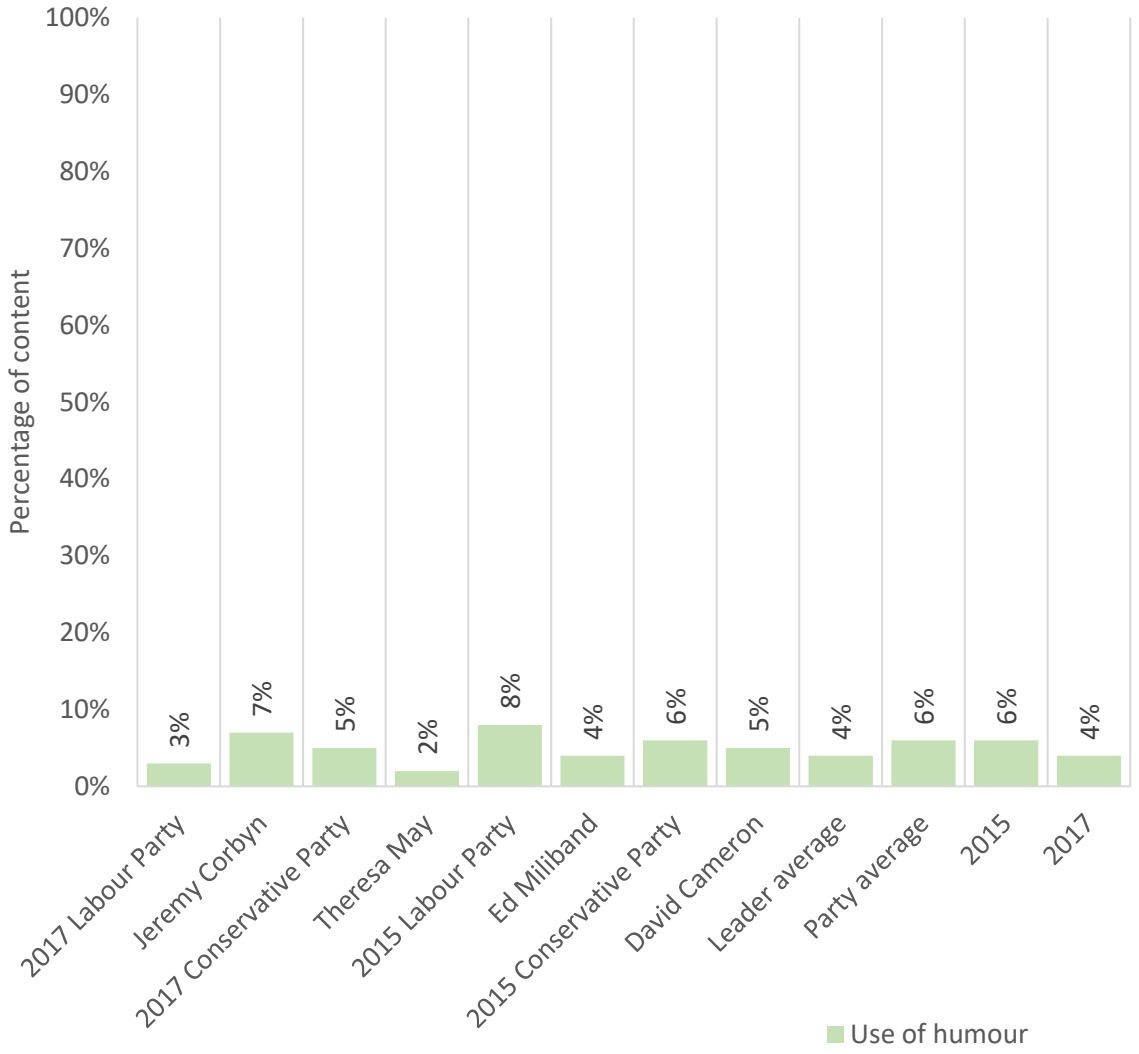


Graph 71. Use of party politicians in detail (n=1,208)

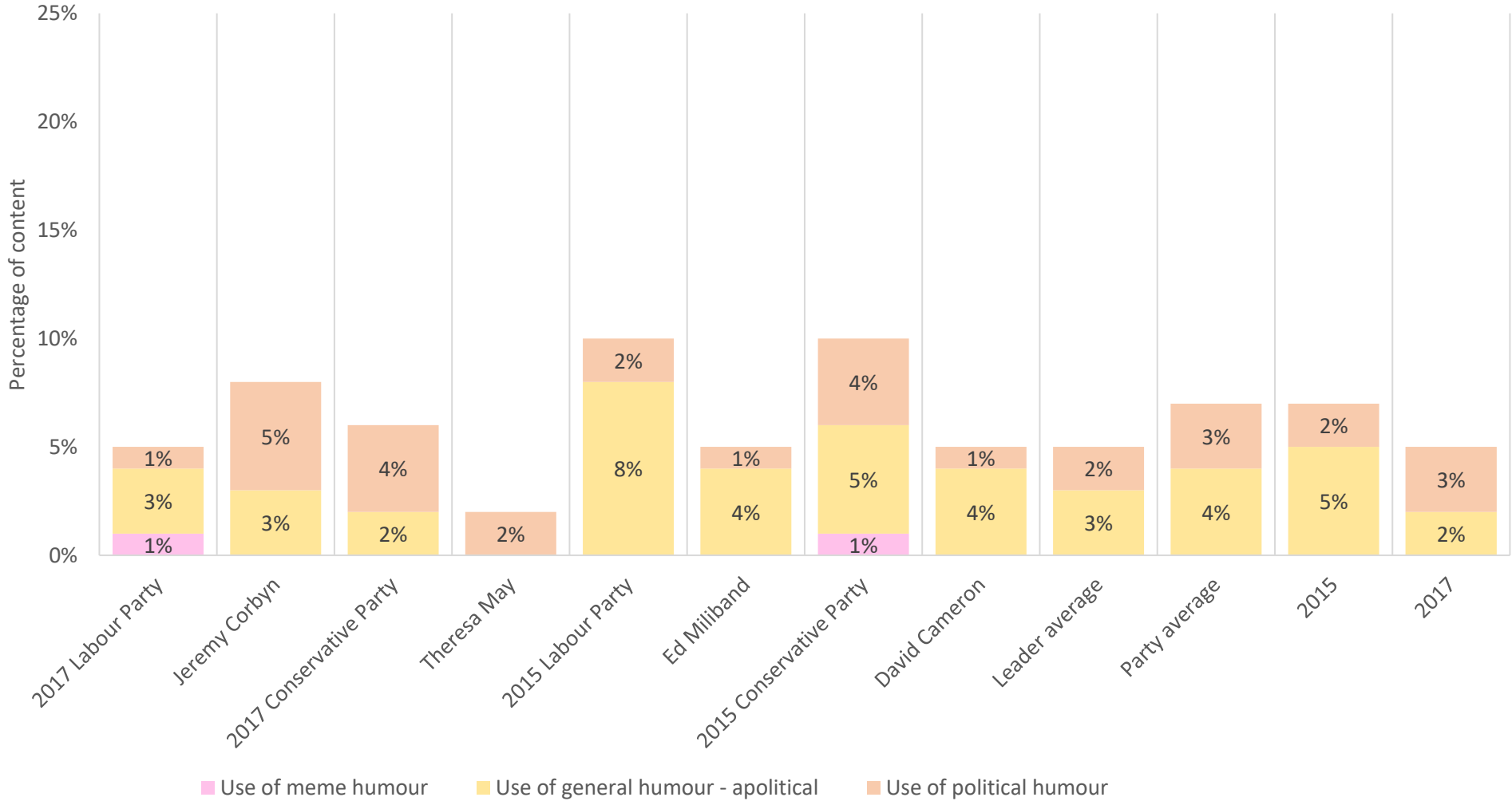


Graph 72. Use of opposition politicians in detail (n=1,208)

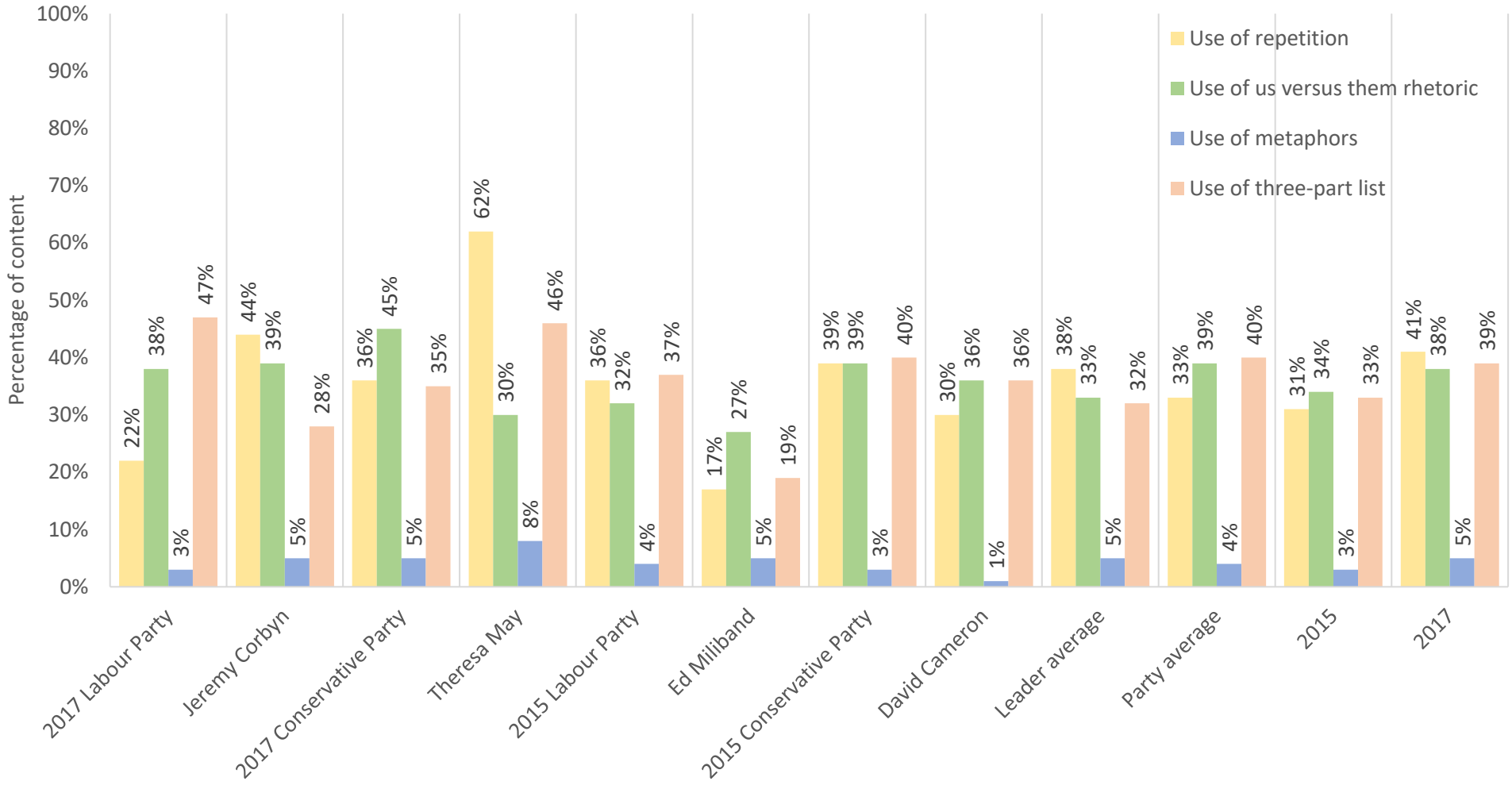
Humour is another form of content seen. Humour offers parties informality, allowing them to either break up their dry political content with alternative humorous forms, or engage in political humour that can reach different supporters. Overall, as shown in Graphs 73 and 74, the form is in decline from 6% in 2015 to 4% in 2017. However, this is centrally due to a decline in party page use and the role of Theresa May. Due to declines in humour use from 2015 to 2017, party pages are now used as serious vehicles of political information. In contrast, for leader pages humour has remained a consistent form, bar Theresa May's page. For Corbyn's page, humour is a core part of a personalisation strategy used to humanise the leader.



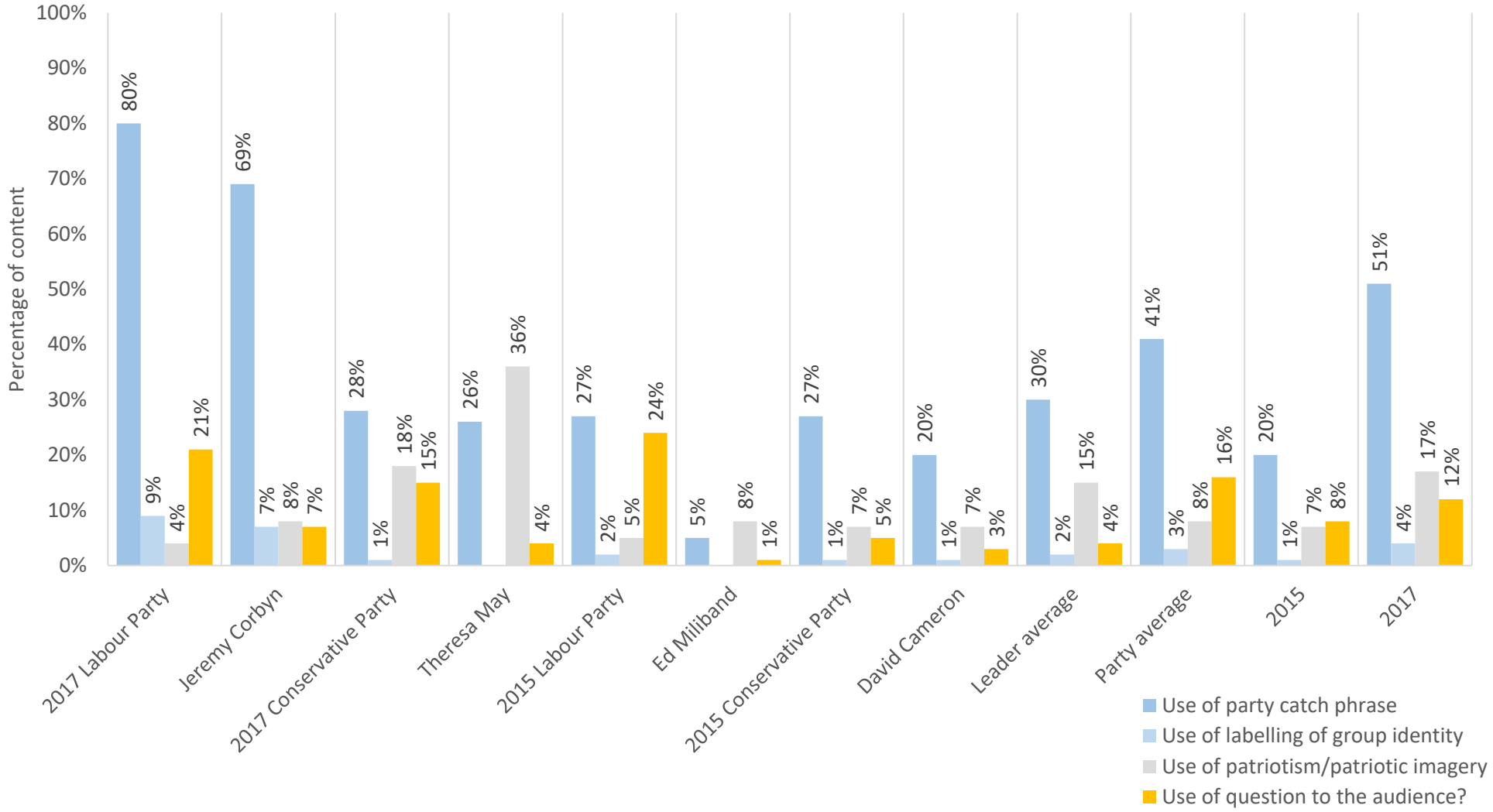
Graph 73. Use of humour (n=1,208)



Graph 74. Use of humour in detail (n=1,208)



Graph 75. Use of rhetorical tools (n=1,208)



Graph 76. Use of further rhetorical tools (n=1,208)

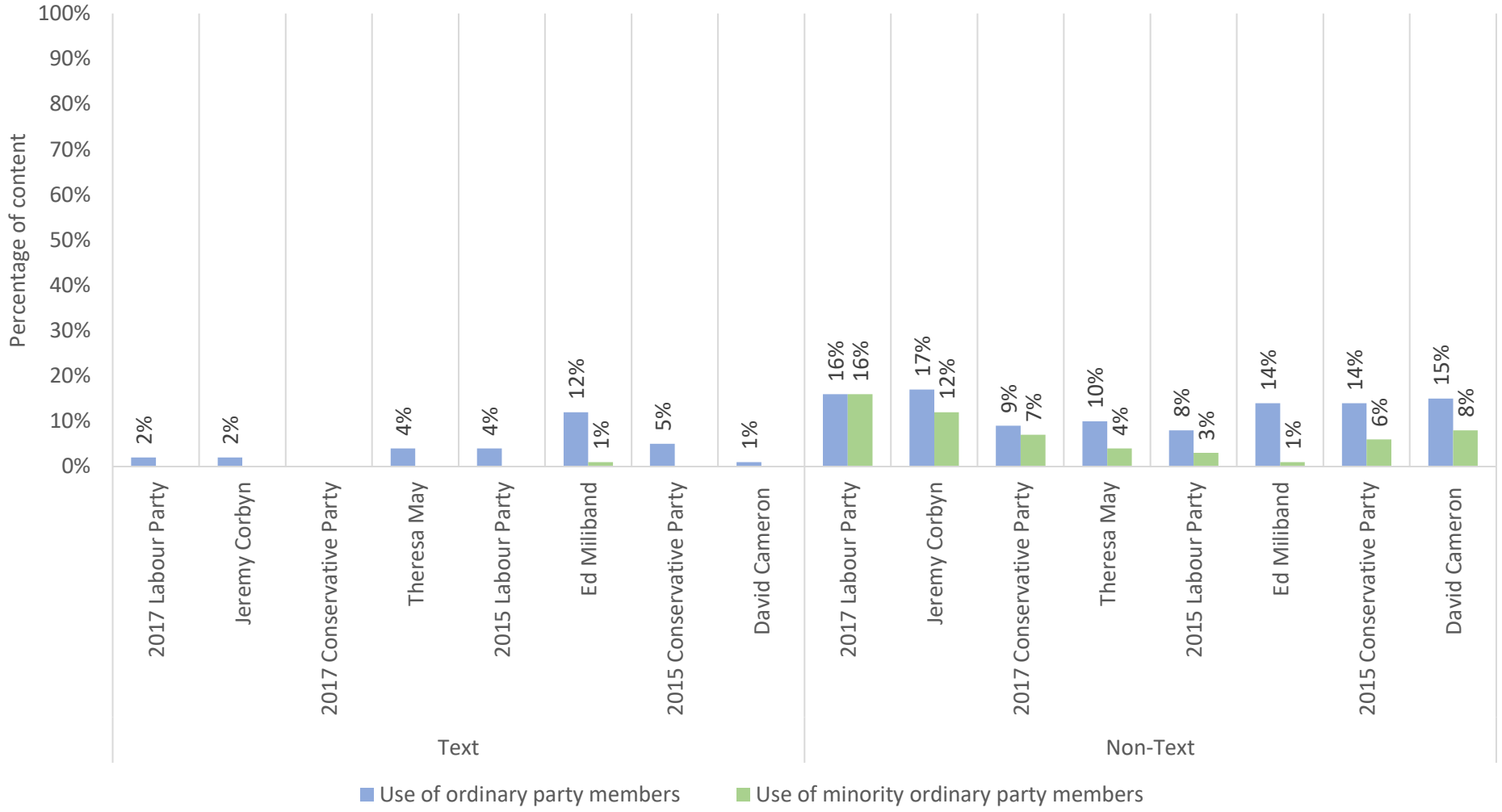
Other rhetorical tools are also common, Graphs 75 & 76 show that repetition, us versus them signposting, three-part lists and party catch phrase use are common. Questions are also popular, growing in use from 8% in 2015 to 12% in 2017. All the rhetorical tools studied saw large increases from 2015 to 2017. The parties are becoming smarter at using hooks to entice people towards content.

Overall, personalisation and rhetoric are popular strategies. The advanced use of rhetoric shows the professionalised nature of party communications. Reflecting the wider literature, parties like to campaign positively using the face and voice of their leader, and negatively using opposition leaders. However, it is apparent that we may have reached peak personalisation, while the form has become hollow. Today's personalised campaigns are not personalised in the traditional stylistic sense of communications research. Leader pages are used as limited routes for genuine personality, leaders instead act as figureheads, avenues for information or the voice of the party. The Conservatives have arguably professionalised the form to an impersonal level, while the Labour Party page tactically avoided the form. Personalisation is clearly a trend that Facebook has enhanced but not revolutionised. Nevertheless, the quality and nature of modern negative personalised communications is a clear evolution of previous abilities, given the ability to edit news content or interviews.

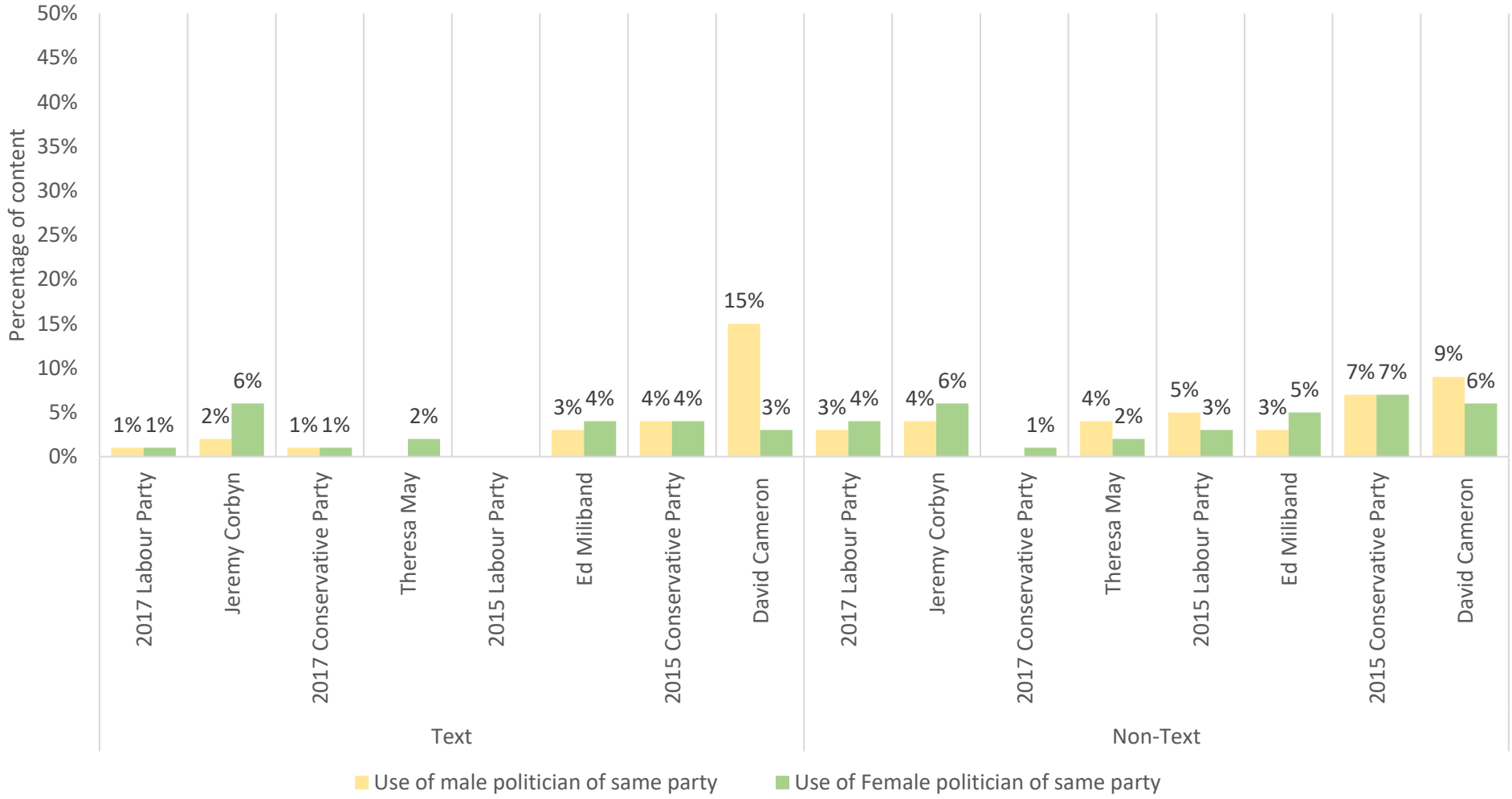
6.3: How is Facebook used to generate participation?

How is partisanship and praise used?

Parties can also use text and imagery of their members to promote party activism and partisan emotion. Heavy use of depiction and partisanship would show an interest in energising the electoral base, virtual members and partisans. Graphs 77 and 78 show the use of party members and politicians across text and non-text content. The use of party members is a clear communications strategy across both elections and parties, this is centrally via the non-text elements of a post especially images and video. Rates of depiction are much higher for Labour than the Conservatives, with interest in depiction focussed on broader party groups centrally ordinary and minority party members.



Graph 77. Depiction of ordinary party members (n=2,416, n of text elements = 1,208, n of non-text elements = 1,208)



Graph 78. Depiction of politician members (n=2,416, n of text elements = 1,208, n of non-text elements = 1,208)

Image 16. 2017 Corbyn use of ordinary party members[61]

The high rates of depiction show the interest parties have in; reporting their everyday campaign approaches, promoting people behind the movement, matching policy to party member activism and in highlighting leaders alongside party members. Outside of the broadest party groups, other party groups depiction is less common. The depiction of minority, male, female, LGBT or disabled politicians is very limited with rates only around 1% at maximum (see Appendix 10), reflecting a lack of portrayal seen in public depiction. The parties are also using Facebook to show and promote their wider party-political talent. This was especially seen in 2015 by David Cameron, who showcased dozens of new prospective MPs in target seats. Overall, the generation of positive partisan identity is seen mainly through Labour, but usage is relatively stable across elections. Clearly party identity is central to how parties campaign on Facebook, however this approach does not necessarily show the parties are placing greater focus upon virtual members over the public. This is because, as seen in the high rate use of broad group depiction, a lot of content is focussed on putting party members alongside the public. Thus, rather than showing an interest in just energising virtual members, use appears dualistic as it is about

[61] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10155402096048872 accessed 2/4/2020

showing the activities and care the party and its activists have in the wider voting public. This conclusion is reflected in Graphs 79, 80 & 81 examine the use of praise. Direct praise is limited, members are used as images of activism, with Facebook mainly aimed at those who are not already party members. Generally partisan based appraisal communications are positive. Only four core forms of partisanship are commonly seen; praise of members, campaigners, MPs and negative appraisal of opposition MPs. Negative appraisal is focussed on opposition MP's, however some negative appraisal based upon campaigners or party members is seen.

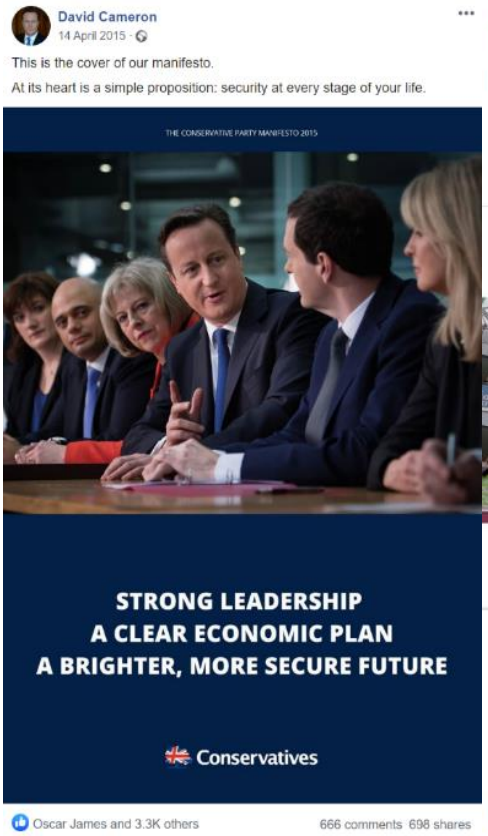
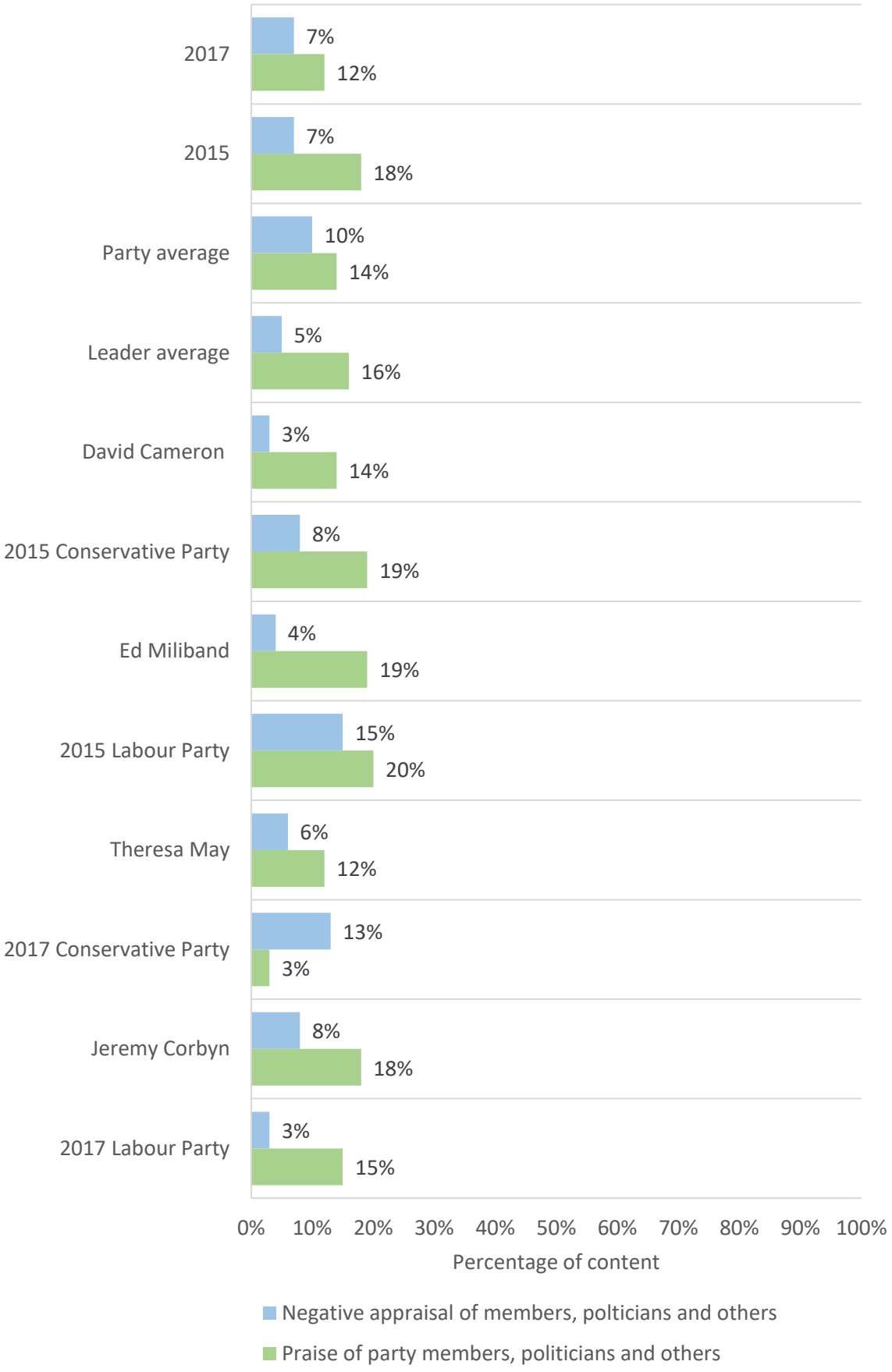
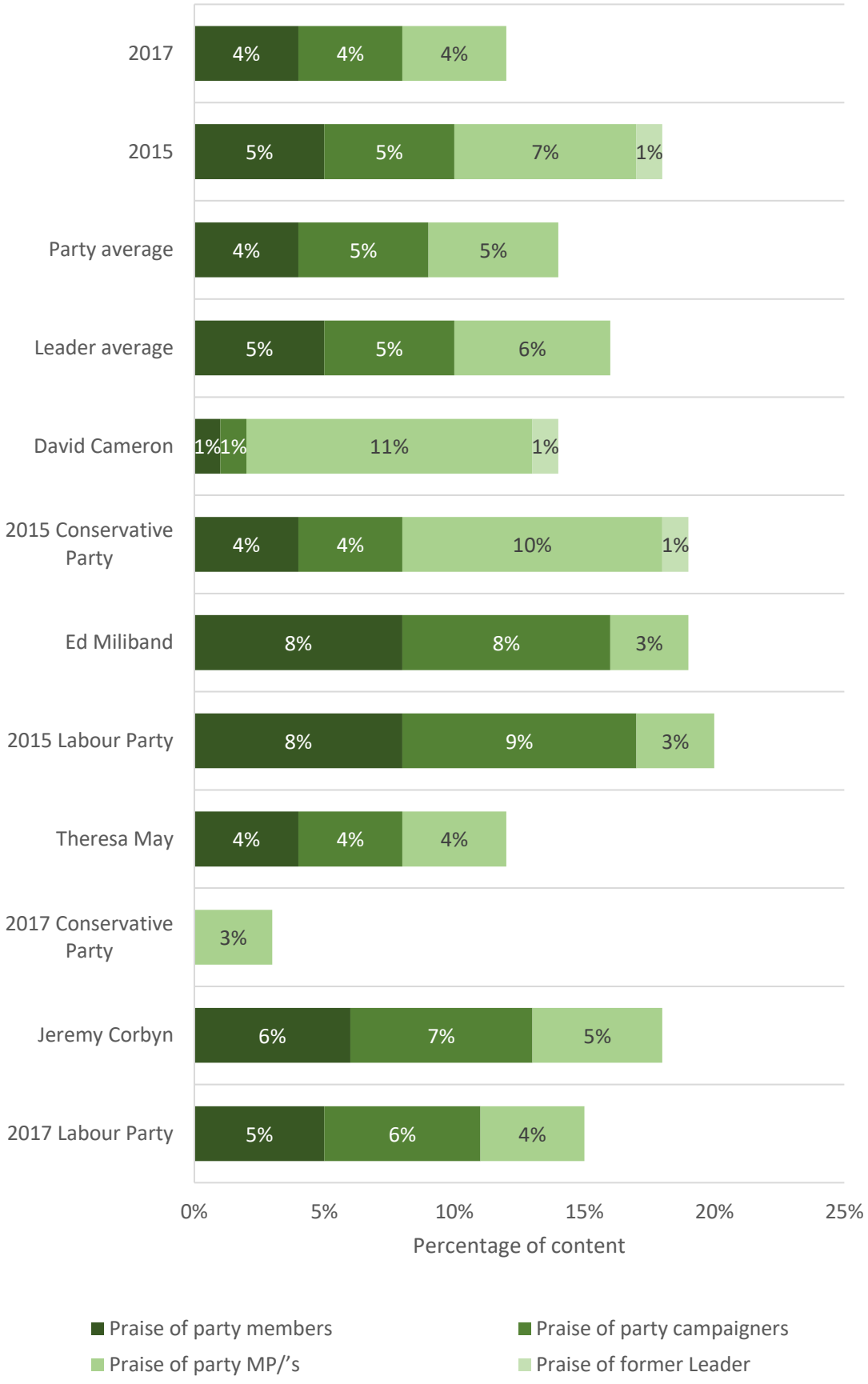


Image 17. 2015 Cameron use of minority politician of same party[62]
Image 18. 2017 Corbyn use of minority politician of same party[63]

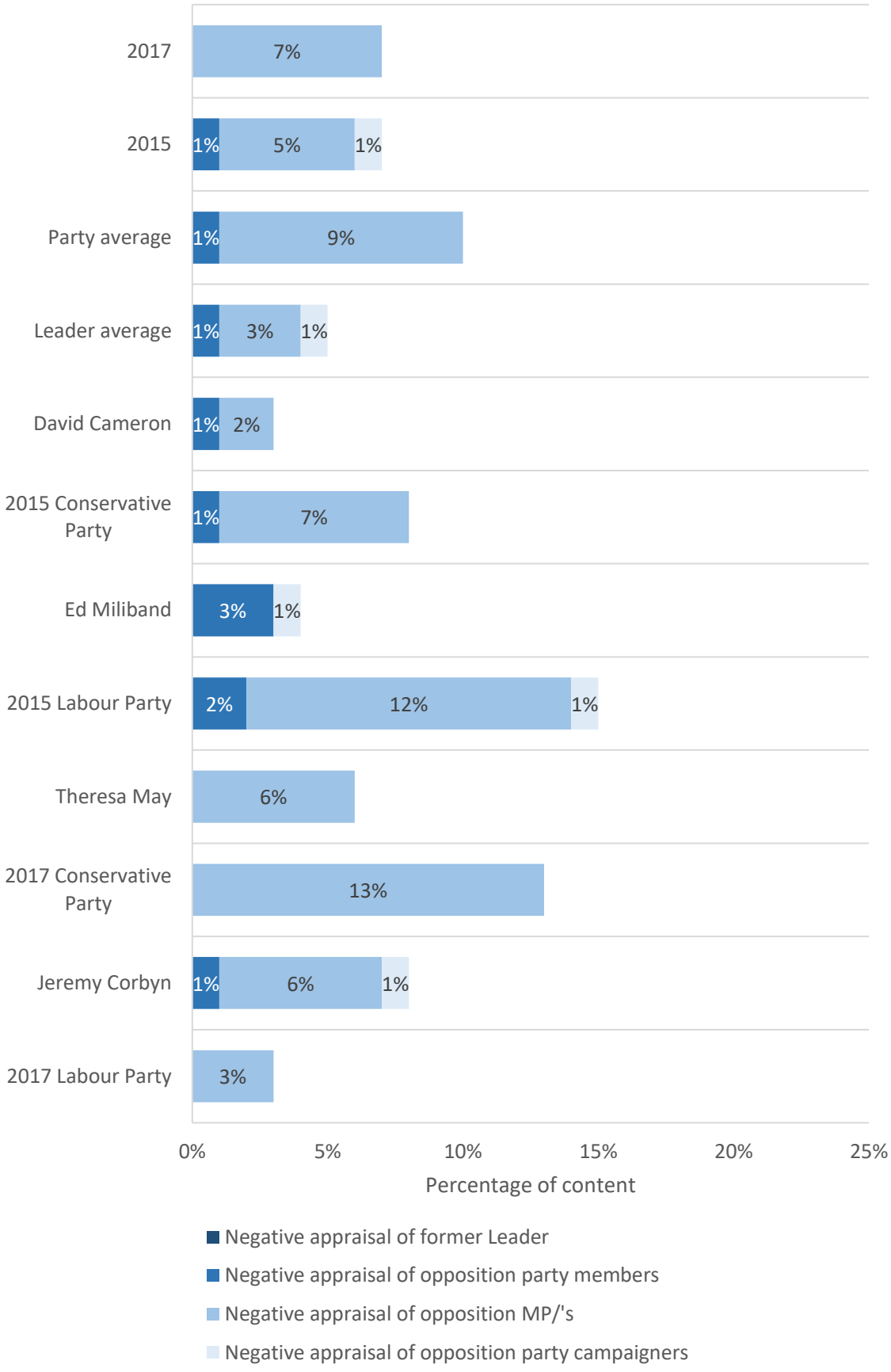
[62] https://www.facebook.com/DavidCameron/10155373792308872 accessed 3/3/2020
[63] https://www.facebook.com/JeremyCorbynMP/posts/10155373792308872 accessed 3/3/2020



Graph 79. Use of partisanship, praise and negativity (n=1,208)



Graph 80. Partisanship, praise in detail (n=1,208)



Graph 81. Partisanship, negativity in detail (n=1,208)

Overall, the data shows that parties are using Facebook to generate limited partisan identity and praise party campaigners, with the central focus bringing together the party and public. The parties are trying to do three things via partisanship and praise communications. Firstly, promote virtual and official members activity. Secondarily, thank and highlight activists. Finally, highlight to the general public that the party is grassroots in nature, on their side and putting considerable effort to speak to them on their terms. Thus, rather than partisanship and praise being a form focussed on speaking to only virtual or official members, the parties are trying to reach the public through imagery of their memberships.

Are parties using internal or external links?

Links are a widely used form that enable parties to encourage viewers of content to go off the platform and engage with other e-campaign tools such as websites or social media. By acting as signposts, links allow for the steering of audiences to online locations for potential campaign information or participation, a novel capacity for a campaign tool. Two core strategies are used by parties, external and internal links. External links drive those who view the content, off the content, page and platform onto other websites. In contrast, internal links promote the visitation of other Facebook pages, meaning that viewers are not encouraged to leave the platform but are prompted to leave the content and page. As links are often integrated into other content forms, for example video and photo content, link forms can exist on top of the other content forms coded for (e.g. a video can also feature a link). Set 3 shows examples of the participation content forms seen including the use of links.

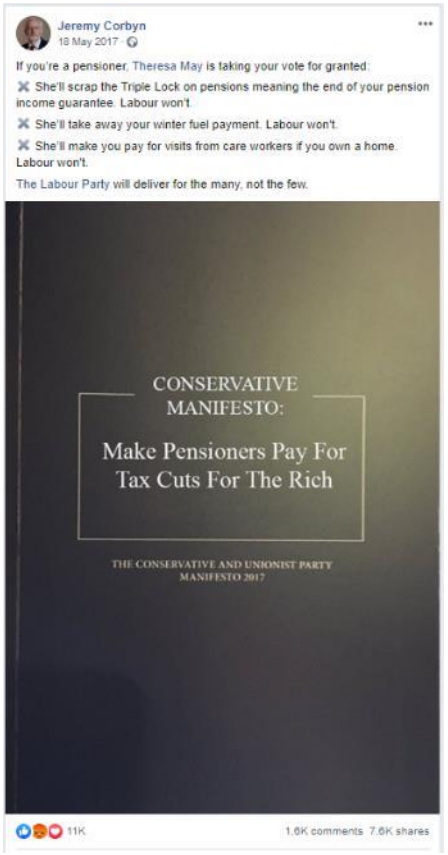
Image Set 3: Post examples – Participation approaches

Visit party website

Call to share

Call to join party

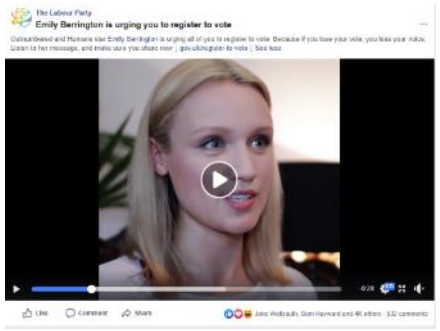
Link to opposition Facebook page

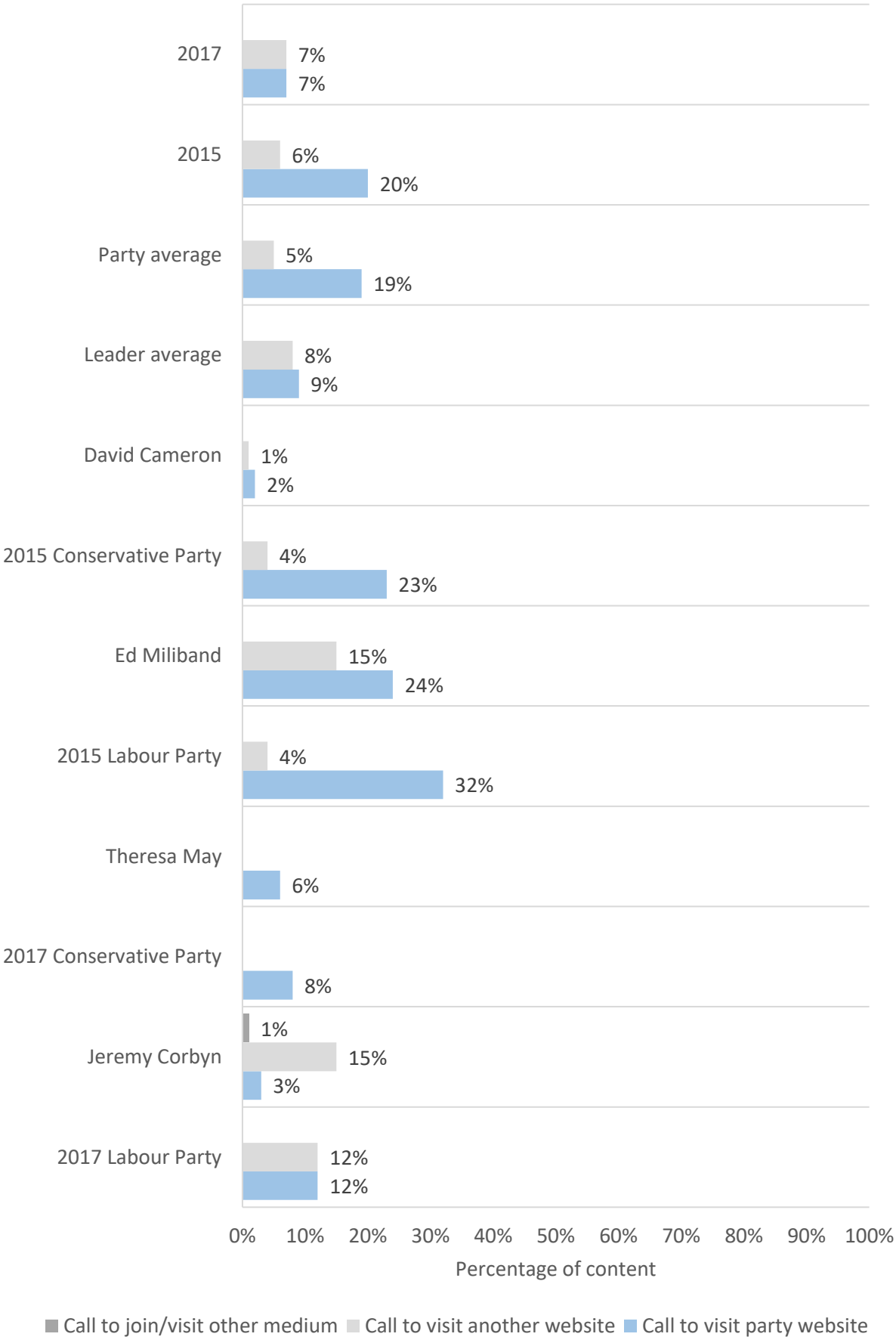


Volunteer

Join event

Register to vote





Graph 82. Calls to visit other locations (n=1,208)

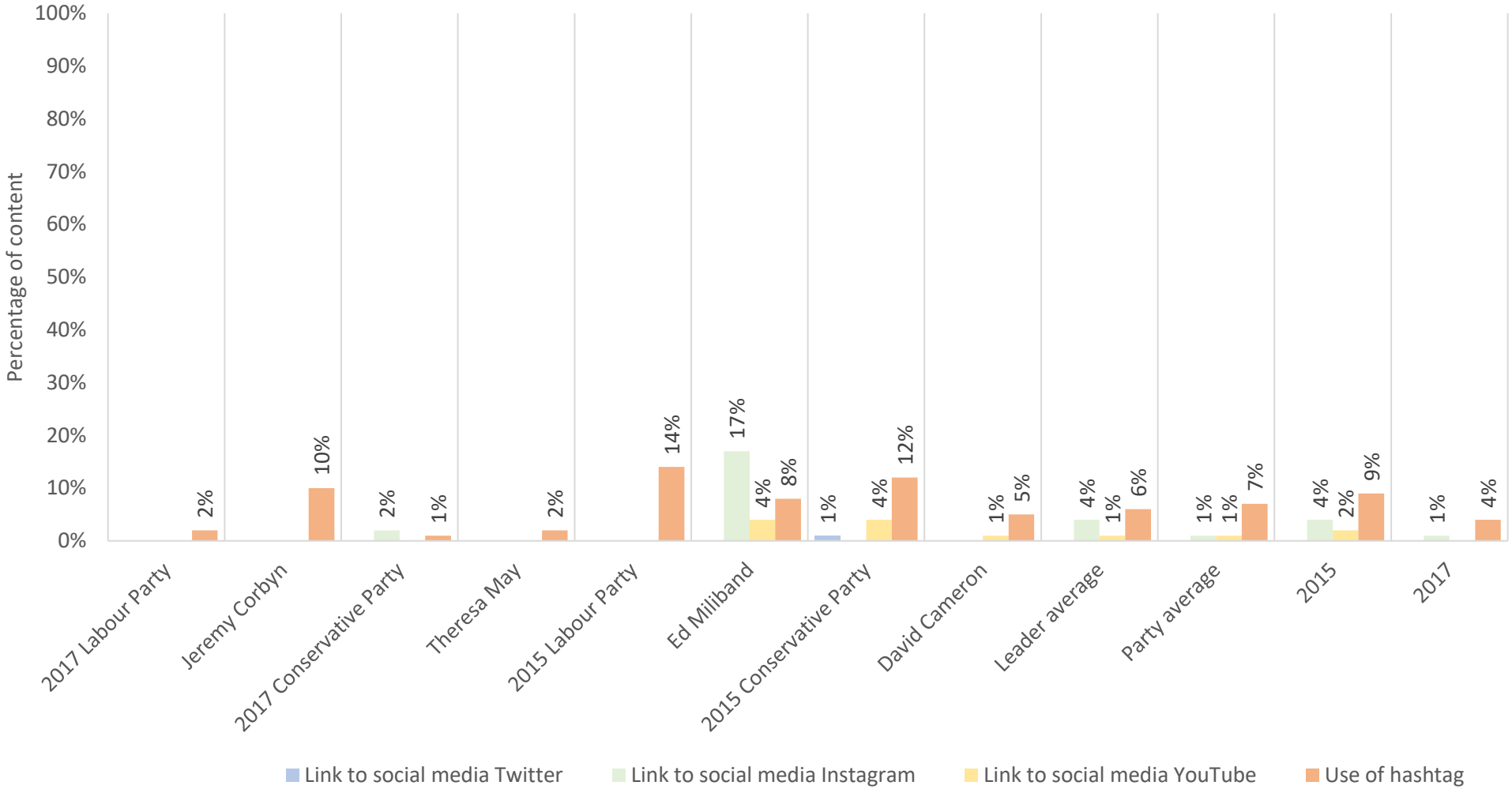
One would expect party websites, a central location for party information and other forms of organisation, to be extremely popular. Within the eco-system of party websites, alongside official central party websites (for example labour.org.uk), other party websites were also coded. Of note is how the parties create separate interlinked party websites, such as *sharethefacts* or *schoolcuts* that are later closed. This approach shows the novel system the parties create around election time to gather data, organise supporters or deliver information. Parties are creating their own online campaign eco-systems with the use of party-concealed websites showing interest in reaching audiences without branding. Party websites are today not just central party pages such as conservatives.com, instead the capacities of the internet have allowed parties to create bespoke issue or group identity led websites. This has allowed the parties to speak to and activate different audiences using different websites, for example Labour's schoolcuts page was used to reach families.

Despite this novel professionalised and nuanced approach to party websites, Graph 82 shows that direct calls to visit a party website have considerably declined. 20% of 2015 content asked the viewer to visit a party website, but by 2017 this was only 7%. The largest declines were seen via the Conservatives, with Labour also seeing a steep decline but some continued use. In contrast to party websites, Graph 82 shows that calls to visit other websites have been static at 7% across both 2015 and 2017. With most of these website links to government vote registry sites. This form continues to be significant given the importance of voter registration to Labour, with heavy use seen from Jeremy Corbyn's page. The party believed in his ability to reach outside of virtual members through his very high engagement, understanding his younger more diverse audience are also those less likely to be registered. This approach shows Labour believes the platform has a clear public role given that official and virtual members are likely to already be registered. Both Corbyn's page and the party page were strongly used to promote registration, showing how the party clearly believes in the power of organic message spread.

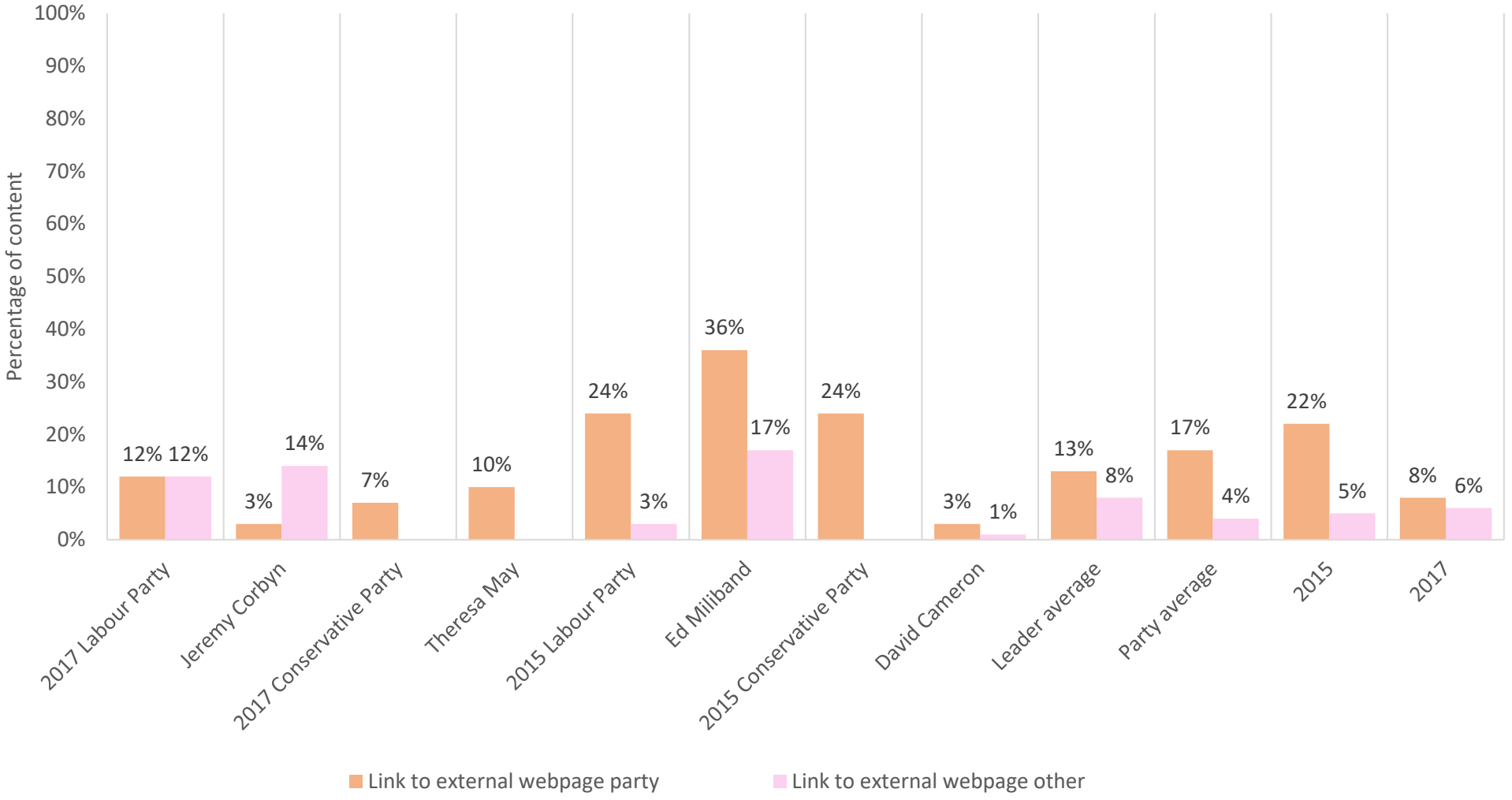
Overall, party websites that were previously so integral to e-campaigns (Gibson, 2015), are shown to have become far less important. The two parties, across both leader and party pages, have become less interested in pushing Facebook users towards more traditional e-campaign mediums and organisational structures. Instead, parties appear to wish to keep users on the platform unless for

very specific purposes, centrally voter registration or limited party website use. This may be because over time the parties are using the platform for information rather than participation. Or if participation is still key, either; the parties believe Facebook is a superior location for many of these elements, or that there is little value in trying to utilise virtual members as online and offline activists within a website framework.

The specific use of external links has also shifted considerably over time; Graphs 83 & 84 show what external links the posts' featured. As is noticeable there are more links to party websites than direct calls to visit them, while the trend of website decline is mirrored in actual links. Similarly, links are more popular than Facebook ascribes because other content forms can feature links (e.g. video) but this is not logged by Facebook. This highlights the weaknesses of automated approaches to data analysis.



Graph 83. Use of external links and where those links lead (n=1,208)



Graph 84. Use of external links and where those links lead (n=1,208)

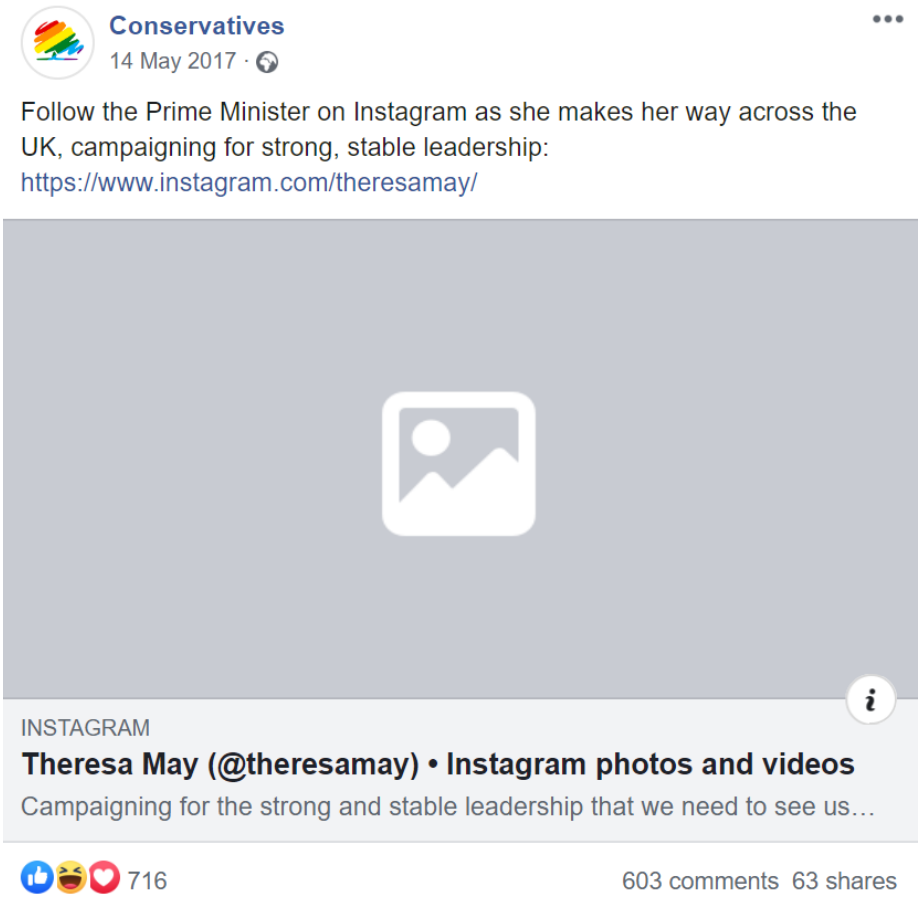
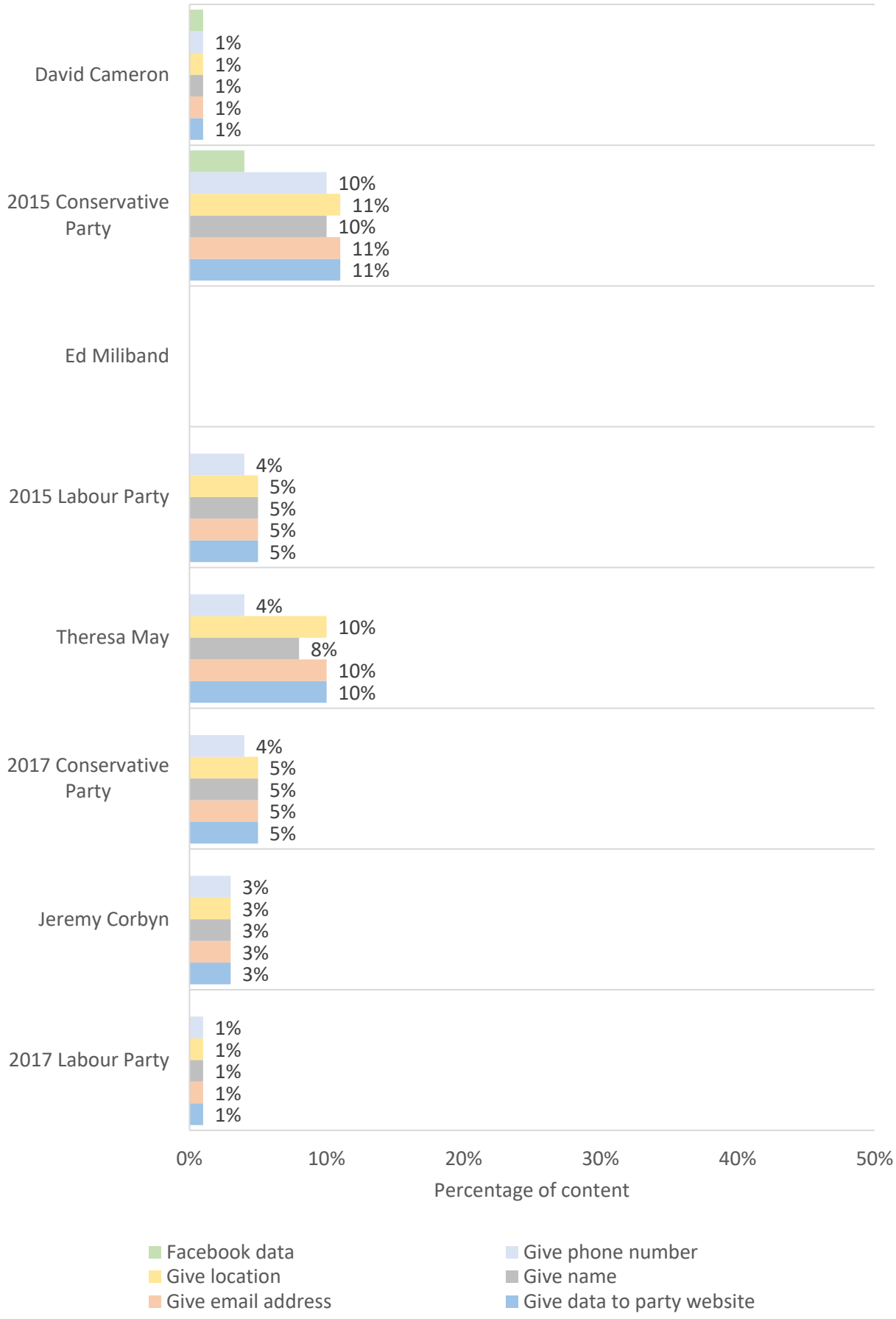


Image 19. 2017 Conservative use of link to Instagram[64]

Links are seen to other social media for the practises of promotion, however this was only a 2015 trend, as the parties have become uninterested in trying to increase their followership on other social platforms through promotion on Facebook. Outside of external websites, hashtags are used across both parties but is a form in decline. In 2015, both Labour and the Conservatives appreciated the grouping/externalising capacities of hashtags, including their ability to link cross-platform content together. However, only Jeremy Corbyn consistently used the form in 2017. Corbyn's continued usage is important as the page exploited the cross-social-network power of hashtags to integrate his online communities' activity. This shows some interest in organising audiences to engage with content in a novel manner across all networks.

[64] https://www.facebook.com/conservatives/posts/10154984054004279 accessed 17/1/2020



Graph 85. Use of data gathering (n=1,208)

Data gathering through websites is a structural participation form that is stable across elections. It is important to note that this data only shows working links, thus due to the age of the campaign many of these websites are now defunct, given the date of data collection this means 2015 rates are likely higher, while 2017 data is more accurate. Graph 85 shows clear party trends, with the Conservatives more interested in the form than Labour. The 2015 Conservative Party page saw a particularly extensive data gathering exercise, with the snap election of 2017 showing less defined efforts especially by Labour. Given data is now integral to campaigns and that the parties appear to use Facebook to reach the general public, one would expect parties to heavily push users to give their data. However, although many posts do try to collect data especially in 2015, attempts are now more limited. This suggests that Facebook based data gathering is occurring through other avenues either; earlier in the year via organic posts/targeted adverts or across the one-month campaign by targeted adverts.

Image 20. 2017 Labour link to donation and data gathering party website[65]

[65] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10154560248062411 accessed 10/10/2019

Alongside external links, links to other Facebook pages were also well used. These links allow pages to push supporters onto other Facebook pages, as well as allowing parties to promote other Facebook communities and different voices. This allows party pages to generate their own social network eco-system, where pages will reciprocate by rebroadcasting content. As Graph 86 shows, the promotion of party-political Facebook pages is prevalent, with this seen firstly by the Conservatives in 2015 then heavily by Labour in 2017. News links were not common, but Appendix 10 shows mainstream news links were seen for Jeremy Corbyn's page (4%). Unlike external links, internal links are shown to be growing in popularity. The growing use of politician, news, charity, activist group and satellite page internal links shows that parties are scaffolding their and allies online Facebook presences together. Parties are appreciating the forming of online eco-systems and information networks; however, these are online/platform-only hybrid networks rather than Chadwick's offline/online idea of media hybridity (2013).

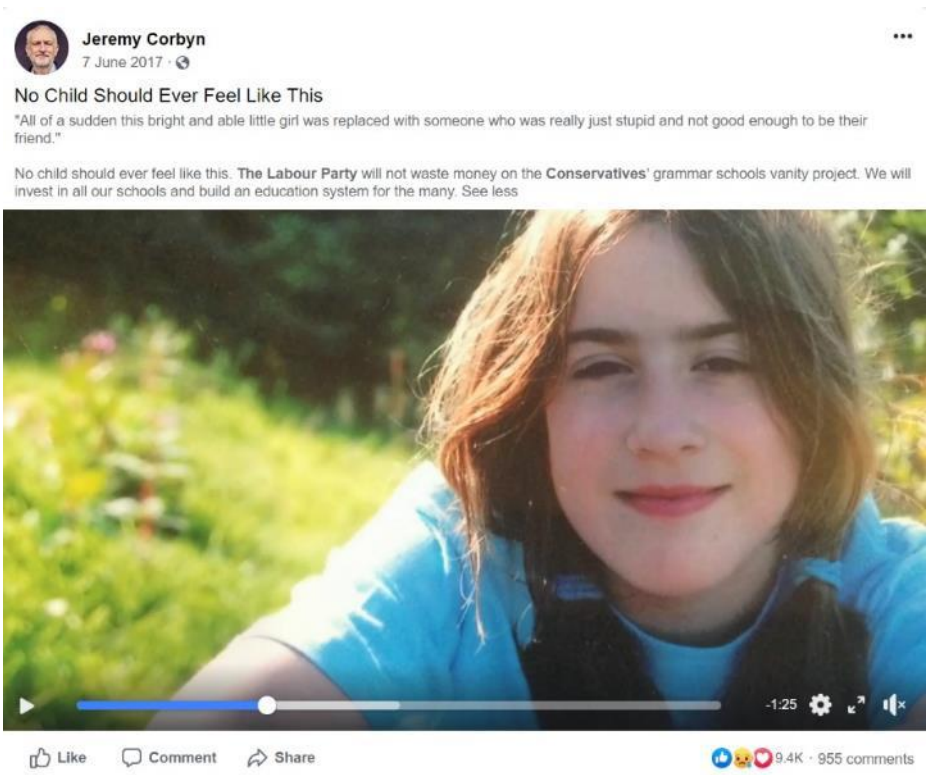


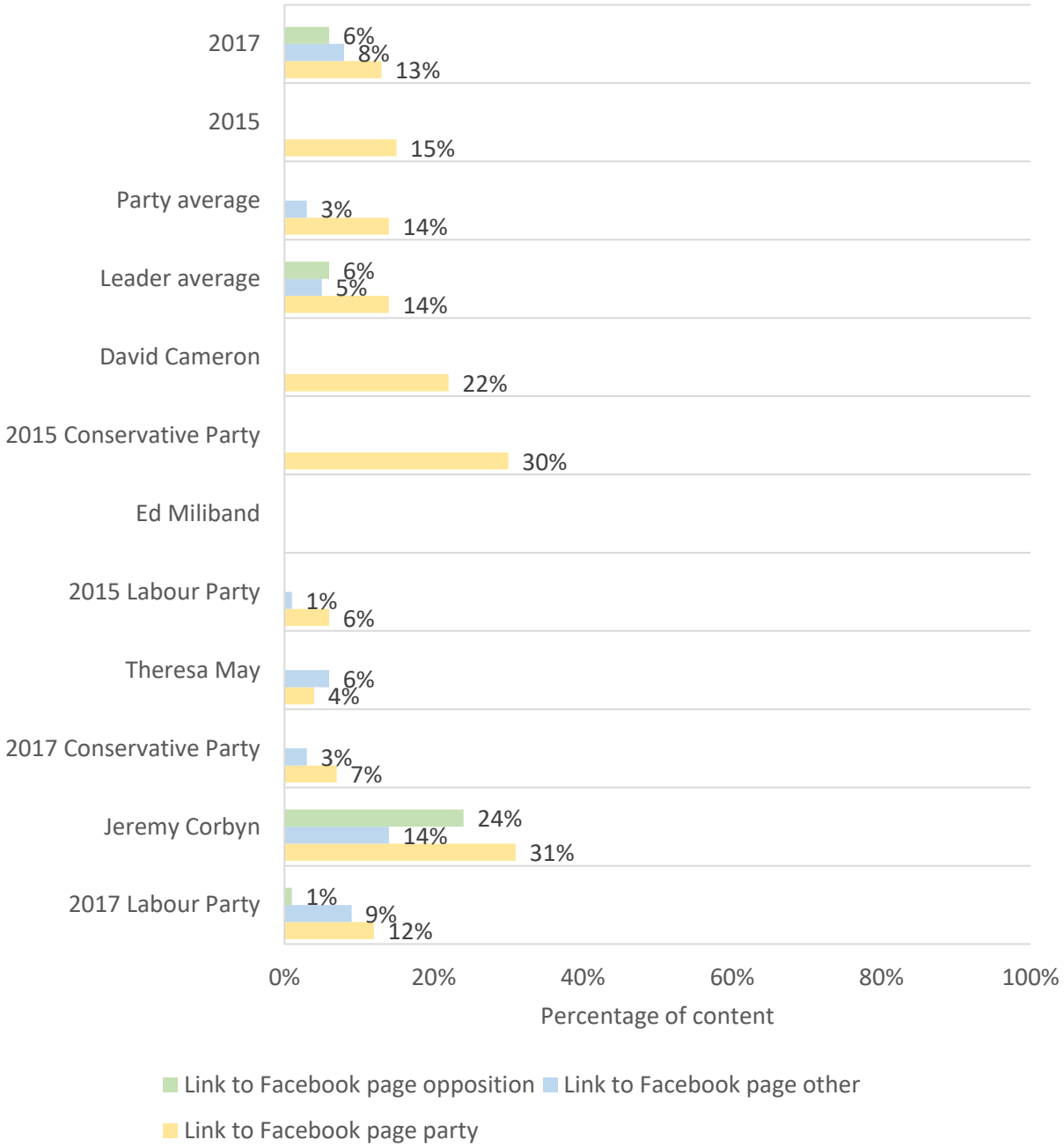
Image 21. 2017 Corbyn use of internal Facebook opposition page links (in bold)[66]

[66] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10155435478218872 accessed 1/4/2020

Finally, a novel approach seen is the linking of opposition pages, this tactic was only extensively used by Jeremy Corbyn. In 2017 his page would consistently feature internal links to Theresa May or the Conservative Party page. Thus, rather than just reusing media content or images to attack Theresa May, Corbyn would directly tag her Facebook page. Through this process it is possible that Corbyn promoted his followers to visit these pages and negatively engage with content. This tactical use of internal links suggests the novel deployment of his fired up virtual members to harass the opposition. This potential promotion of cyber activism shows manifestations of Margetts' idea of the cyber party, with the online doorstep open to all no matter their relationship to the party.

Image 22. 2015 Ed Miliband use of Labour website petition via link[67]

[67] https://www.facebook.com/edmiliband/posts/948878048464490:0 accessed 12/1/2020



Graph 86. Use of internal links (n=1,208)

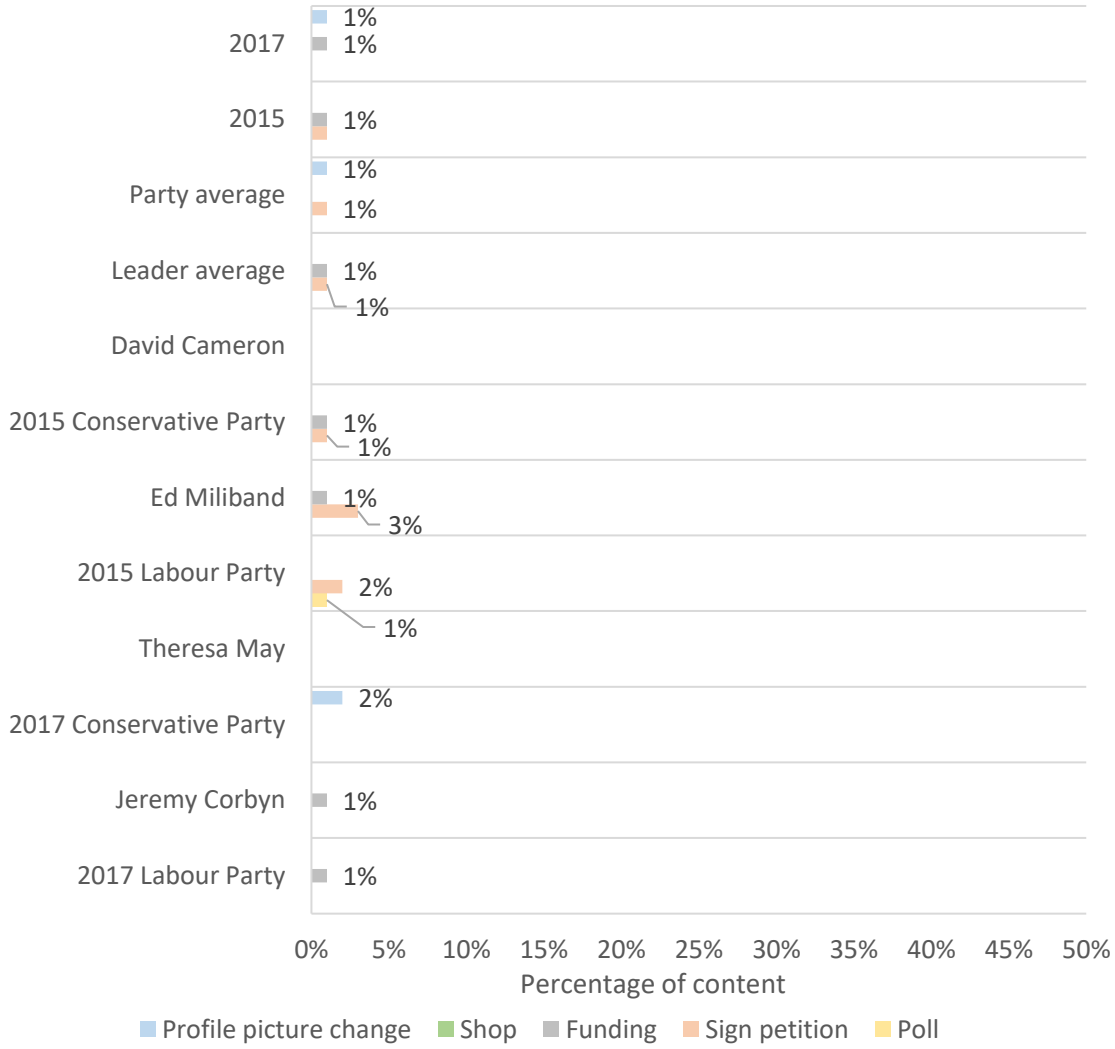
Overall, external links are more popular than internal links, however the trend is declining. The parties' interest in integration of traditional participation architecture has declined, with the low usage rate of party websites in 2017 speaking to a changing tactical approach on Facebook via organic communications. Parties are not consistently trying to organise their online support through non-Facebook channels. Only 3% of Corbyn's content included a link to the party website, with Corbyn four times more interested in pushing viewers towards non-Labour websites than Labour websites. This is very important as it challenges claims of a hybrid

media environment (Chadwick, 2013), and shows that parties view website citizen-initiated campaigning to not be worth heavily promoting.

Approach shows novelty as well as conservatism. Firstly, unlike other traditional campaign tools, through internal links parties can act like everyday users reissuing content. This ability of parties to act in the manner of traditional Facebook users, to be a hub of a wider field of information, offers them opportunities to scaffold their presence into wider networks. Equally information approaches are clearly occurring through Facebook rather than using Facebook to push users to party websites. Finally, we are seeing the beginning of novel uses of audiences, as seen via Corbyn's linking of opposition pages. These aspects show parties are not beholden to previous approach. However, if high rates of novel participation approaches are not seen, then given current approach, this shows Facebook is being used as a general information delivery system. The platform is thus a medium for broad traditional elements of participation such as voter registration. The party and leader pages' central role would therefore not be for novel participation actions and utilisation of virtual members. Instead Facebook is used as a central information-rich hub for parties' online campaigns. While more novel approaches to participation may be seen elsewhere as part of a wider approach to party campaigns.

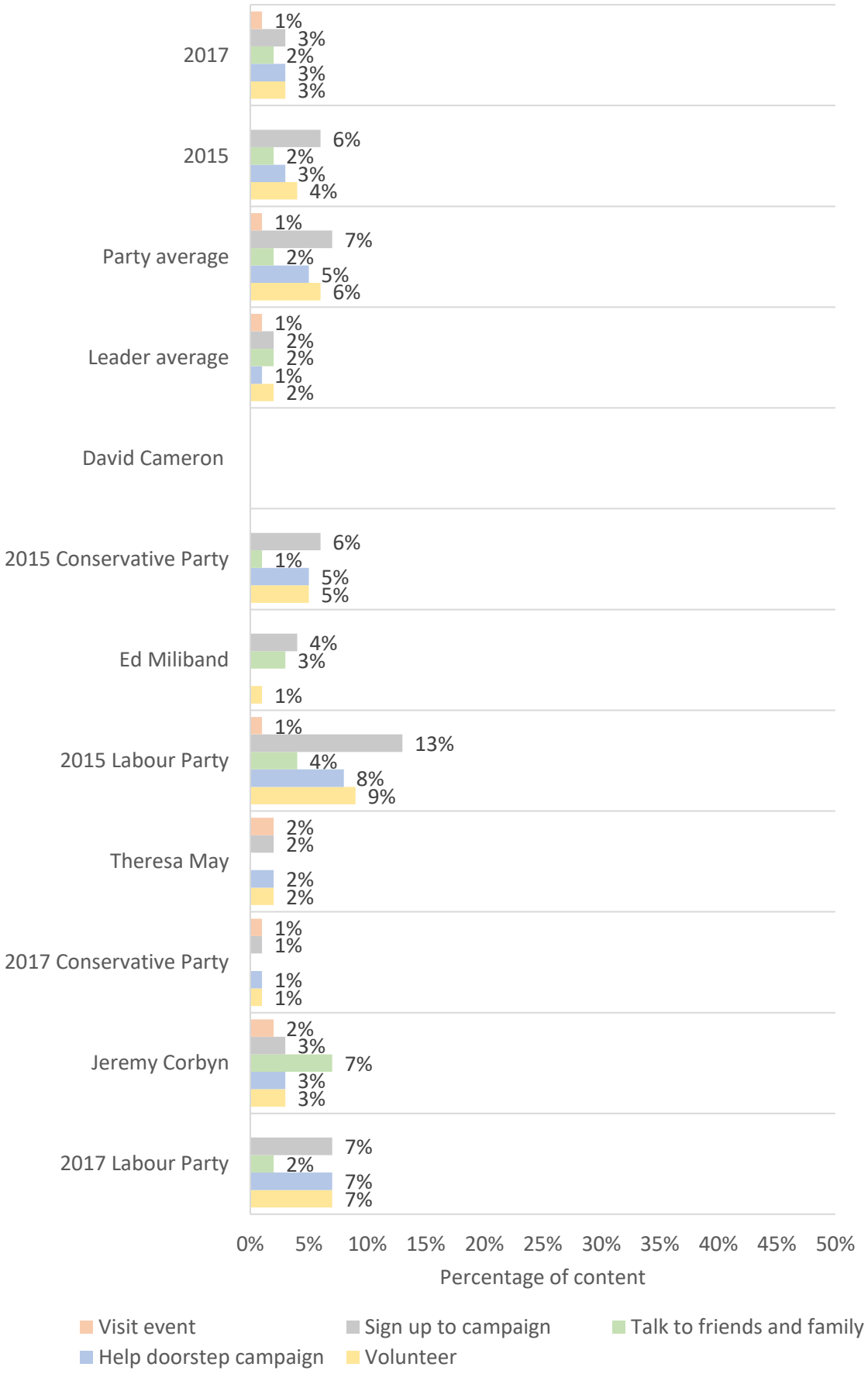
Is Facebook used to engender participation?

Facebook can be used to prompt other forms of online participation that are used to organise or promote party members, virtual members and the general public to do an action. Graph 87 shows the use of five other online participation forms is very limited, suggesting Facebook's primary use as an information tool, or that parties are putting low effort into less vital avenues of public participation. Of the two parties Labour stands ahead in using some of these elements, though usage is still low. From signing polls and petitions to visiting a party's shop, interest in getting Facebook users off the platform into online organisational and participatory avenues is limited.



Graph 87. Other forms of online participation (n=1,208)

Parties are prioritising only the most important forms of participation for audiences, centrally visiting other Facebook pages, party websites and voter registration websites. There is low interest in parties using virtual members as a source of revenue or political pressure, from areas such as petition signing, polls or funding calls. The data supports business as usual findings (see Margolis & Resnick, 2000), as the parties clearly have little interest in hearing the public's voice, let alone allowing it to influence them. The low usage trends seen here may be because parties are focusing on less committal forms of participation that encourage a wider body of users to participate with the parties. However, Graph 88 shows that more complex forms of offline participation clearly targeted at members and the highly partisan are common. It thus appears the parties have little faith or perceive low value in some online participation forms.

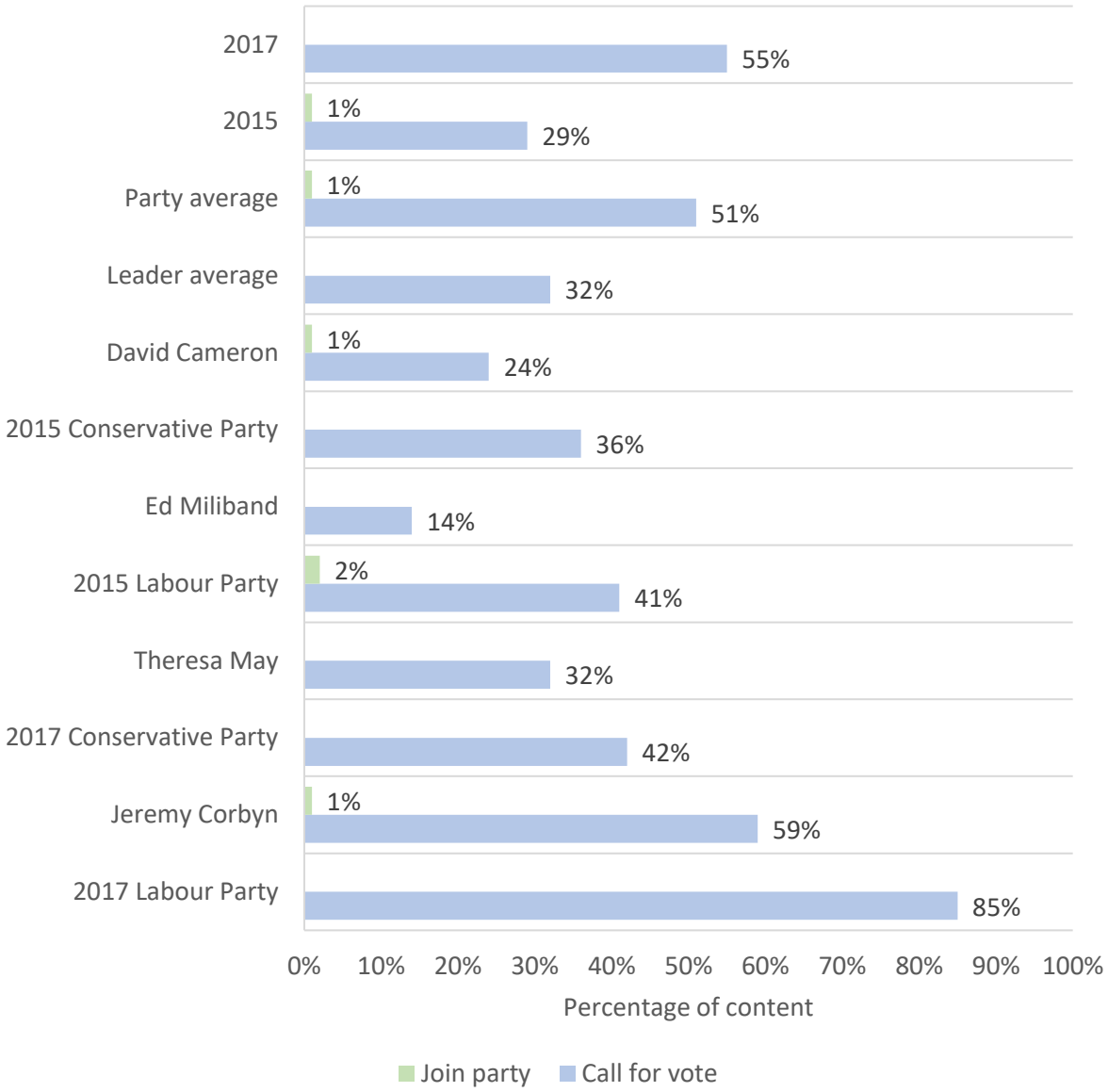


Graph 88. Forms of offline participation (n=1,208)

Offline participation, despite being more complex for Facebook users, is being promoted much more heavily. Across the short campaign of 2017 Labour were clearly trying to organise their supporters and their virtual members in some capacity. Central focus was seen in getting people to volunteer, doorstep campaign and talk to their friends and family. In contrast, the Conservatives only showed interest in 2015, with interest very minimal by 2017. The Conservatives appear disinterested in trying to harness the power of their virtual membership or organise people through new avenues. Across the parties, the most popular forms were to volunteer, talk to friends and family, help doorstep campaign or sign up to campaign, in contrast, protests and hustings went totally un-promoted (data in Appendix 10). Event promotion was also popular, especially through the 2017 leaders; Corbyn promoted the party's rallies across Britain, while Theresa May did phone in events. Signalling Labour's keen interest in organic message delivery, Labour also promoted users to talk to friends and family offline. The party still believes in traditional kitchen table politics, with this approach showing they believe their virtual members are not an echo chamber.

Image 23. 2015 Cameron call for vote[68]

[68] https://www.facebook.com/DavidCameronOfficial/posts/979082725449379 accessed 13/2/2020



Graph 89. Non-official/virtual member forms of offline participation (n=1,208)

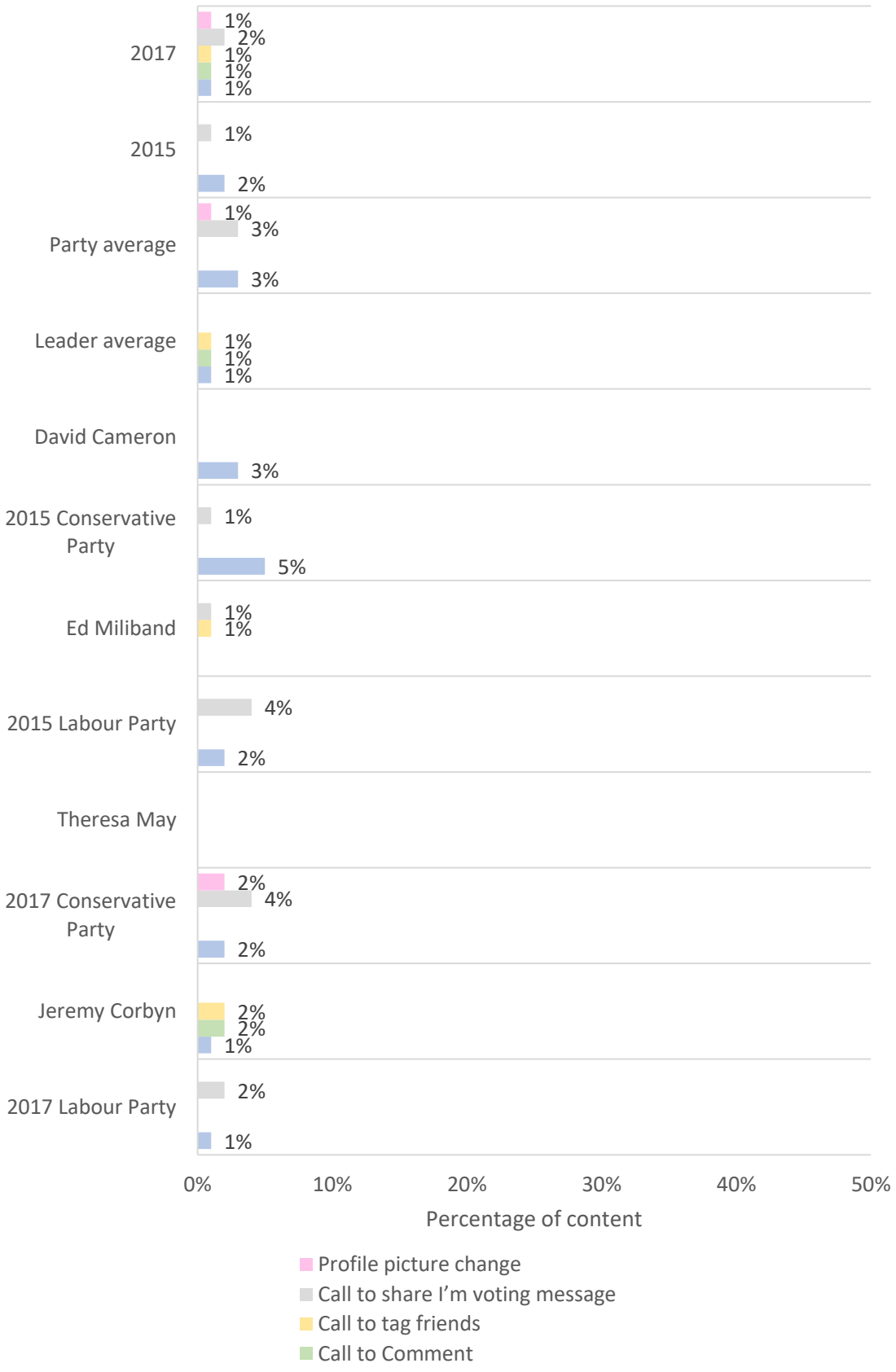
The most core but valuable forms of participation to the parties; joining the party and voting, show us how important the parties believe talking to non-virtual or official members is. Graph 89 shows the parties are not strongly interested in pushing users to join the party, this suggests several possibilities. Firstly, given it is an election campaign, these calls may be more likely seen after election day, as parties wish to solely focus on campaigning. Secondly, parties may no longer care about rigid structures of membership, instead adopting a more fluid structure akin to Margetts' description of the cyber party. This structure sees an individual without official party membership having no barrier to turning up and helping campaign. This was seen through Labour's consistent calls for offline action that did not ask for

membership. Finally, the lack of interest in getting viewers to join the party may show that the parties are campaigning to individuals they believe are likely members, however given how broad other elements of information and participation are, this seems very unlikely.

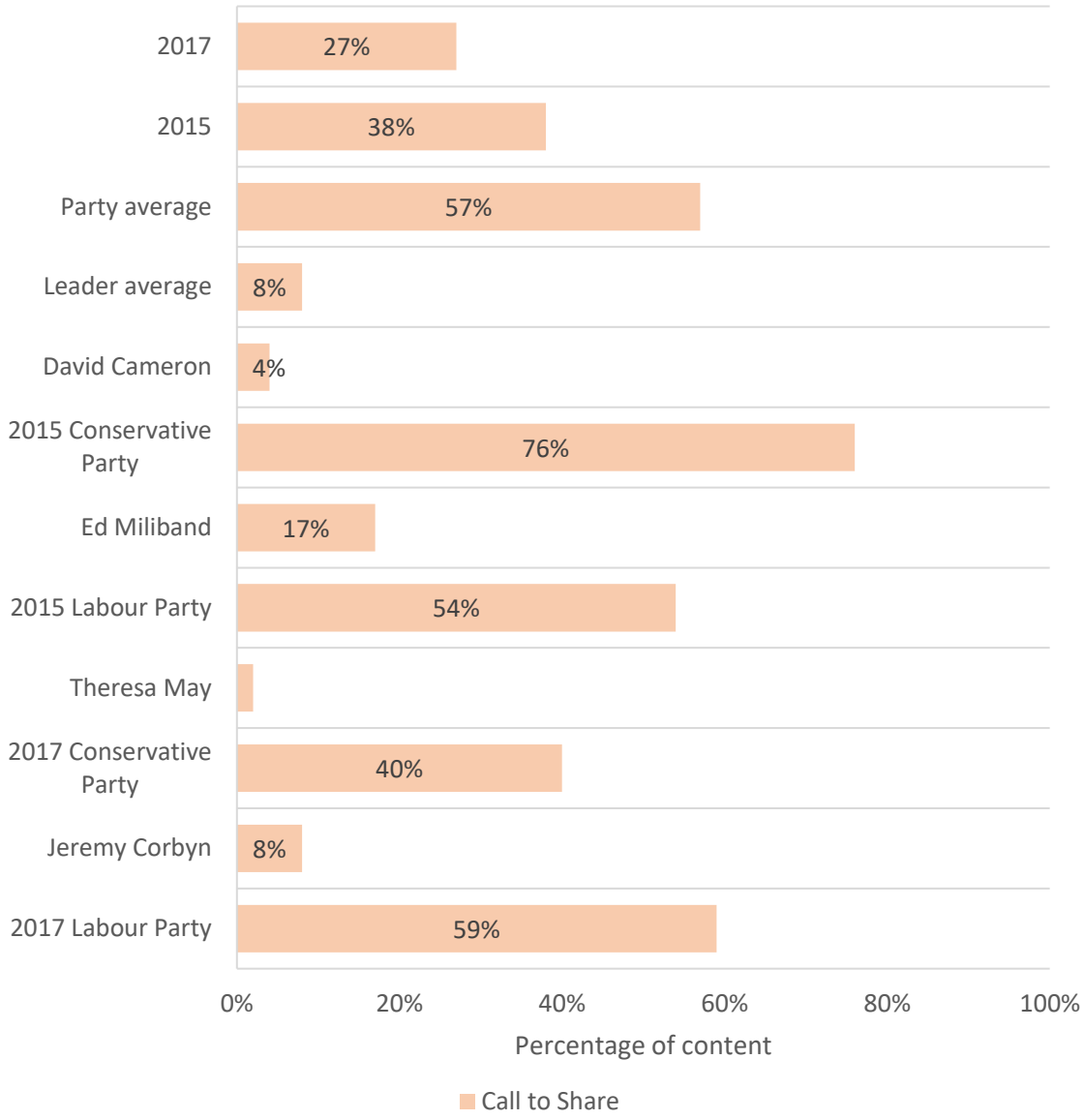
In contrast to joining a party, calling for votes is one of the most popular content forms seen across all the codes examined within the data. It is also a form that is growing, 55% of 2017 content included a call to vote with very high levels seen from the Labour Party page. Although the Labour Party engage in the form more, high levels are also seen through the Conservative Party. The generalist nature of voting calls suggests parties believe Facebook reaches the public and not just partisan virtual members. Parties believe that online calls for votes is a worthy expression, suggesting that core offline participation is possible even to the broad public. The high rate of calls for votes but lower interest in other forms of participation shows a traditional usage of the platform for election campaigning. Facebook appears to be used to campaign to the wider electorate, with novel applications towards other participation forms more limited.

Do parties promote engagement?

Although participatory practices other than voting are relatively limited, especially more complex practices that aim to prompt members or virtual members to go offline, engagement may well see a different picture. Engagement as a participatory practice places Facebook in a third position, with its capacities to spark resonance between party and user due to the potential for interaction. Given engagement is so vital for the spread of messages parties are likely to heavily promote engagement.



Graph 90. Prompting of engagement (n=1,208)



Graph 91. Prompting of shares (n=1,208)

As Graphs 90 and 91 show, across the different calls for engagement only one form is very common; sharing. The function of sharing is vital for engagement and post reach and so is understandably heavily promoted. 42% of all content sent featured a call to share, however from 2015 to 2017 a large drop in use was seen from 38% to 27%. This reduction in calls to share is mainly due to Jeremy Corbyn and Theresa May's page not using the form. This huge divergence between leader and party pages is also reflected in 2015 to a lesser extent. Why leaders would not promote their content, but party pages do, is an interesting finding that shows divergence in strategy across pages. Potentially parties are realising that constant calls to share are unproductive and so have decided to keep content simple and

more succinct. Of the other engagement forms usage rates are low, collectively I'm voting messages and calls to like, only make up a further 4% of content seen. Overall, the data shows that the parties believe share engagement to be the only form of major importance.

Image 24. 2015 Miliband call for share[69]

6.5: Conclusion

A descriptive typology of approach

Tables 30 and 31 present the descriptive typology of approach for the two parties. The labels were generated from the frequency of the form seen in comparison between each election year. Rarer approaches were included if a page utilised the form at rates far above the other pages. Inherently as a descriptive analysis, the typology reflects an interpretation of the data collected, as such to reduce bias only the clearest trends were charted.

[69] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10152750848757411

Table 30. Descriptive typology of Labour Party approach to Facebook 2015 and 2017

	2015		2017	
	Leader	**Party**	**Leader**	**Party**
Labour Party	Poster Traditionally Personalised Low-Negative Personalised Positive Less Professionalised Core-Topic Focussed Medium Policy Detail Medium Political Information Non-Media Focus Non-Representors Public Participators External Linker Partisan Praise	Poster Medium-Personalised Heavily Negative Personalised Mainstream Media Use Positive and Negative Professionalised Core-Topic Focussed Medium Policy Detail High Political Information Negative Expert Focus Mainstream Media Focus Non-Representors Public Participators External Linker Partisan Praise Party Page Promoters Campaign Participators Call for Vote Share	Video Heavily Personalised Medium-Negative Personalised Topic Diverse Mainstream Media Use Positive and Negative Professionalised Broader-Topic Focussed Brexit Avoider Medium Topic Change Medium Policy Detail High Political Information Celebrity Focus Mainstream Media Focus Representors Public Participators Internal Linker Partisan Praise Register to Vote Campaign Participators	Video De-Personalised De-Negative Personalised Topic Diverse Infographic Mainly Positive Professionalised Broader-Topic Focussed Brexit Avoider Medium Topic Change High Policy Detailed High Political Information Celebrity Focus Non-Media Focus Representors Public Participators Internal Linker Partisan Praise Party Page Promoters Register to Vote Campaign Participators Call for Vote Share

Table 31. Descriptive typology of Conservative Party approach to Facebook 2015 and 2017

	2015		2017	
	Leader	**Party**	**Leader**	**Party**
Conservative Party	Poster Heavily Personalised Medium-Negative Personalised Positive Professionalised Core-Topic Focussed Low Policy Detail High Political Information Mainstream Media Users Non-Media Focus Representors External Linker Internal Linker Politician Praise	Poster Heavily Personalised Medium-Negative Personalised Positive and Negative Professionalised Core-Topic Focussed Medium Policy Detail High Political Information Mainstream Media Focus Representors External Linker Data Gatherer Politician Praise Campaign Participators Share	Video Heavily Personalised Medium-Negative Personalised Positive and Negative Professionalised Core-Topic Focussed Brexit Obsessed Major Topic Change Medium Policy Detail Medium Political Information Non-Media Focus Anti-Representors Data Gatherer Negative Politician Appraisal	Video Heavily Personalised Heavily Negative Personalised Topic Uniform Mainstream Media Use Negative Professionalised Core-Topic Focussed Brexit Obsessed Major Topic Change Low Policy Detail High Political Information Negative Expert Focus Mainstream Media Focus Anti-Representors Call for Vote Share

How is Facebook used for information and participation?

Examining information approaches, in just a few years we have seen marked change in structural approach. The parties' campaigns have evolved considerably; the 2015 General Election was a *photo election,* but the 2017 General Election was a *video election*. Approach by 2017 was professionalised, dependent on a smaller class of video forms via infographics and use of the mainstream media. This video-led approach brought more negative and personalised communications, with greater levels of policy detail. However, the use of video was evolutionary not revolutionary, across 2015 and 2017 the parties were in an era of controlled experimentation. Video was used to expand on previously popular approaches through hyper-charging the content parties have always liked to send, with novel aspects only visible on the periphery. The use of novel forms including memes and Facebook Live were seen tested in 2017, however these approaches became much clearer during the 2019 General Election.

Topic choice and the amount of information sent in each post has changed markedly between elections, parties are today sending more complex information including greater policy detail. Large shifts were seen across the parties' content topics, with Labour broadening approach while both parties switched topics used away from issues of competence. There was also an increase in ideological framing across elections, with the parties further apart in 2017 than 2015. However, both parties still fundamentally focused on a set of core topics including leadership, the economy, the EU, party action, social care and protection. These forms make up most of the content, showing the use of the platform to centrally reach the wider public, not just virtual members. Political information is also more positive than negative, with parties prioritising less detailed political information over policy detail. Nevertheless, it is important to note the high rates of detail seen through some pages, especially the 2017 Labour Party page. Labour was potentially able to use Facebook to combat what left-wing critics have labelled as press bias, including promoting policy positions that were deemed too left-wing and not covered by mainstream news (Rhodes, 2019).

Experts are used by both parties but at relatively low rates. In contrast, celebrities are popular but only with Labour, the party clearly appreciated the

capacities of the platform to match opinion leaders with relevant populations. Instead of experts or celebrities, the main way parties would increase the influencing power of their information was through edited mainstream media content. This powerful new capacity to edit news content was seen across both elections but increased considerably in 2017. The parties clearly appreciate the ability to utilise trustworthy media organisations as edited mouthpieces, often in negative and personalised ways. The use of media centres on this form, with the decline of news links showing the parties are only interested in the use of news if they can edit the content.

Personalisation is shown to be a key strategy of communications growing in importance across elections. The Conservatives especially employed negative personalisation, but Corbyn also used the form heavily. The Labour Party page in contrast utilised a tactical de-personalisation strategy; showing an interest in a nuanced approach to communications. The platform clearly offers a novel capacity for high levels of subtlety in how the parties can represent themselves. Facebook fits into the wider continuing trend of the personalisation of politics (Karvonen, 2010). However, the personalisation trend seen focused on representation and use of the leader, not genuine elements of personalisation. The parties were using their leaders centrally as figureheads while complex elements of identity were muted. This approach was similarly seen in the use of depiction and issues covered, only the most electorally important groups were mentioned, while only Labour placed any effort into representing minority groups. This again highlights a cautious approach that tries to speak to as many as possible.

Examining participation, party websites were popular, but use declined heavily by 2017, with traditional e-campaign mediums clearly out of favour. Facebook is maintained by both parties as an insular network, the pages examined were not keen to send users off-site and make them leave their content. Facebook is consequently treated as both the communications avenue and endpoint for campaigns, disputing Chadwick's ideas of traditional/novel hybridity (2013). As external links have declined, internal links have increased. The parties, especially Labour, have become more interested in establishing their Facebook pages within a wider Facebook ecosystem. This is an innovative approach and shows an interest in digital activism over offline activism. This interest in Facebook based activism is further evidenced in Corbyn's page's use of opposition page links, which directed

virtual members to attack the opposition. These virtual page attacks are a replication of offline protests within an online environment. The Labour Party made extensive use of partisanship and activist depiction to enthuse its online support and energise their vote. However, as levels of praise were low, the central use of partisan depiction appears to be the promotion of the campaign to the public, rather than to support or thank activists.

As website use for participatory organisation has declined, parties have been trying to organise users through Facebook. Efforts are clearly seen through Labour and are focused on core forms of offline participation such as doorstep campaigning, rather than online forms such as polls. This is important and shows core participation efforts are in pushes to get online users offline, rather than general online activism. Party interest therefore appears to be in internal Facebook activism alongside traditional offline participation. Labour was trying to utilise their virtual members as a campaign force in 2015 and 2017, showing that the party is interested in utilising the huge body of virtual members identified in Chapter 4. Nevertheless, the approach was limited in comparison to their efforts in getting the broader public registered or voting. Evidently the use of Facebook to generate participation of different forms is a novel application of social media, however the parties could have done more to utilise their virtual members online as well as offline. This innate conservatism may be because of the type of pages they are. As the party and leader page are the core party presence on the platform and thus the most vital for information dissemination, participation efforts may occur through other page types. The final area of importance to the parties was engagement, with calls for sharing seen consistently by the parties across both elections. The parties clearly believe in the power of organic Facebook communications to deliver influential information and to a lesser extent generate participation.

The ‘traditional’ Facebook campaign?

Did we see a *traditional*, *transitional* or *novel* Facebook campaign across the 2015 and 2017 General Elections? Facebook offers unique capacities including; the utilisation of virtual members online and offline, the ability to send engrossing and interactive content, alongside the ability to speak to the public through supporters.

However, in analysis the parties only partially exploited these aspects. The party and leader pages are therefore best described as having engaged in a *traditional Facebook campaign*, rather than something more innovative.

Many key new capacities of Facebook were underutilised especially by the Conservative Party. Interest in novel approaches to information and participation were muted, showing evolution but no revolution in approach. Interactivity is also deliberately limited, with parties using the platforms' engagement capacities as a top-down tool, limiting any sort of bottom-up influence. As Stromer-Galley asserts, "campaigns ultimately construct and use citizens as objects they need to manage through controlled interactivity in order to reach their objective" (2014, p. 177). Of the two parties, Labour's approach was much closer to a *transitional* campaign given their greater focus on online activism, as well as more novel approach to information. While within Labour's campaign, Corbyn's page was more experimental in approach than the party page. However, Labour was still focused considerably on information provision, while participation approaches were muted secondary efforts. As such although Labour was ahead of the Conservatives in 2017, both parties' campaigns are more comfortably described as traditional in style.

Information approaches showed improved abilities and capacities over traditional campaign tools, including; the reuse and editing of news, video content with high detail, highly personalised content with large amounts of depiction. However, approach follows wider party approaches to other content forms, the platform therefore is being used in an evolutionary but not revolutionary way. In information approach, Facebook offers a range of traditional tools, bridging the gap between leaflets and other more direct tools such as targeted advertisements. Facebook is thus used across these two core page types as a broadcast campaign learning tool, a catch-all tool used to campaign to the public, party members and virtual members. Facebook was not used in a revolutionary way because these pages are now central to the political parties' online campaigns. Incremental evolution is seen in the data, suggesting that the two parties do not want to risk a frivolous approach with such a core campaign tool. Thus, what has occurred in information approach across the elections, has been carefully controlled experimentation to test more novel methods. The rise of interactive infographics and Facebook Live show that the parties are not averse to change, but do not want to take risks with such a core spoke of their online election campaigns.

Participation content focused on voting or registering to vote, not on utilising virtual members like official members. This mirrors the emphasis we see in both parties' traditional campaigns, through doorstep outreach and campaign materials, with clear delineation between members and the public. In traditional campaigns activism occurs from official members, with little interest in getting the general public to participate. This is the general trend seen on the platform, although not in online engagement. Of the two parties Labour did show greater interest in using their virtual membership to campaign offline. The party pushed virtual members across both pages to talk to friends or family, doorstep campaign and campaign online via opposition page links. Labour's party and leader page thus showed some aspects of Margetts' cyber-party (2001), given that there was an interest in just turn up campaigning. Equally there was no traditional-style barriers between official and virtual members. However, approach was clearly more interested in generating a citizen initiated campaigning framework (Gibson, 2015), rather than fundamentally changing party activism and organisation.

As every effort spent on virtual member participation is effort lost in information dissemination, selective pressure is apparent in how the parties used the platform. Novel applications of participation were clearly of secondary concern, showing prioritisation and that both parties are utilising the tool tactically. The parties' leader and party page Facebook campaigns were clearly dualistic; prioritising speaking to the broader public over activating virtual members, even though Facebook content can adjust to either. The parties are not campaigning in a traditional manner because of a lack of professionalised knowledge. Instead they are optimising their strategies depending on page and intended goal. This nuance in how different page types can be used is seen in other aspects as well, with leadership personalisation, negativity, level of policy focus and political narrative different on each page type. Both parties are balancing their objectives for the pages, with current goals resting most heavily in broadcast information, engagement and voting. Labour and the Conservatives thus see more value in Facebook as a digital leaflet with socially located engagement, rather than a participatory and organisational tool. It may be through other avenues on the platform, including satellite pages and targeted advertisements, that these parties push for participation and organisation more heavily.

Identifying the *traditional Facebook campaign*, does not mean that the platform has not had a fundamental impact upon party campaigns. Facebook's very generalist capacities gives the parties a broad campaign tool that merges broadcast information dissemination with sociological networks. The 'traditional Facebook campaign' is powerful as the political information is shared socially. Information when shared utilises virtual member's social characteristics, therefore the parties push heavily for engagement. The new socially located volatility the platform offers to parties is a novel avenue for party campaigns. Through multiple-step flows of communications political information sent can cascade naturally to where it can be most effective, breaking past traditional class, location and age barriers seen in offline campaigning. The huge engagement seen in Chapter 5 shows that millions of voters are being exposed to what is now shown to be an evolved mainstream information dissemination campaign. This is a fundamental shift, as through engagement parties can use their virtual members as a powerful new intermediary between party and public. This mainstream core campaign therefore comes as much from the public's mouth as from the parties.

In Facebook parties have a core mass broadcast campaign tool like leaflets, but with many powerful unique elements. The party and leader pages are digital, editable, infinite in content frequency, with novel avenues for information and content form. The pages also feature broad options for participation, posts and pages are interlinked to the wider internet and interlinked within Facebook. However, most importantly all these elements can be spread socially through users' engagement. Therefore, Facebook offers fundamental change for parties, because finally a mainstream campaign tool can bridge the gap between underutilised partisan virtual members and the broader voting public. Before Facebook, these people would likely influence their closer-knit family and friends, however Facebook has increased the scope of these people's networks creating new avenues for social group pressure and increasing volatility. Thus, although Facebook's differences across individual characteristics of information or participation approach may not present revolutionary change, collectively the platform offers an unparalleled upgrade in how parties can campaign. Facebook is thus a powerful evolution of previous campaign approaches, as it has merged established campaign approaches within a novel influential setting.

Momentum: Satellite, Janus-faced and permanent campaigning

7: Momentum: Satellite, Janus-faced and permanent campaigning

7.1: Introduction

The influence of external-to party organisations and groups on elections has been of central concern to researchers for decades. Across the role of the media, unions and charity organisations, it has always been clear that political elections are not just battles between parties' campaigns, other factors and power-groups have always been at play (Lazarsfeld, Berelson & Gaudet, 1944). Edwards a decade ago posited the notion of 'democratic intermediaries' (2006, p.9), a term used to describe non-party organisations important within elections. Edwards outlined three forms; "preference intermediaries - organizations that articulate and aggregate political demands, information intermediaries - organizations that deliver political information and details on voter registration, and interactional intermediaries - organisations that facilitate political participation" (2006, p.8). The framework "demonstrates the different ways in which campaigning initiated beyond the official party campaign can occur" (Dommett & Temple, 2018, p.196).

Before the rise of social media, scholars were debating the effects of the internet on this wider body of powerful intermediary organisations that influence elections. Some scholars argued that the internet may erode intermediaries' positions (Bryan, Tsagarousianou & Tambini, 2002), others were more positive asserting 'disintermediation… would allow for an unbiased representation of citizens' demands' (Edwards, 2006, p.1). Academics' disagreed about which direction the internet would push these groups, but it was clear that intermediaries were becoming an important force online as well as offline. With the rise of social media this idea of democratic intermediaries has expanded via what Dommett and Temple call the rise of 'satellite campaigns' (2018). Unlike past iterance's of democratic intermediaries which were much easier to delineate, modern satellite campaign organisations are much more diverse, capable of merging together Edwards' ideas of preference, information and interaction intermediaries (2006). Modern satellite campaigns can be utilised and admixed within parties' traditional campaigns or be separate entities, with the rise of 'satellite campaigns' driven directly by the power and influence of social media. Party satellite campaigns are

also not always clearly linkable to parties' campaigns, with these groups often playing upon the differences within their online presence, making the line of distinction of what is a party's online campaign harder to define. Given the lack of explanatory validity of Edwards' ideas in the social media age, there is a clear need for a new typology of these types of groups online through the conceptualisation of the Facebook satellite campaign landscape.

Of these new satellite campaigns, Momentum stands out as of major importance. The campaign group, with its ~40,000 members (2018), boasted of their importance to the 2017 Labour campaign. They asserted that more than 100,000 people used their My Nearest Marginal tool during the campaign. While their Facebook videos reached over 23 million views and were watched by 12.7million unique users (McDowell-Naylor, 2019). Momentum were clearly an important player on Facebook. As a grassroots Labour Party movement supportive of Jeremy Corbyn, the rise of Momentum has seen the real-world application of a satellite campaign to an election where social media was central. There are three reasons why Momentum is examined over other forms of satellite campaign. The first reason is the impressive engagement and reach the page received. Secondarily, as this thesis' focus is in studying political parties' campaigns, Momentum is a party-linked page of importance. Thirdly, Momentum heavily uses social media including novel approaches.

Satellite campaigns present a major opportunity for party campaigns, because of the potential for these sub-organisations to campaign in a different way or be used for different purposes than official party or leader pages. This new landscape is defined as Janus-faced campaigning, with this chapter examining the concept through Labour's 2017 General Election campaign via Momentum, the Labour Party page and leader page. The rise of satellite campaigns presents new questions for how parties are campaigning using Facebook, but also how they are campaigning generally. Alongside election campaigning, there is also the unexamined role and use of satellite pages for permanent campaigning, thus this chapter also examines a sample of 2018 Momentum posts. Overall, this chapter answers key aspects of research questions one, two and three alongside three questions that illuminate satellite campaigning in detail.

1) What role does Momentum play in Labour's Facebook campaign? This is examined across information and participation.
2) What are satellite campaigns used for during the 2018 permanent campaign?
3) Was Labour engaged in Janus-faced campaigning?

Conceptualising satellite campaigns

We have seen over the last few decades a continued decline in partisanship, a third of voters switched parties between the 2015 and 2017 General Elections (Fieldhouse et al., 2019). Volatility is very high with partisanship and community not as strongly linked as in the past (Putnam, 1996).

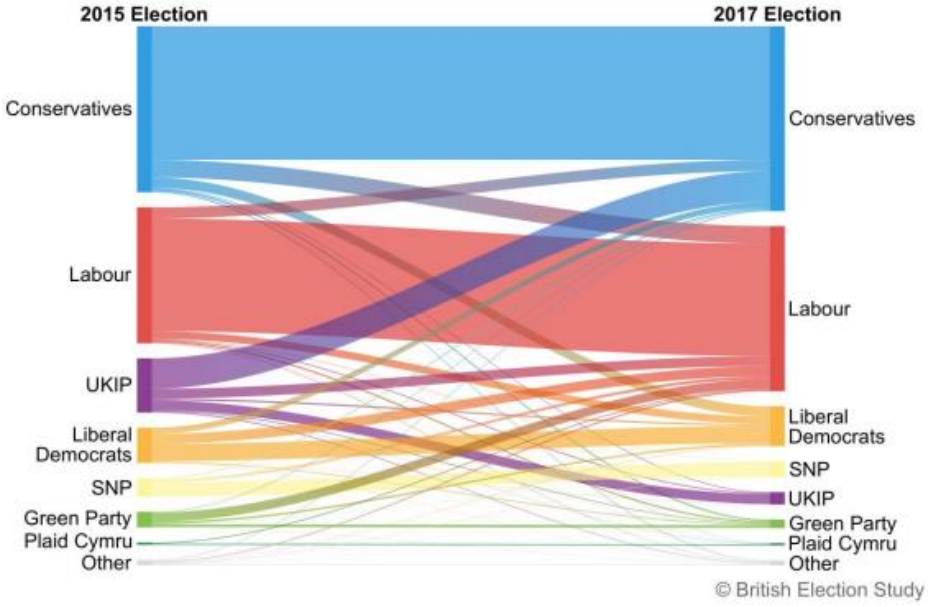


Figure 2. Vote flows 2015-2017 (Mellon & Evans, 2019)

Parties are also claimed to be in decline, with membership low within political and societal organizations, and reduced trust in the leading political and social institutions such as the Government, Parliament or courts (Schudson, 1998; Putnam, 2000). These issues, within a wider discourse, amount to what has been labelled a growing "democratic deficit" (Seidle, 2004) or even a "crisis of democracy" (Zittel & Fuchs, 2007). It is commonly accepted that a major way to reverse this crisis is to increase the level of political participation. Although we have seen British

parties grow in membership recently, the general trend of party membership is downwards[70]. Given this situation, as election campaigning is strongly dependent on scarce resources (Margolis et al., 2003; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008; Anstead & Chadwick, 2009), some parties have opened themselves up to citizen participation fostering new ways to become a campaign volunteer (e.g., Gibson & Ward, 2000b; Foot et al., 2007; Hooghe & Vissers, 2008; Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008; Schweitzer, 2011). However, given the low levels of participation content seen from the traditional Facebook campaign, we are potentially seeing this online participation operating via new satellite pages. As Dommett and Temple state; "…by drawing on the energies of citizens who may not feel sufficiently enthused to join a party, but who may nevertheless share party values, satellite campaigns can provide a wider set of advocates, who may be better placed to articulate their appeal. Digital therefore helps to enable the transition back and forth between being a party-sympathizer to carrying out the role of a party-activist, blurring the lines between models of party membership and affiliation" (Dommett & Temple, 2018, p.202).

Dommett and Temple, in their article *Digital Campaigning: The Rise of Facebook and Satellite Campaigns* (2018), posited the role of Momentum and Campaign Together during the 2017 General Election as examples of these 'satellite campaigns' that "represent a distinctive and important shift in campaigning" (2018, p.189). Dommett and Temple outline their concept of satellite campaigns as: "Organisations beyond parties were identifying, mobilising and organising citizens to deliver leaflets, canvass voters, and organise on- and offline… It suggests that, in addition to Whiteley and Seyd's categories of the central party campaign, centrally coordinated local campaigns, and purely locally directed campaigns (2003, p. 638), we can also identify campaigns originating beyond party structures and control—those termed here 'satellite' campaigns" (2018, p.201).

Satellite campaigns are clearly problematic to define, as Dommett and Temple assert "affiliate organisations such as trade unions, business organisations, and community groups, have long provided additional resources for parties' electoral campaigns" (2018, p.195). Given this clear lack of definition between previously identified 'democratic intermediaries' (Edwards, 2006) and 'satellite

[70] www.researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN05125/SN05125.pdf accessed 12/08/2017

campaigns' (Dommett & Temple, 2018), the need for a new label appears unnecessary. However, the need for a new terminology and classification arises because of the way social media is interacting with these third parties.

Dommett and Temple also emphasise, "the capacities of digital appear to have altered previous practice" (2018, p.195). Social media has altered democratic intermediaries into something different and more powerful, with change pronounced enough that a definitional cleavage is necessary. This definitional shift is warranted because digital platforms have increased the reach and capabilities of democratic intermediaries to campaign. Even small intermediaries have seen their campaign reach and impact vastly improved through social media, meaning that many third-party groups now have a central campaign function rather than an intermediary function. As such the essence of what satellite campaigns are and can action, is heavily related to the digital tools they use. Today, satellite campaigns exist across the full range of social networks available. Facebook is examined over other platforms because of its well-defined satellite campaign network, large userbase, wider socio-political-demographic representation and greater capacities for different campaign approaches. Examining Facebook is essential for understanding what satellite campaign organisations are, how they act and what their function is.

Although we know satellite campaigns exist and are an important phenomenon, there is a lack of precision in defining what different satellite campaigns are. Although, Dommett & Temple's contribution to the identification of 'satellite campaigns' on Facebook is important in defining this new campaign dynamic, they fail to adequately conceptualise and define the differentiated roles satellite campaigns can have. Firstly, Dommett & Temple suggest that satellite campaigns feature the "increasing importance of intermediary, unofficial, organisations beyond parties that facilitate and promote campaigning activities", suggesting that "a campaign can be classed as satellite when vote-seeking activism is primarily driven by intermediary organisations without the control of a party" (Dommett & Temple, 2018, p.202). In the case of Momentum, a clear example of a satellite campaign, this definition does not fit. This is because Momentum as an organisation is still heavily related to the Labour Party; Labour is the parent organisation, all Momentum members since January 2017 must be Labour Party members, they campaign using Labour platforms such as the Party Conference and feature close links with Labour MP's. As such I would assert Momentum, although

clearly a satellite, is still part of the overall Labour Party campaign akin to Progress or other internal group's within Labour. Although the lines of control and connection are inherently ambiguous and blurred, Momentum is still clearly a party-linked satellite campaign.

Further issues in conceptualisation are also apparent in Dommett & Temple's second example of a satellite campaign; 'Campaign Together'. Campaign Together is a volunteer non-party affiliated tactical anti-Conservative organisation. Simply defining this group as a satellite campaign akin to Momentum fails to appreciate a core element of satellite campaigning; that some groups have set points of orbit while others do not. This cleavage is vital, as it is important to define the deliberative use of satellite campaigns by parties separately from "satellite" campaigns that provide incidental aid. Campaign Together has no central orbiting point, is not party-linked and is independent, Campaign Together may incidentally help the Labour Party but is not linked with the party. Thus, Campaign Together and Momentum are different entities and need to be conceptualised differently. Dommett & Temple's definition of satellite campaigns fails to address the huge differences seen between these two groups natures, goals and activities.

What is required is a typology of the different categories of satellite campaigns that exist on Facebook using more nuanced descriptors, whilst where pertinent still conceptualising these different groups under the umbrella term of satellite campaigns. This chapter consequently creates a more comprehensive typology of different types of satellite campaigns seen via Facebook. Using the example of the Labour Party, Table 32 includes four core differentiated types of party-linked satellite pages found on Facebook. The central dichotomy generated is between official party-linked and indirectly party-linked satellite campaigns based upon relationship to party. Further, the new typology offers a reclassification of non-party affiliated campaigns such as Campaign Together, to definition outside of party-satellite campaigning as incidental campaigns. The central orbiting point, around which party-linked pages are satellite to, is the Labour party and leader pages. As previously asserted these pages are the 'traditional Facebook campaign' the core of parties' campaigns on Facebook and thus the pivot point around which satellites orbit on Facebook.

Table 32. Conceptualisation of the seven forms of satellite campaign pages seen on Facebook

	Party satellite campaigns (official party-linked)				Unofficial satellite campaigns (indirectly party-linked)	Mon-party incidental campaigns (independent)	
Type	**Party movement**	**Local pages**	**Individual MP's pages**	**Traditional democratic intermediaries**	**Fan/grassroots pages**	**Tactical/turnout/reformist**	**Traditional democratic intermediaries**
Other Examples	Labour Leave, Blue Labour	Milton Keynes Labour Party, Labour South West	John McDonnell, Ben Bradshaw	Institute for Public Policy Research	Grime4Corbyn, Jeremy Corbyn: The People's PM	38 Degrees, Tactical Vote - Stop the Tories, Rize Up	Save the Children, Demos
Example Used	Momentum	Cardiff Central Labour	Rebecca Long-Bailey	Unison	JeremyCorbyn4PM	Campaign Together	National Education Union
Link to Party	Official formal links with party	Official formal links with party	Official formal links with party	Official formal links with party	Unofficial emotional links with party	Unofficial, purely tactical links with party	Independent
Size	40,000 members, 250,815 Facebook followers	975 Facebook followers	10,533 Facebook followers	1,377,006 members, 47,748 Facebook followers	328,445 Facebook followers	3,104 Facebook followers	461,950 members, 29,000 Facebook followers
Facebook Links	Central links are to leader page	Central links are to party page	Central links are dependent on the MP	Central links are with other democratic intermediaries	Central links are to other 'fan' pages	Central links are to other 'reformist/tactical' pages	Central links are with other democratic intermediaries
Goal	Support left wing of Labour Party and Corbyn. Defeat opposition	Promote local issues	Promote the MP and local issues	Support unionism, union workers interests and the Labour party	Support Jeremy Corbyn	Promote progressive candidates, tactical voting	Support unionism, union workers interests
Membership	Has monetary backing and membership	Has monetary backing and membership	Has monetary backing and membership	Has monetary backing and membership	Purely online and operated via donations	Operates via donations but purely online	Has monetary backing and membership
Online or Offline	Can act online and offline	Can act online and offline	Can act online and offline	Can act online and offline	Campaigns online, offline campaigning is incidental	Mainly campaigns online, offline campaigning is incidental	Can act online and offline
Online Presence	Has its own party apparatus and online eco-systems like websites	Often has own party apparatus and online eco-systems like websites	Uses local networks, often has online eco-systems like websites	Has own organisational apparatus and online eco-systems like websites	Does not have its own party apparatus and only presence is via social media	May have websites but does not have its own party apparatus and main presence is via social media	Has own organisational apparatus and online eco-systems like websites
Professionalisation	Features a professionalised paid core staff, although wider staff will be voluntary	Features a professionalised paid core staff, although wider staff will be voluntary	Features a professionalised paid core staff, although wider staff will be voluntary	Features a professionalised paid core staff	Un-professionalised, staff of a small scale and totally voluntary, content will be crowd sourced	Features a professional but voluntary staff	Semi-professionalised, staff of a small scale
Content	Extensively uses bespoke content created in house, reissues other page's content, uses humour and 'internet style'	Some bespoke content, reissues other page's content, local focus	Some bespoke content, reissues other page's content, may be personalised, local focus	Uses bespoke content created in house	Little bespoke content, reissues other page's content, uses humour and 'internet style'	Uses bespoke content created in house	Some bespoke content created in house, reissues other page's content

Examining Table 32, firstly, there are party linked official satellite campaigns. The first of these are party movement satellite pages, these often feature an internal political dimension and as such semi-independence but are still formally linked with the mother campaign. Momentum is a perfect example of this, with its links centrally seen to the leader page. Secondarily, there are a huge number of local, county, regional and subnational party groups, often representing local party organisations that campaign during the election. These are centrally linked to the party page and are focussed on local issues. Examples include groups such as Cardiff Labour or Cheltenham Labour. Thirdly, and highly related to local pages, are the hundreds of MP pages that exist on Facebook. For example, every Labour MP has their own Facebook page that campaigns during elections. These pages' link to the party or leader page depending on their internal party-political position. Finally, akin to the offline world, there are the online representations of party-linked traditional democratic intermediaries including entities such as unions and think tanks. Unison is an example of this for Labour, with central links to the party page and other Labour-affiliated unions.

As well as official party-linked satellite campaigns, an unofficial party-associated satellite campaign theme is defined. Fan/grassroots pages are not party-linked but are party supporting pages usually run by volunteers. As such one cannot label their impact as incidental as these pages are run explicitly to support a party, however equally they are clearly not part of any official satellite campaign page network. Fan-made pages can utilise a less formal approach and are often interlinked with other fan-made or alternative sources. For example, JeremyCorbyn4PM is interlinked with Corbyn's page as well as the Artist Taxi Driver and Another Angry Voice. The changing political landscape on Facebook has seen these unofficial satellite pages become more influential. Dozens of these pages exist for all the major parties, with their capacities for campaigning leading to many interesting developments in the use of fan pages for what I term 'cluster campaigning'. This defines campaigning based upon numerous seemingly independent sources but controlled by a close band of creators. This is important because some of these supposedly unofficial pages are clandestinely being used by parties' campaigns, examples are provided later. In future, the typology of satellite campaigns may need to include some seemingly independent fan pages as a type of party-linked campaigning. This is because of how the lines between party

and unofficial satellite campaigns are blurring. Currently, given how fan pages are a relative unknown and need far more study, they are not defined as officially linked.

The final two types of pages shown within Table 32 are labelled as non-party incidental campaigns. These groups are not labelled as satellite campaigns because these pages have no specific party of orbit. Instead the term incidental campaign is created as these groups can help certain parties, but this is not their specific aim. For example, Campaign Together promotes 'progressive candidates' tactical voting and as such can help Labour, but the primary focus of the page is to help non-Conservative candidates. Alongside these pages, akin to the offline world, there are also the online representations of unaffiliated traditional democratic intermediaries including entities such as unions, think tanks and charities. As shown via Unison these can explicitly help a party, but other non-political independent examples exist that may only incidentally help a party. The detachment of these incidental campaign groups from satellite campaigns makes defining the role and influence of satellite campaigns much clearer.

Finally, hyper-partisan media organisations and opinion leaders were not included within this typology as these areas are too broad and are more clearly defined within other theoretical areas. Hyper-partisan media organisations such as Skwawkbox and Novara Media are particularly linked with the Corbyn/Labour project. This may lead one to argue they act akin to unofficial satellite fan pages. However, as these groups are primarily alternative media sources, current understandings of hyper-partisan news are better suited to explaining their electoral role (Potthast et al., 2017) than the concept of satellite campaigning. Similarly, opinion leaders with social media presences (who have also been termed 'outriders'– see Cohen, 2019) can also be clearly linked to parties. Owen Jones is a clear example, the Guardian journalist and Labour activist campaigned for the Labour Party during the 2017 General Election. These individuals with large Facebook presences may be asserted to be satellites of the Labour Party. However, Jones as well as other individuals such as Aaron Bastani and Ash Sarkar of Novara Media, did not campaign extensively on their own, instead they all campaigned via Momentum. The fact that these 'outriders' engaged in a party-linked satellite campaign speaks to the difference of opinion leaders to satellite campaigns. These individuals appreciate that there is a clear difference between a professionalised organisation used to campaign, and their own individual influence via their

communications. As such merging the idea of opinion leaders with satellite campaigning is problematic, as not only would the concept become too large and unwieldy, but also the pre-existing ideas of opinion leadership via Lazarsfeld et al. (1957) explains the role of these individuals better than the idea of satellite campaigning.

Conceptualising Janus-faced campaigning - the 'traditional' and 'new methods' Facebook campaign

Campaigns on Facebook have moved beyond the use of party pages as seen in 2010, past the combination of leader and party pages seen in 2015, towards the use of multiple pages all utilising different approaches in 2017. Parties are now harnessing Facebook with great complexity, with campaigns more multi-faceted, nebulous and hard to discern. The key elements of this new trajectory in campaigning must be defined, with Janus-faced campaigning a definitional term used to describe how parties are now campaigning using Facebook.

Janus-faced campaigning centrally defines a tactic that has always been important to parties' campaigns; the sending of different messages to different voter groups using different methods, styles and approaches. Janus-faced campaigning on Facebook is defined in this thesis as a party; *using different pages with different approaches to reach different audiences, thus presenting different faces of the same political party to the public*. Campaign complexity and multi-faceted approaches are arguably nothing new, for example, leaflets have been heavily localised in the UK for decades. Examining the constituency level Shephard (2007) finds evidence of local targeting of party message to suit constituency profile interests. However, social media in the modern era presents a large cleavage in the capacity of parties to action far more diverse strategies both via targeted and organic communications.

Janus-faced campaigning has been seen continuously throughout this thesis, through parties using leader and party pages for different purposes. However, Janus-faced campaigning is also a typological concept that groups pages according to their campaign use. This chapter discerns two elements from studying the Labour campaign. There is firstly the use of a 'traditional Facebook campaign' made up of the party and leader page as outlined in Chapter 6. While alongside this is the utilisation of satellite pages of different forms as part of a 'new methods' approach.

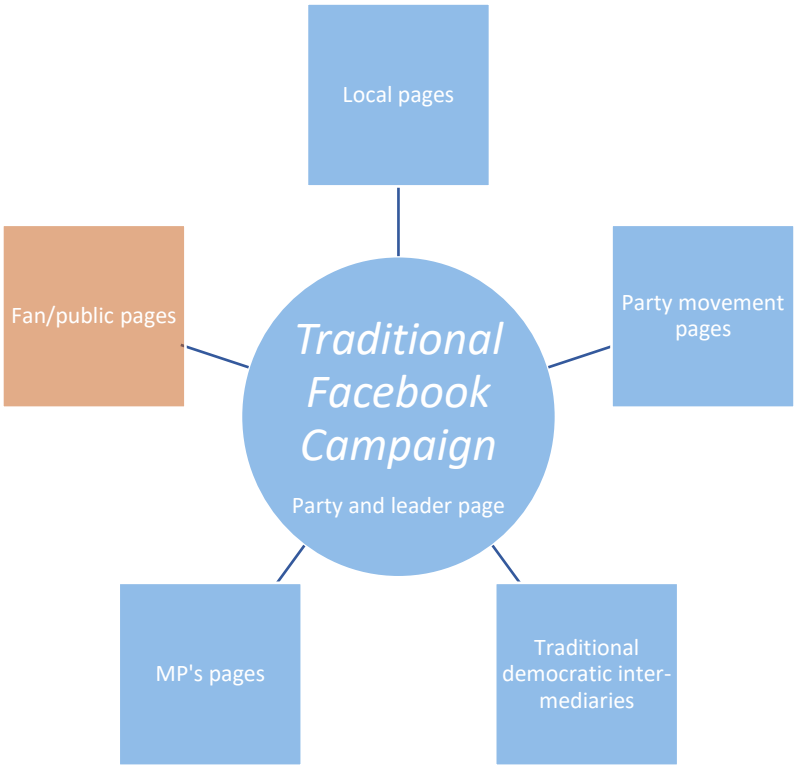


Figure 3. Visualisation of Janus-faced campaigning**.** Blue denotes clear party association/control, red denotes potential clandestine operation/control. Circle denotes *traditional campaign*; squares denote *new methods*.

Janus-faced campaigning describes a powerful campaign dynamic. Through the replication of a national broadcast campaign via the traditional Facebook campaign, parties can influence the mass public. With approach focused on broader topics of public concern, information rather than participation and voting/registration participation content, parties can reach out to the median voter in considered language. Alongside this central core, through the new methods element of Janus-faced campaigning, parties can benefit from novel approaches. Approach can be as broad as the number of satellite pages a party has, with approach informed by the nature and audience of each page. For example, Momentum focuses on participation and emotive partisan information, Grime4Corbyn focusses on younger black audiences and cultural/identity politics, while Cardiff Labour focusses on Cardiff infused partisan Labour politics. The new methods campaign gives parties new capacities that the traditional campaign cannot, including a focus on partisan content, participation and novel communications forms. Thus, through both these avenues, Janus-faced campaigning on Facebook gives parties the best of both

worlds. Parties are not only able to reap the sociological rewards of more traditional broadcast approaches to campaigning, but also utilise narrowcast targeted approaches. This system operates across both organic communications and targeted advertising, giving parties radical new dimensions of campaign approach. Table 33 outlines the differences between the elements.

Table 33. Outline of traditional and new methods within Janus-faced campaigning

	Janus-faced campaigning	
	Traditional Facebook campaign	**New methods campaign**
Source	The core pages – party and leader pages	Satellite pages - party controlled pages or acquiesced fan pages, traditional democratic intermediaries, MP page's, regional pages
Logic	Facebook offers access to millions of voters; a professionalised party presence online will help in elections and the permanent campaign	Facebook offers new ways to campaign to many different groups. The capacity to reach and organise them is tied heavily to the approach taken. There is room for alternative approaches rather than replication of a traditional campaign online
Activities	Replicate a broad offline campaign online to win votes and enthuse support	Use novel approaches to reach different demographics/areas, communications using the language of these groups

Parties can now use many different types of satellite pages as part of a new methods campaign, with the clandestine use of fan/public pages a recent phenomenon. The use of fan/public pages shows the nefarious aspects of Janus-faced campaigning; parties can use pages that appear out of direct party control but are actively still part of their campaign. Examples of this campaign tactic are becoming more common. During the Brexit referendum Lynton Crosby's CTF partners utilised various 'grassroots' groups to spend up to £1 million on targeted advertisements (Waterson, 2019). Equally, Scientists for EU, professionalised 116 smaller pro-EU fan pages using a £100,000 donation to centralise all communications through one office (Manthorpe, 2019). Recently, during the 2019 General Election, public anti-Corbyn pages such as *Capitalist Worker, Parents*

Choice or *Third party,* advertised in support of the Conservatives. The background operations of these pages showed clear association with the Conservative Party (Hotham, 2020). All these examples show parties branching out within the new methods campaign element of Janus-faced campaigning. It also presents an issue with understanding modern campaigns on Facebook. The clandestine utilisation of satellite pages by political parties means Janus-faced campaigning must be a supply-side concept. It is getting harder to appreciate the pages that constitute Janus-faced campaigning, with the circumstances leading to a blurring of boundaries between what is, and what is not, part of a party's Facebook campaign. Nevertheless, although important, nefarious activity is the extreme end of new methods. Instead, most party activity is part of the visible iceberg, with the varied use of party, leader and party-linked satellite pages the core of Janus-faced campaigning online.

Finally, Janus-faced campaigning is also a fluid concept, as there is both party based nuance towards the traditional and new methods campaigns, as well as clear possibilities for parties to shift their approach over time. Some satellite pages may see themselves dragged in to being part of the traditional campaign as new satellites are formed. The evolution of this system will be heavily related to page audience, campaign goal and wider political tactics. Nevertheless, the core approach of multiple satellite pages alongside the party and leader page, is the new campaign normal on Facebook. Janus-faced campaigning thus defines how parties will be campaigning on the platform in future, as party presences on the platform continue to fracture and grow.

In an era of the slow decline of traditional one-step flow communications forms such as television, the rise of multi-level approaches seen in Janus-faced campaigning across both targeted advertising and organic communications, may define a new epoch. Campaigning is moving further away from mass-communications towards micro-communications via smaller groups receiving different messages. Individual voters can be sold different promises, with this presenting new opportunities for political parties, but also presenting new issues for the action of democracy. Academics and activists have repeatedly pointed out the threats of targeted advertising from parties. However, the complexity and diffusion of modern campaigns is seeing potential problems exacerbated across both the targeted and organic campaigns, via official party pages and myriad satellite pages.

The variance of organic Facebook campaigning is mirroring trends seen within the wider media system, stimulating further political volatility within Britain.

The permanent campaign

Vergeer, Hermans and Sams (2011) suggest; “with the advent of the Internet, permanent campaigning to build public support becomes easier” (Vergeer et al., p.485). Chapter 5 showed that engagement levels are high across the permanent campaign, with leader and party pages offering parties a consistent gateway to the public year-round. Although the campaign period features higher average engagement, the nature and capacity of satellite campaigns to permanently campaign is an area requiring further investigation. Satellite pages feature innovative permanent campaigning potentials because permanent campaign interest will likely trend towards virtual members rather than the general public. Thus, as these pages often have smaller but highly active support bases, they have unique abilities to generate, activate and sustain virtual members. Thus, within parties’ wider approaches to Facebook, satellite pages can lead from the front in novel permanent approaches.

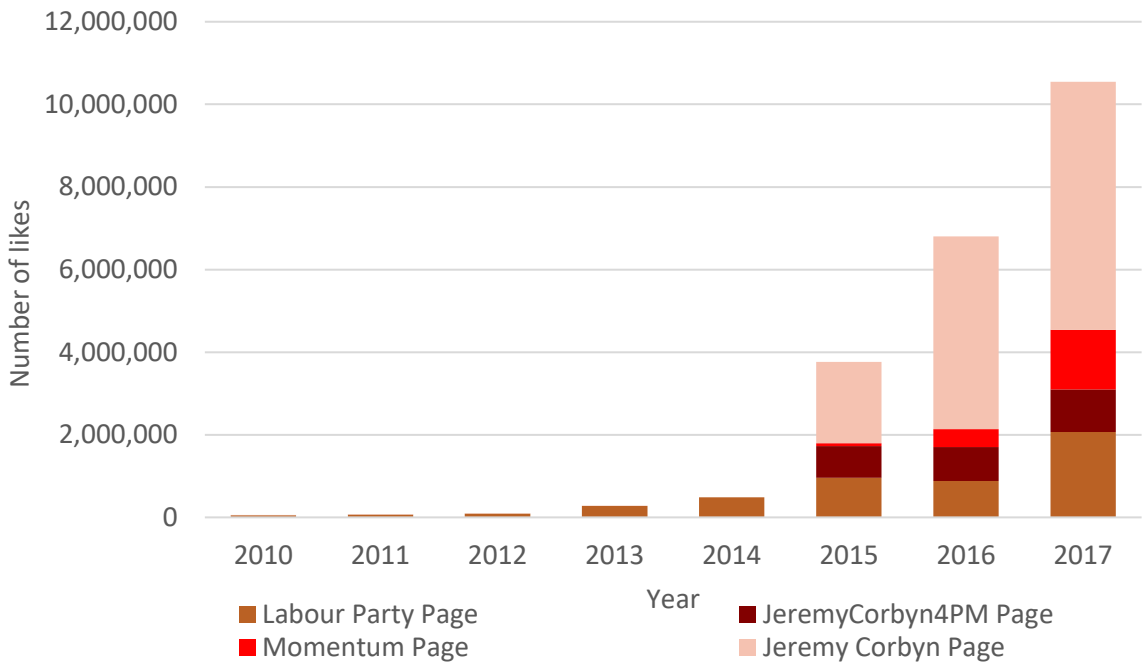
James Dennis examined Momentum’s national Facebook content alongside Portsmouth’s local Momentum page, across one month of the 2018 permanent campaign (2019). Although centrally interested in organisational dynamics (in which he finds traditional controlled interactivity), his study also examined the Momentum page’s permanent campaign practices. Dennis found that “Momentum replicates some of the organizing and campaigning practices of political parties”, with the group “instructing members to undertake an action on the request of the leadership” (Dennis, 2019, p.98). Across both local and national levels Dennis finds Momentum to be definable as what Kavada labels a ‘movement party’ (2019), with the group acting as both a pressure group and campaign organisation. Clearly the group is campaigning permanently, with Dennis positing that there may be some hybridity in how Momentum campaigns on Facebook across permanent and electoral periods. He argues that “Momentum can undertake both internally and externally-facing political action” (Dennis, 2019, p.109), however as he did not study the whole year of 2018 nor the election campaign this proposal requires investigation. As such, this

chapter expands upon Dennis' hypothesis that Momentum is used differently across electoral periods, through examining the full permanent and election campaign periods.

Through studying a party-movement page like Momentum, we not only see how the wider Labour Party campaigns during an election, but also how internal pressure groups operate permanently. Given the changing nature of the Labour Party's membership, Momentum may have a clear role not only for campaigning for the party, but also permanently campaigning for its own ideology within the Labour Party. Consequently, this chapter examines Momentum's approach across 2018. Momentum's approach may shift from tactics used to reach the general public, including a focus on information and organisation during the election campaign, towards membership and internal partisan activities during the 2018 permanent campaign. Further study will need to be undertaken in future on how party and leader pages approach the permanent campaign.

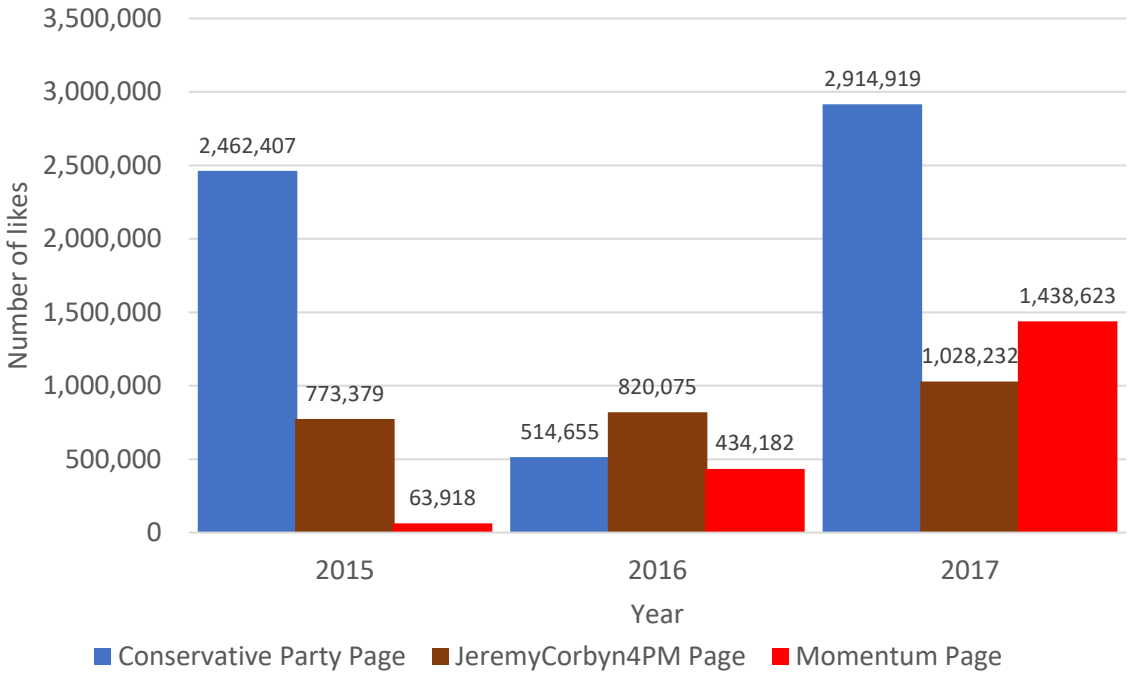
Satellite pages and engagement

Digital media is reconfiguring party-related engagement (Vaccari & Valeriani, 2016, p.295) with satellite pages a new part of this changing landscape. In Chapter 4 we saw that Momentum features different virtual members to the Labour or Jeremy Corbyn page, however having followership is only one half of the equation. The level of engagement satellite pages' offer is of importance to their capacities to carry out diverse roles across information and participation. To understand their potential for engagement and to provide some comparative understanding, two satellite pages; Momentum (party linked movement page) and JeremyCorbyn4PM (unofficial linked fan page), are examined alongside the Jeremy Corbyn and Labour Party page.



Graph 92. Total like engagement per year by page (n=9,418)

Graph 92 shows that by 2017 Momentum and JeremyCorbyn4PM's engagement levels were collectively higher than the Labour Party page. Although far behind Jeremy Corbyn's page, 24% of the like engagement achieved by the party was from these two satellite pages, against 57% for Jeremy Corbyn and 20% for the Labour Party.



Graph 93. Labour satellite vs. Conservative Party page likes (n=4,609)

Satellite pages are very popular, Momentum and JC4PM nearly overtook the Conservative Party page in like engagement in 2017, receiving only 500,000 fewer likes. It is apparent that certain Facebook users are interested in receiving information from less establishment pages such as Momentum or JC4PM, rather than policy orientated professionalised campaigns. Satellite campaigns are thus important as not only can they reach a different audience to other pages, but when using a constellation of satellite pages, as many Facebook users can be reached as via official party pages. As such they are a vital part of parties' Janus-faced campaigning and highlight the logic of having multiple Facebook pages as part of a campaign.

7.2: Momentum's information approaches

To appreciate the scale of what the data represents, below in Table 34 the number of cases from a selection of percentages is shown for each page. All data across all graphs are shown across 25%, 50% or 100% scale, this is to make comparison fair and allow for comprehension of less common content forms.

Table 34. How many posts each percentage represents for each page (n=695)

	Number of posts	**2%**	**25%**	**50%**	**100%**
Momentum page 2017	*153*	3	38	77	*153*
Momentum page 2018	120	2	30	60	120
Labour Party page	278	6	70	139	278
Jeremy Corbyn page	144	3	36	72	144

Although academics and commentators have outlined what satellite campaigns are in the broadest sense, it is not known how they operate or what strategies they use for information. Satellite campaigns have the potential for innovation (Dommett & Temple, 2018), with abilities to adopt internet-culture, divergent viewpoints or ultra-partisan takes on politics. Overleaf are a series of examples of Momentum's content.

Image Set 4: Post examples – structure, information and participation

Video, Meme, use of opposition leader

Video, internal partisanship, join party

News link, use of anti-figure

Video, reuse of others content

Use of Poll

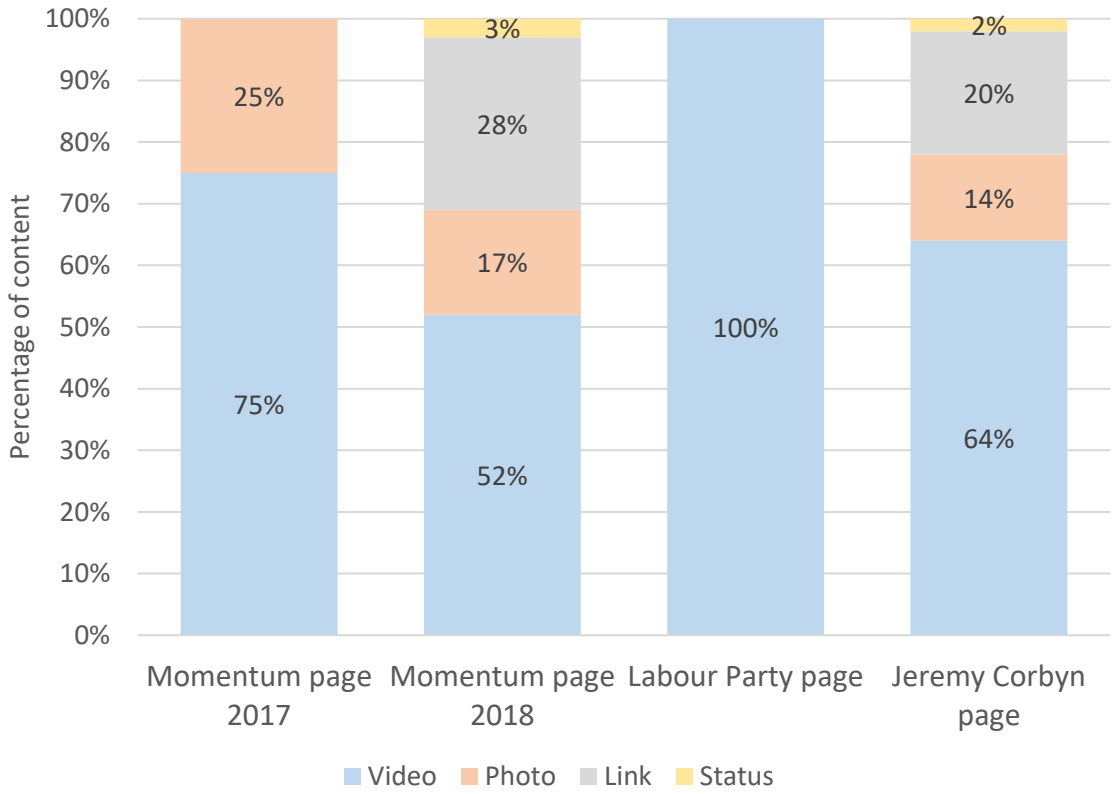
Use of party politician, media news, informal language

Use of leader, praise of campaigners, call to join, call to help doorstep campaign

Praise of campaigners, use of party members

How does Momentum approach structural content?

The first key area of analysis is content structure. Examining the 2017 General Election in Graph 94, Momentum followed the Labour Party page's video trend. Momentum's posts in 2017 were 75% video content, behind the Labour Party page (100%) but ahead of Corbyn's page (64%). Momentum is following the latest trends in campaign information delivery despite reduced resources, the group does not suffer from the normalisation gap previously seen in Chapter 5. The high use of video speaks to Momentum's integration within modern understandings of how social media works, with usage showing that reduced monetary resources is no barrier to video content. There are clear differences between the pages, especially in the use of links and the amount of video used. However, generally a coherent trend is visible, with video clearly in supremacy and then photo or link content subsidiary.



Graph 94. Content approaches (n=695)

Regarding the 2018 permanent campaign, Momentum's approach clearly changes, with a radical rise in link content (+28pp) opposite to a decline in video (-

23pp) and photo content (-28pp). The decline in video content towards photo shows that resources clearly shift, with cheaper re-issued external sources receiving greater use during the permanent campaign. Thus, although a structural form normalisation trend is not seen in Momentum during the 2017 election campaign, it is shown during the permanent campaign. This contrasts with the Labour Party page, which in Chapter 4 saw video use decline far less during the permanent campaign. There was therefore greater money and professionalised effort put into Momentum's election campaign versus the permanent campaign, this suggests a clear shift in how the page was used across these two periods.

Table 35. 2017 General Election video approaches by Labour pages (n=695)

	n	Video content according to Facebook	Video uses mainstream media	Video uses alternative media	Video is PEB	Is infographic video	Is Facebook Live video	Is music video
Momentum page 2017	153	75%	21%	3%	0%	4%	3%	2%
Momentum page 2018	120	52%	29%	0%	0%	0%	4%	0%
Labour Party page	278	100%	3%	0%	6%	58%	2%	0%
Jeremy Corbyn page	144	64%	18%	0%	3%	8%	2%	0%

Examining video across the 2017 General election in Table 35, Momentum's approach was particularly different to the Labour Party page and closer to Jeremy Corbyn's page. Unlike the Labour Party page, Momentum did not extensively utilise infographic videos (4%), instead they favoured mainstream media content (21%). Momentum consistently reused media especially news, but also other cultural programming like Question Time or comedy staples like The Office. Momentum spoke in a different more experimental way, with this further seen through their application of Facebook Live (3%), alternative media (3%) and music videos (2%). The group avoided talking like a political party, they did not use any PEBs and avoided long-form content, highlighting the younger digital savvy audience they wanted to reach. Momentum utilised novel methods, with the organisation standing

outside of the remit of the traditional Facebook campaign. Momentum was able to innovate by trying new things to reach a different audience than the leader or party page. The decline of some of these novel methods during Momentum's 2018 permanent campaign, also shows that some of these approaches (such as music videos) were used to reach the general public, rather than virtual or official member support. In 2017 Momentum had a real belief in novel viral content for public consumption, a tactic that worked so well that Momentum's video content was re-used during the 2019 General Election.

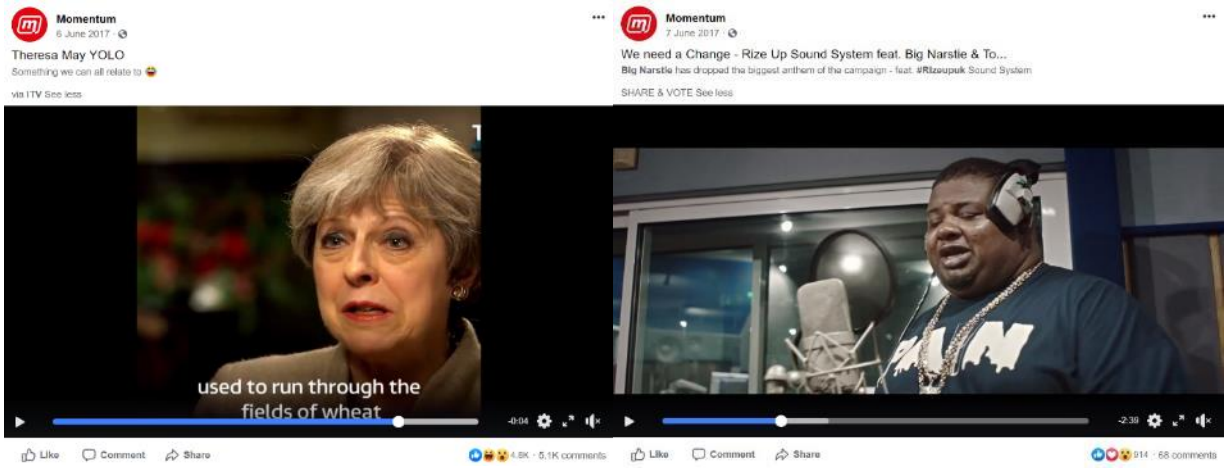


Image 25. 2017 Momentum use of meme in video[71]
Image 26. 2017 Momentum use of music video[72]

Examining photo approaches in detail, although overall use of photo was remarkably similar between Corbyn and Momentum's page across the 2017 election, Momentum clearly used more novel approaches to the form. Momentum extensively used meme's, with 14% of their content meme's, against 0% for the party page and 1% for Corbyn. The use of meme's shows Momentum was pushing boundaries, using the language of the internet to communicate in a new way to a different audience. Momentum was utilising what is referred to as mediated authenticity (Enli, 2015), their position as a satellite campaign allowed the organisation to use a humorous tone that the more serious pages could not.

[71] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=461391127539613 accessed 13/3/2020
[72] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=671438556381892 accessed 13/3/2020

Table 36. 2017 General Election photo approaches by Labour pages (n=695)

	n	Photo content according to Facebook	Is newspaper front-page	Is image collection	Is text only image	Is poster	Is meme	Is Infographic	Image was defunct	Is Twitter screen cap
Momentum page 2017	153	25%	1%	1%	10%	3%	14%	5%	0%	19%
Momentum page 2018	120	20%	0%	0%	17%	1%	4%	0%	1%	13%
Labour Party page	278	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Jeremy Corbyn page	144	26%	0%	1%	1%	8%	1%	2%	1%	0%

Another key difference across the election was Momentum's use of text-only images (10%), a defunct format across all the other pages studied, the high incidence rate is mainly due to the use of screen captures of Twitter comments (19%). Momentum extensively brought Twitter content to Facebook, this interlinking of two social networks shows how Momentum treated Facebook as part of a wider social network eco-system, but only as an information source. Twitter content was used but not linked, users were not promoted to leave the page. Instead, Twitter content was used on Facebook to feed into the formation of a collective identity (akin to that seen with movement parties as per Kavada, 2019), and help develop the narrative of left versus right politics. Momentum thus used Twitter content to inflame partisan passions and prompt activity on Facebook itself.

Comparing the 2017 and 2018 Momentum approaches, general trends in photo approach continued, however there was a large decline in Momentum's use of meme's (-10pp), a growth in text only images (+7pp) and lower use of Twitter screen captures (-6pp). The data shows that photo approach, just like video approach, shifts from election to permanent campaign. The decline in meme's and Twitter screencaps show that the page became less interested in using humorous content. Rather than trying to activate the wider partisan public during the election

campaign via humour and Twitter content, during the permanent campaign the group focused more on information rich photo content.

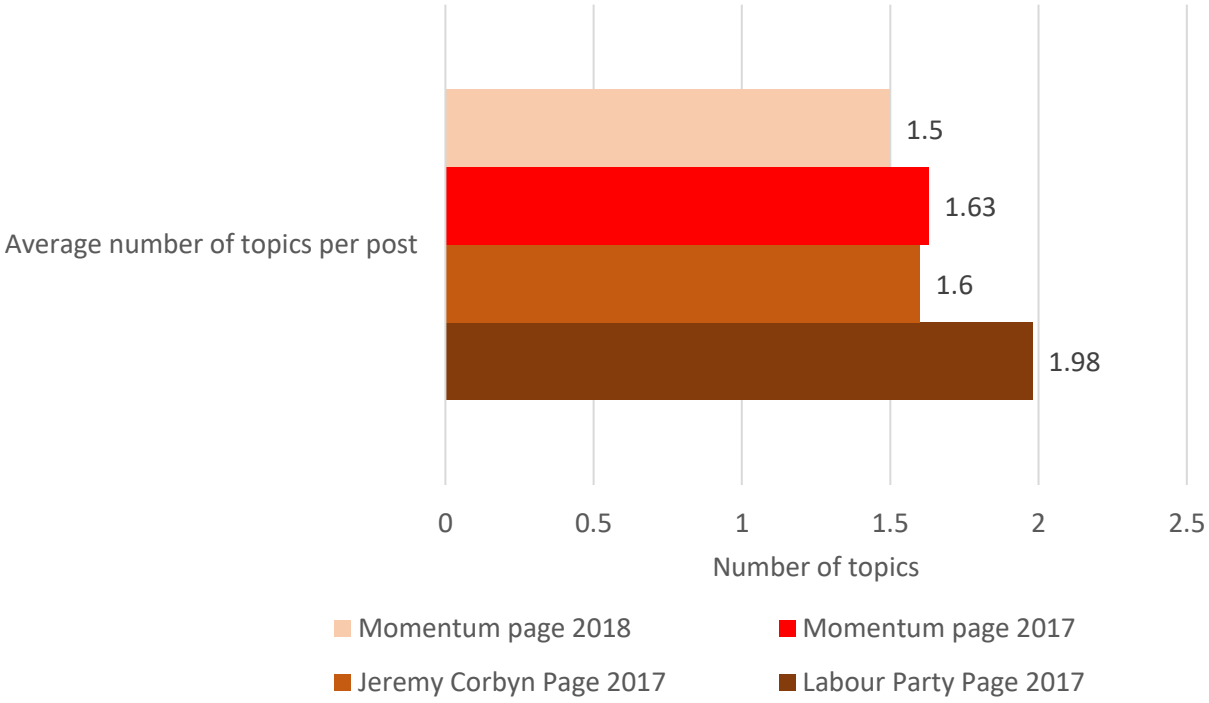
Image 27. 2017 Momentum use of poster[73]

Overall, across photo and video content, the Labour campaign was using different pages to inform dissimilar audiences in diverse ways. Clear structural styles informed by intended and expected audiences are visible. Momentum approached in a novel manner with sights clearly set on a younger more radical internet disposed audience. Corbyn's page mixed some more novel elements seen via Momentum with core traditional approaches to speak to the wider public young and old. The Labour Party page was focussed heavily on informative video content for a broad audience. The capacity for Labour to present a frivolous younger face to certain groups including those put off by traditional party politics, alongside a more serious and leadership personalised presence to the broad userbase, signals the benefits of Janus-faced campaigning. The party could do it all, via presenting itself differently to groups.

[73]https://www.facebook.com/PeoplesMomentum/photos/a.160217227657006.1073741829.155710354774360/458681371143922/?type=3 accessed 6/6/2019

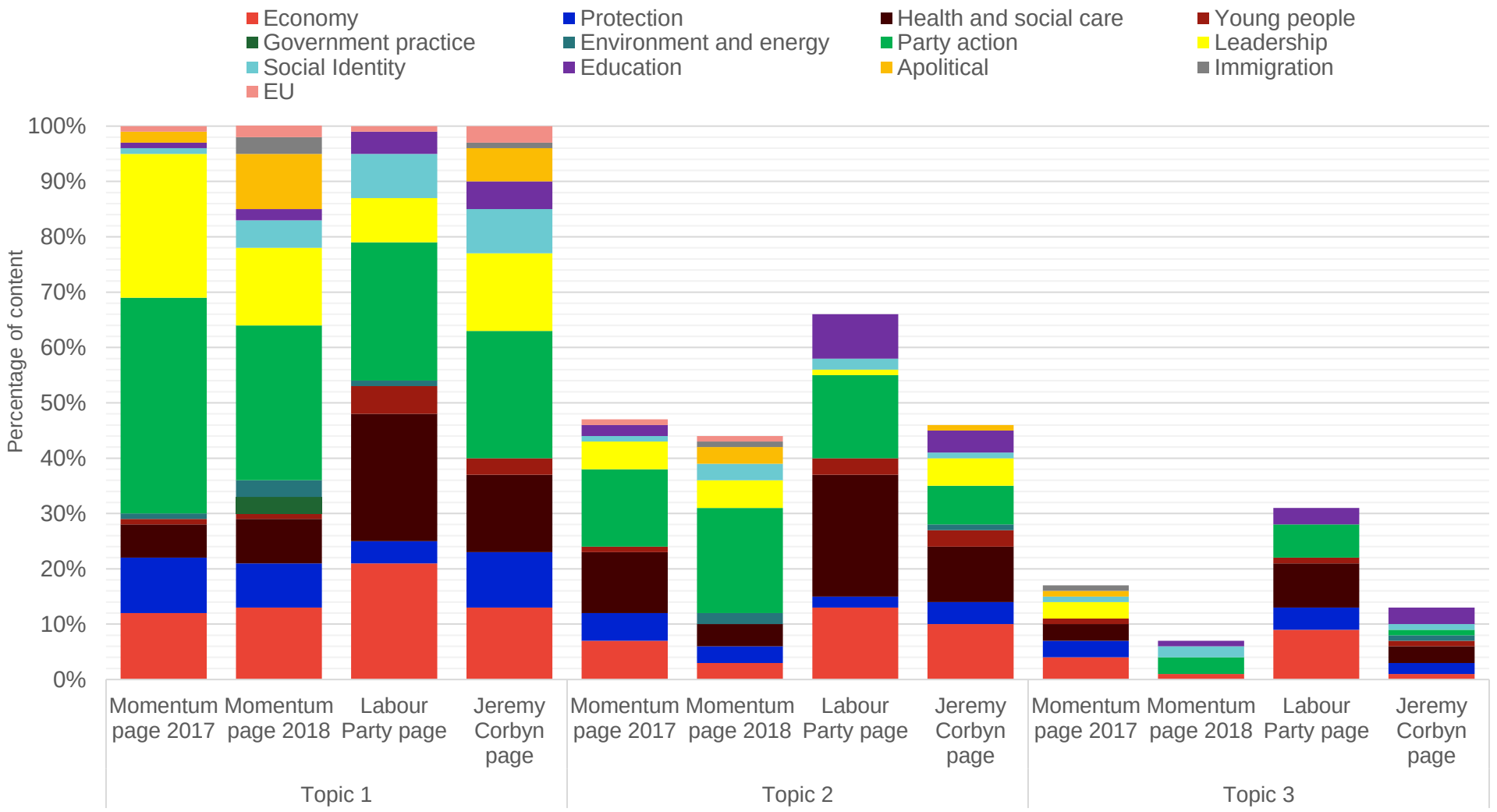
Is Momentum using different topics?

Momentum was not used to deliver as many political topics (1.63) as the party page (1.98), with the page using a similar number of topics per post to Corbyn's page (1.60). Both Momentum and Corbyn's page fit in as a middle information tool, in contrast the official party page takes on the role of disseminating more complex information. The focus of the Corbyn and Momentum pages' is centred less on policy and core political issues, instead they are more focused on ideas and actions. There was a small drop in Momentum's topic complexity between the 2017 General Election (1.63 average) and the 2018 permanent campaign (1.5 average). This reflects the group switching away from broader campaign issues, to content designed for virtual members. Nevertheless, even during the permanent campaign topic use is still well above one, showing how imperative it is for analyses of Facebook to engage in multi-level topic study.



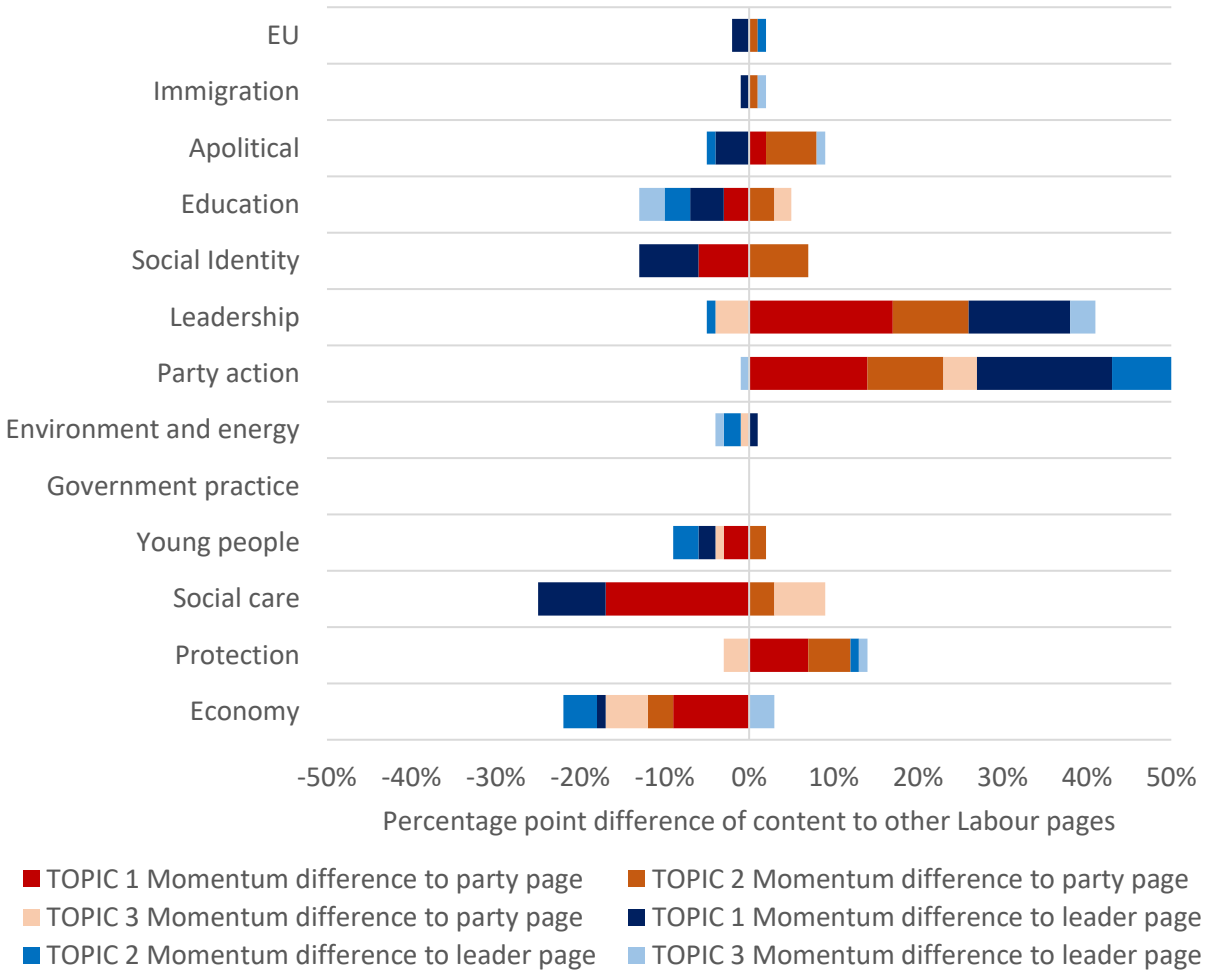
Graph 95. Average number of topics per post (n=695)

Graph 96 overleaf examines the topic's used across the triple coding system.



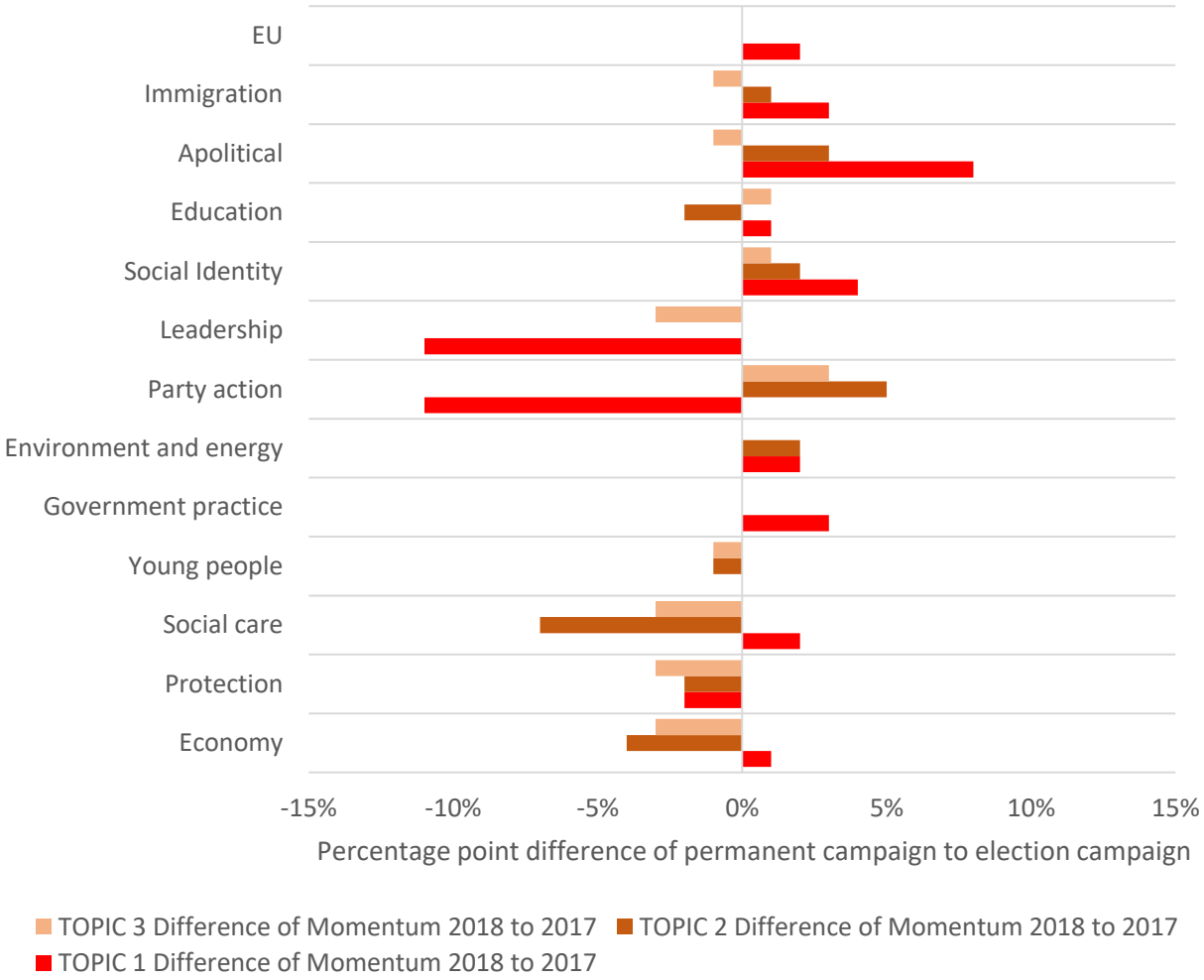
Graph 96. Use of topics across tripartite coding scheme (n=1,211)

Examining the topics covered, Momentum's main 2017 topics centred on the economy, protection, party action and leadership. There was a 59pp primary topic choice difference between Momentum and Corbyn's page, as opposed to 79pp for the Labour Party page. Although Momentum's approach mirrors some elements of the Labour and Corbyn page, the group sent by far the least broad range of primary topics. 86% of content occurred from the five most used topics, as opposed to 64% for the party page and 60% for the leader page. A large amount of focus was placed on two areas, with 64% of primary topic content centred on leadership and party action. Momentum as an organisation in-part founded to support Corbyn and his politics, understandably has high rates of leadership content (26%). The party heavily fed into Corbynmania and heavily personalised the leader. Momentum's even greater focus on party action content (39%) shows a role apart from the other pages. As examined later when looking at participation approaches, the group heavily focused on activating the public and virtual members.



Graph 97. Difference of Momentum content to party / leader page (n=1,211)

Although Momentum's topic use expanded across subsequent topic choices, compared to the other Labour pages they were unconcerned with promoting electorally important policy areas, such as social care or the economy. The page was not primarily concerned with political information and policy, leaving these elements to the traditional Facebook campaign. Instead, Momentum's satellite campaign was designed to energise certain elements of the electorate, engage with more radical information topics and engender virtual member participation. This was not a narrow approach however, the group showed disinterest in narrowcast social identity or young people focussed content. This is surprising given that the organisation is thought to be narrow in focus; being youth orientated and interested in issues of racism, equality and social justice. Instead, during the election Momentum was trying to reach a large more radical group of voting public than the party or leader page.



Graph 98. Momentum 2018 permanent campaign difference vs. 2017 General Election campaign approach (n=1,211)

Examining changes across the permanent campaign 2017 to 2018, Momentum's permanent campaign was clearly far less focussed on party action or leadership content. Smaller declines were seen in economy, protection and social care, with major positive changes seen in the use of social identity, education, immigration and the apolitical. Momentum appears to be trying to speak to a smaller partisan audience in 2018. Thus, the organisation switches from a mainstream more externally focused campaign page to an internal campaigning organisation. This reflects Dennis' posited idea of the potential hybridity of Momentum (2019), proving that the group do alternate their campaign nature depending on electoral period.

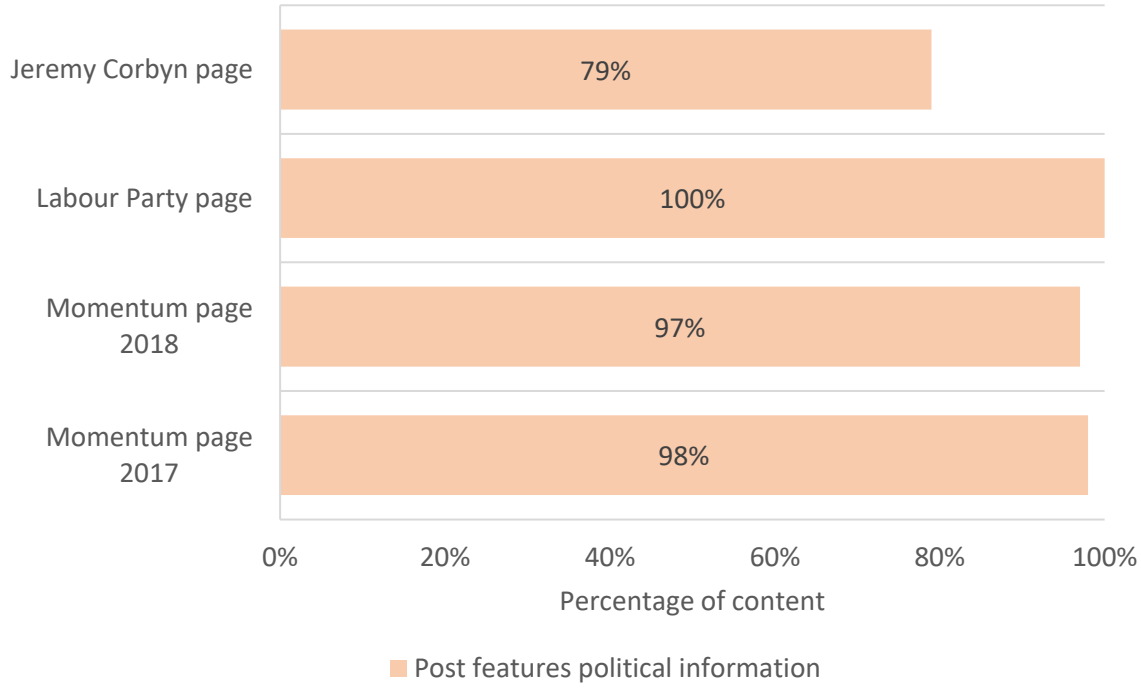
Image 28. 2017 Momentum use of leadership primary content[74]

Overall, Momentum was engaging in different topics to the other pages. Labour's topic frequency and diversity shows that the party was engaging in Janus-faced campaigning. A 'traditional' Facebook campaign was centrally being run by the party and leader page, designed to deliver core political information for the general public, while Momentum tried to bring home wayward left-wing groups, activate virtual members and develop Corbynmania. Through all three pages Labour was able to reach out to the core groups they needed to succeed in the election, whilst not undermining the character of each individual page.

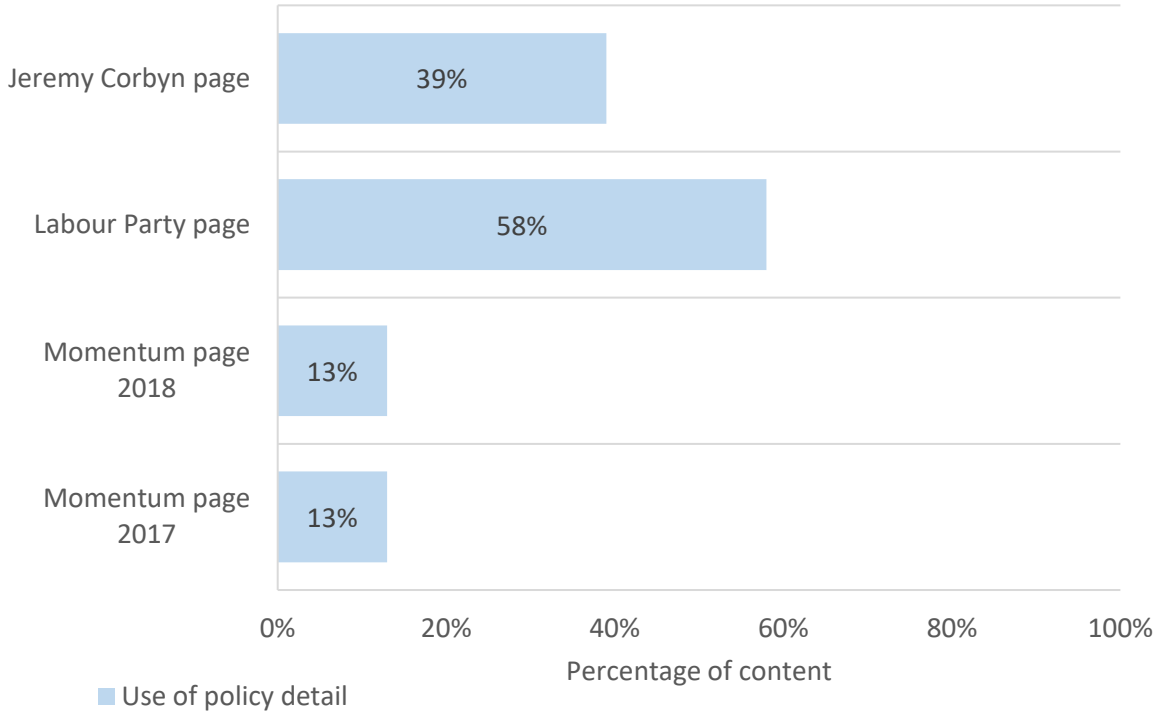
[74] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=462132310798828 accessed 5/5/2019

Does Momentum use complex information?

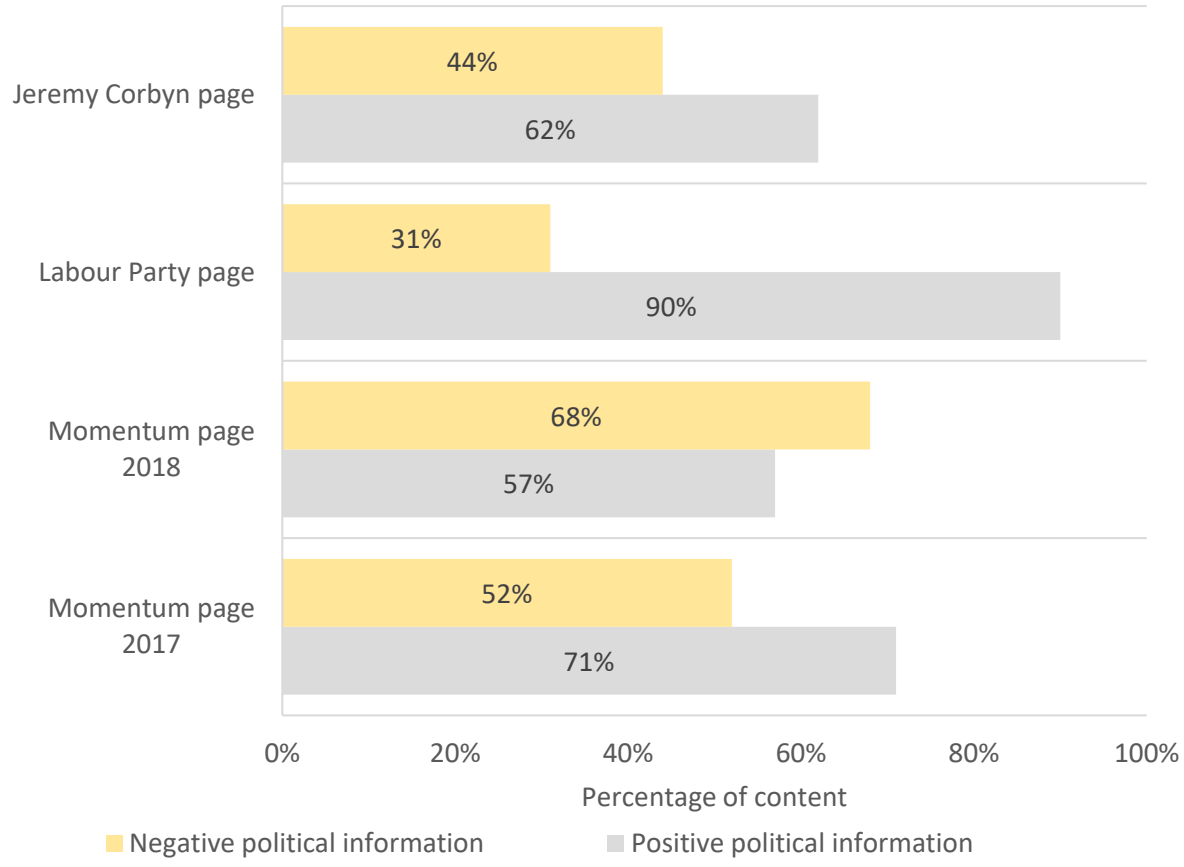
The trends seen across topic choice, including the role of Momentum as a tool not centred on policy and political information but instead on participation, organisation and leadership, is clearly also seen in use of policy detail. Momentum across both 2017 and 2018 featured low levels of policy detail (13%), although levels of political information were still high (97 & 98%). The organisation still delivered political information but was focussed on broader debates and ideas related to politics, not direct policy. The differences across the pages show the official party page used for detailed information, Momentum for ideological political information and Corbyn's page for a mixture of both. The sentiment of the political information delivered is also different across the pages. Momentum featured more negative political information (52%) than the leader (44%) or party page (31%), alongside less positive information (71%) than the party page (90%). In the sentiment of the political information used, Momentum more closely follows Corbyn's page than the party page, the group communicates in a more emotionally charged manner, showing their interest in speaking to a more partisan audience.



Graph 99. Use of political information (n=695)



Graph 100. Use of policy detail (n=695)

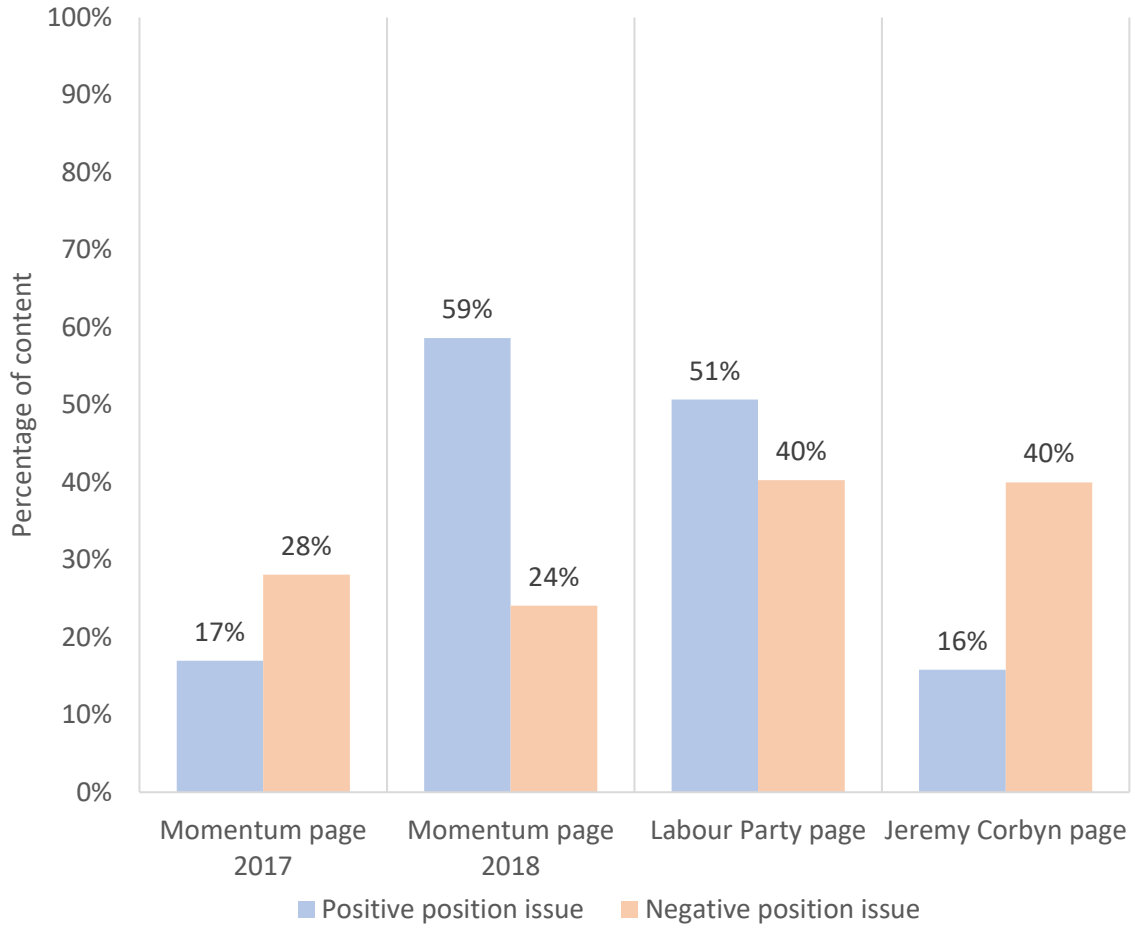


Graph 101. Political information tone (n=695)

The use of position issues also varies by page, Momentum (17%) features similar positive position issue use to Corbyn's page (16%), with the Labour Party page using more of the form (51%). Negative position issues are also more clearly used by the leader (40%) and party page (40%) rather than Momentum. Some commentators and Labour MP's have criticised Momentum as a Militant-style organisation[75], asserting the group to be particularly left wing and radical. However, it was the more moderate Labour Party page that pushed these combative ideological position issues. In contrast, Momentum and Corbyn pushed a broader political idealism that was an inclusive vision and not focused on combative policy.

Examining Momentum's 2018 permanent campaign, the trends change enormously, although policy detail remains low in use, positive position issue use accelerates (from 17% to 59%). This increase in position issue use is tied to the internal campaigning dimension Momentum evolved into during the permanent campaign. Momentum was focussed on the #JC9 campaign to elect Corbyn friendly politicians to the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party. All nine of the promoted candidates gained seats on the NEC, with the campaign a complete success[76]. Alongside this campaign, Momentum was also part of the 2018 local election push, supported striking workers and for Labour adoption of radical policy areas such as Universal Basic Income. These internally orientated campaigns saw the page promote left-wing politicians, policy and ideals; explaining the huge jump in positive position issues. Equally, given this was internal campaigning, it also explains why we see a relative decline in negative position issues.

[75] https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/mar/18/secret-tape-reveals-momentum-plot-to-link-with-unite-seize-control-of-labour accessed – 4/9/2019
[76]https://labourlist.org/2018/09/full-jc9-slate-elected-to-labours-nec/ accessed – 4/9/2019



Graph 102. Use of position issues (n=695)

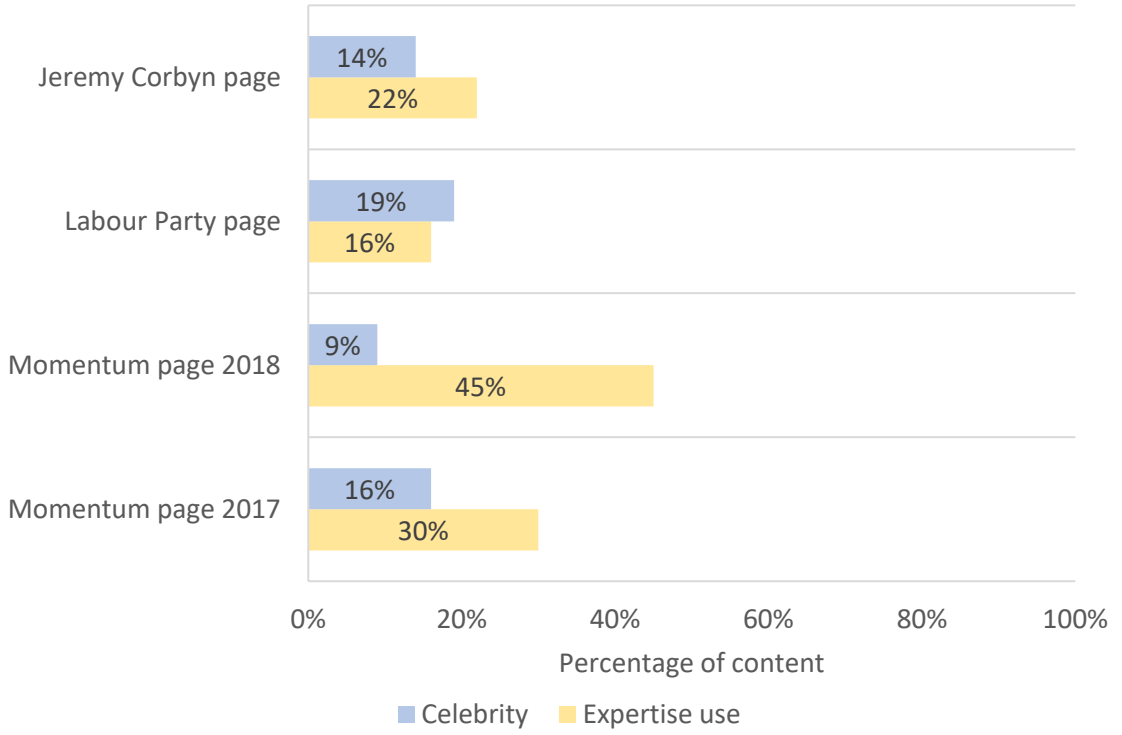
Overall, Momentum was not focused on as complex a level of information as the party or leader page during the 2017 General Election. This Janus-faced use of different pages is important because the Labour Party was delivering a diverse level of political detail, across a range of issues, with different sentiments. All the pages promoted the Labour manifesto's radical policies but differed in how they were delivered. The party page was centred on specifics; high levels of detail and political information saw the page delivering radical policy in both a positive and negative way. Corbyn was used in a middle role, both used to inject emotion into the Labour policy agenda but still with policy detail. Momentum was there to inform and activate a different audience, detail was minimal with focus on narrative and emotion. Examining the permanent campaign, Momentum was successful in pushing and framing radical policy. Labour's change from a centre-left force in 2015 to one that was more radical in 2019 did not occur in isolation, Momentum was a key part of this change.

Image 29. 2018 Momentum use of negative position issue[77]

Is Momentum using expertise or celebrity?

Chapter 5 showed that across party and leader pages Labour's use of expertise was subsidiary to celebrity. Facebook offers new avenues for the utilisation of experts and celebrities, with satellite campaigns offering even greater scope for the use of cultural figures that can speak to different audiences. Due to their smaller audience targets, satellite campaigns such as Momentum can use more specific experts or celebrities than the party or leader page. This is seen within Momentum, as well-respected left of centre academics such as Joseph Stieglitz and Noam Chomsky are used as experts, while other important cultural figures such as Stormzy are used as celebrities. Overall, as Graph 103 shows in contrast to the leader and party page's, Momentum is much more interested in using experts than celebrities. As Momentum champions more radical causes, experts are used to argue ideological positions within a wider left-wing vision both during elections and permanently. Equally, Momentum uses experts like celebrities, as figures such as Noam Chomsky have a large amount of cultural capital as left-wing figures.

[77] https://www.facebook.com/155710354774360/posts/682952075383516/ accessed 1/2/2020



Graph 103. Use of expertise or celebrity (n=695)[78]

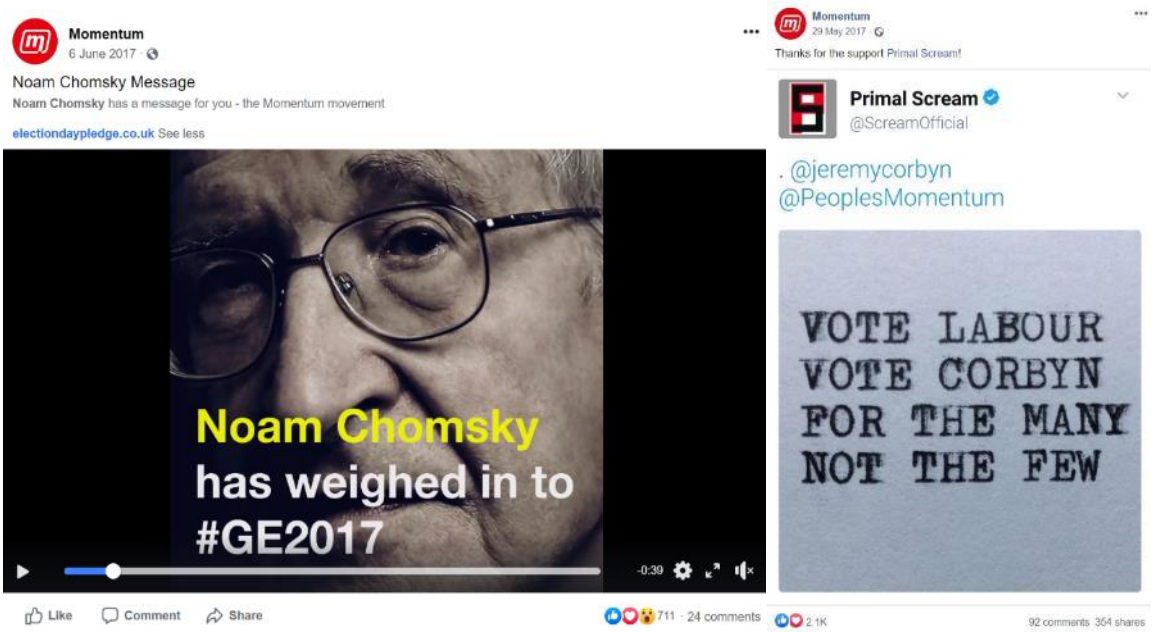
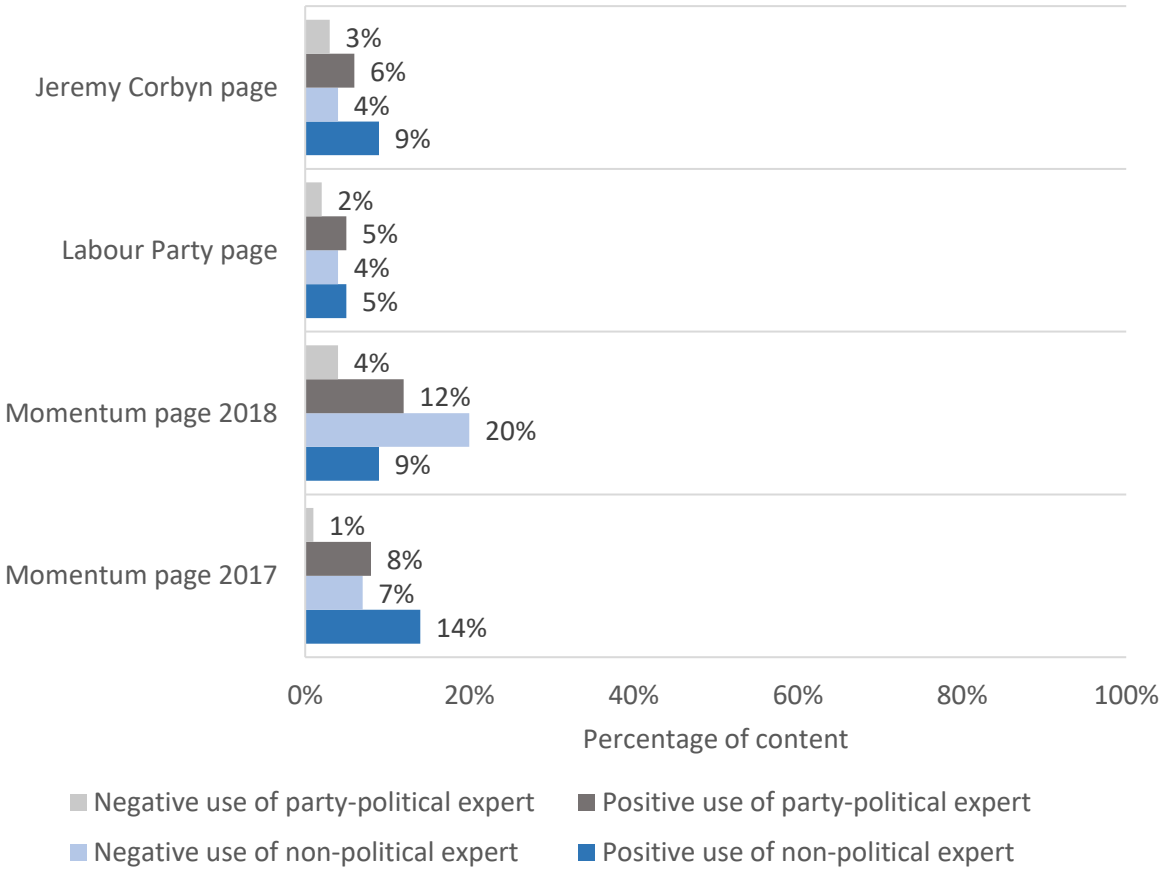


Image 30. 2017 Momentum use of expert[79]
Image 31. 2017 Momentum use of celebrity[80]

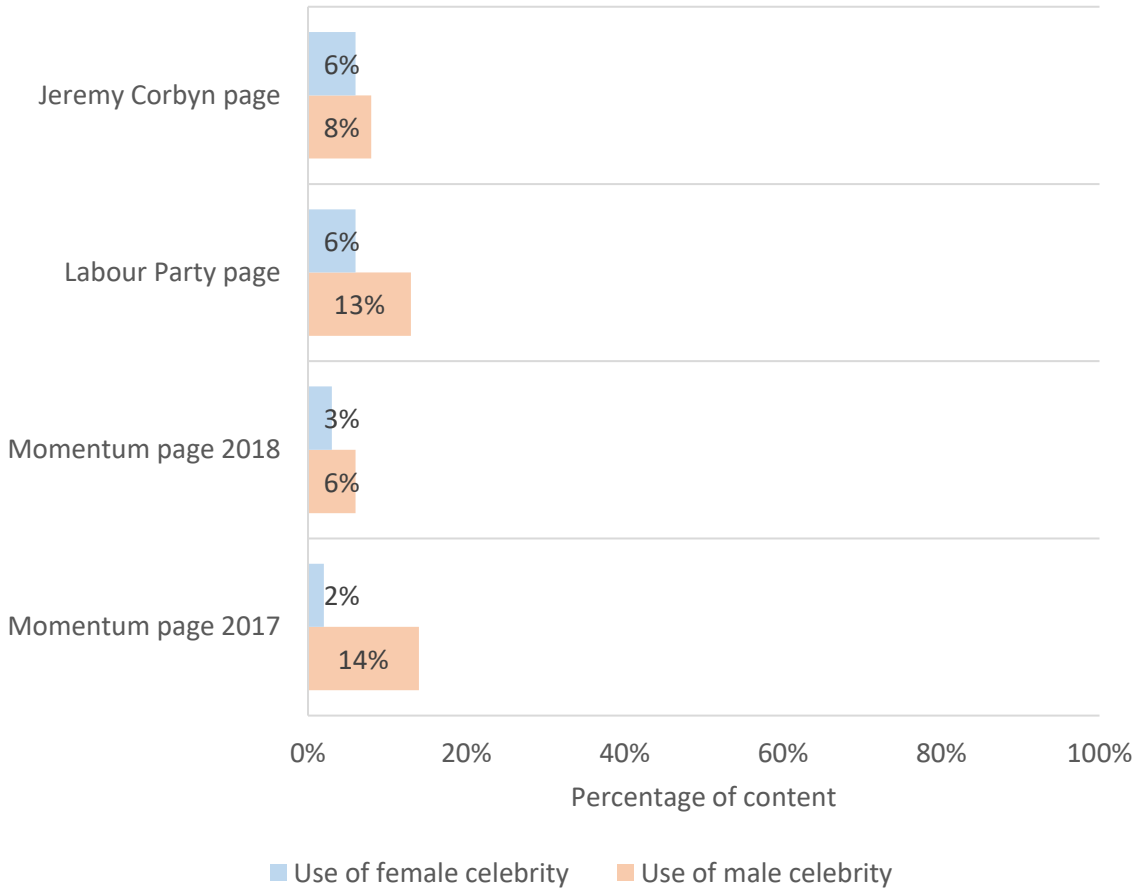
[78] Worked out from use positive and negative use of non-political and political experts, alongside male and female use of celebrities.
[79] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=461652557513470 accessed 1/5/2020
[80]https://www.facebook.com/PeoplesMomentum/photos/a.160217227657006.1073741829.155710354774360/?type=3 accessed 1/5/2020

Examining the use of expertise in detail within Graph 104. Momentum like the other Labour pages favoured using non-political experts over party-political experts. The pages appreciate the influence sources outside the party can have for persuasion. Usage of experts during the election campaign was generally positive. 14% of 2017 Momentum election content used non-political experts positively, with usage rates far above Corbyn (9%) or the Labour Party page (5%). Momentum's use of experts was also higher (7%) compared to the other pages (4%). However, a marked shift in negative use of expertise occurred during the permanent campaign. 20% of Momentum's permanent campaign content used experts in a negative way, with positive use of experts declining to only 9% of content. Momentum shifted from positive expertise used to influence the wider public during the election campaign, to negative expertise to internally campaign to virtual members during the permanent campaign. During this internal campaign, the negative use of experts was used to battle soft-left figures and ideas.



Graph 104. Use of expertise (n=695)

This trend between a more insular permanent campaign and a broader public facing election campaign is also seen when examining Momentum's use of celebrities. During the election campaign, 14% of Momentum's content used a celebrity endorsement; standing close to the approach seen by the party page (17%) and the leader page (13%). However, the groups use declined rapidly across the permanent campaign to 4%. Momentum, during the election campaign fits the wider Labour model of using celebrity endorsements to influence and engage with the wider public. However, when Momentum was campaigning internally during the permanent campaign, there was less incentive to reach out to different audiences and thus motivation to use opinion leaders. Within the celebrities used, Labour was shrewd in how they exploited celebrities and their networks. Momentum was clearly trying to reach different demographics and parts of society to the other pages.



Graph 105. Use of celebrity (n=695)

Momentum's celebrities were more specific opinion leaders, including left-wing figures such as Michael Rosen or Billy Bragg, or important figures within minority communities such as Stormzy. In contrast, the traditional campaign focused

on household names such as Steve Coogan. Labour clearly had an appreciation of the way different celebrities can influence different sociological networks, with Momentum using celebrities to break into communities more likely open to Momentum's more radical message. Overall, unlike the other pages Momentum favours expertise equally with celebrity. Momentum's interest in experts rather than celebrities during the permanent campaign shows the organisation shifting towards internal partisan battles, with ideology and expertise more important for political outcomes.

How is news and other media used by the group?

Momentum's approach to media sources during the 2017 General Election is relatively reflective of the other Labour pages, with a few unique approaches that set the organisation apart. Momentum, like the other Labour pages did not use news media links; Labour were interested in keeping audiences on Facebook except for specific participatory purposes. Examining mainstream media use, Momentum utilise media content but only if it can be edited. Momentum's use of positive and negative mainstream media (positive 12%, negative 14%) is found at rates very similar to the leader page (positive 13%, negative 13%), in contrast, the party page did not use mainstream media content (0% positive, 5% negative). During the election Momentum used mainstream media creatively. The group used many different types of mainstream content to promote or attack politicians and leaders in novel ways. Examples include editing images of The Office alongside Theresa May, the use of Question Time or news interviews. The group used a novel approach, because as Dennis notes, Momentum was "operating outside of the restrictions of formal party politics" (2019, p.110). Momentum was free to communicate in a different way to the other pages.

Outside of mainstream media use, Momentum was the only page interested in promoting the party's campaign success via polling content (6%). This occurred centrally via Twitter screen captures. A fundamental area of difference is seen in the groups use of alternative media, Momentum used alternative media positively (6%), while the other Labour pages did not. For Momentum, alternative media sources included YouTube videos of Novara Media and the Artist Taxi Driver, as well as

Skwawkbox news content. One of the benefits for Momentum over Labour, is because it is not an official page it can use an informal style and sources outside of the mainstream. This allows Momentum to tap into a vast array of left-wing bloggers, YouTubers and partisan news, that the other more establishment pages distance themselves from. This gap gave Labour the capacity to campaign both as a radical outsider, as well as maintain a sense of official competency.

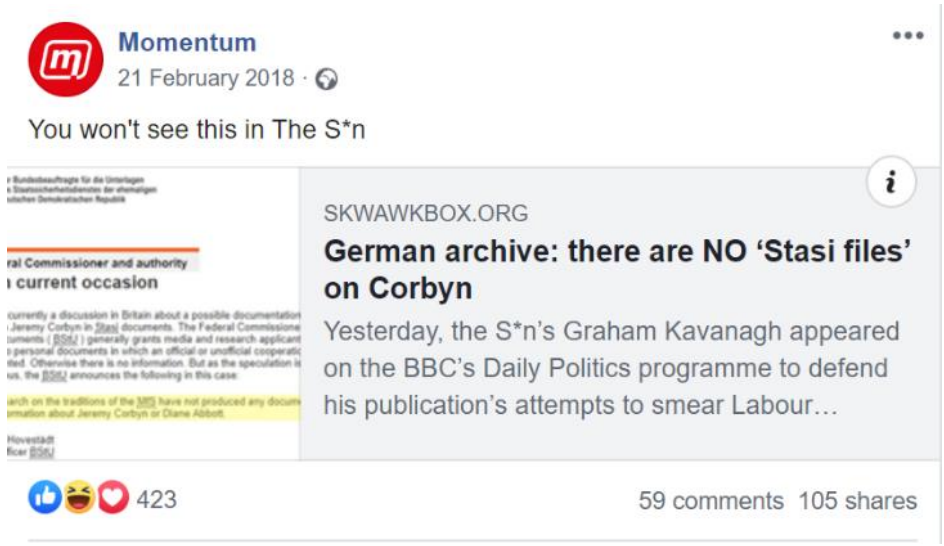
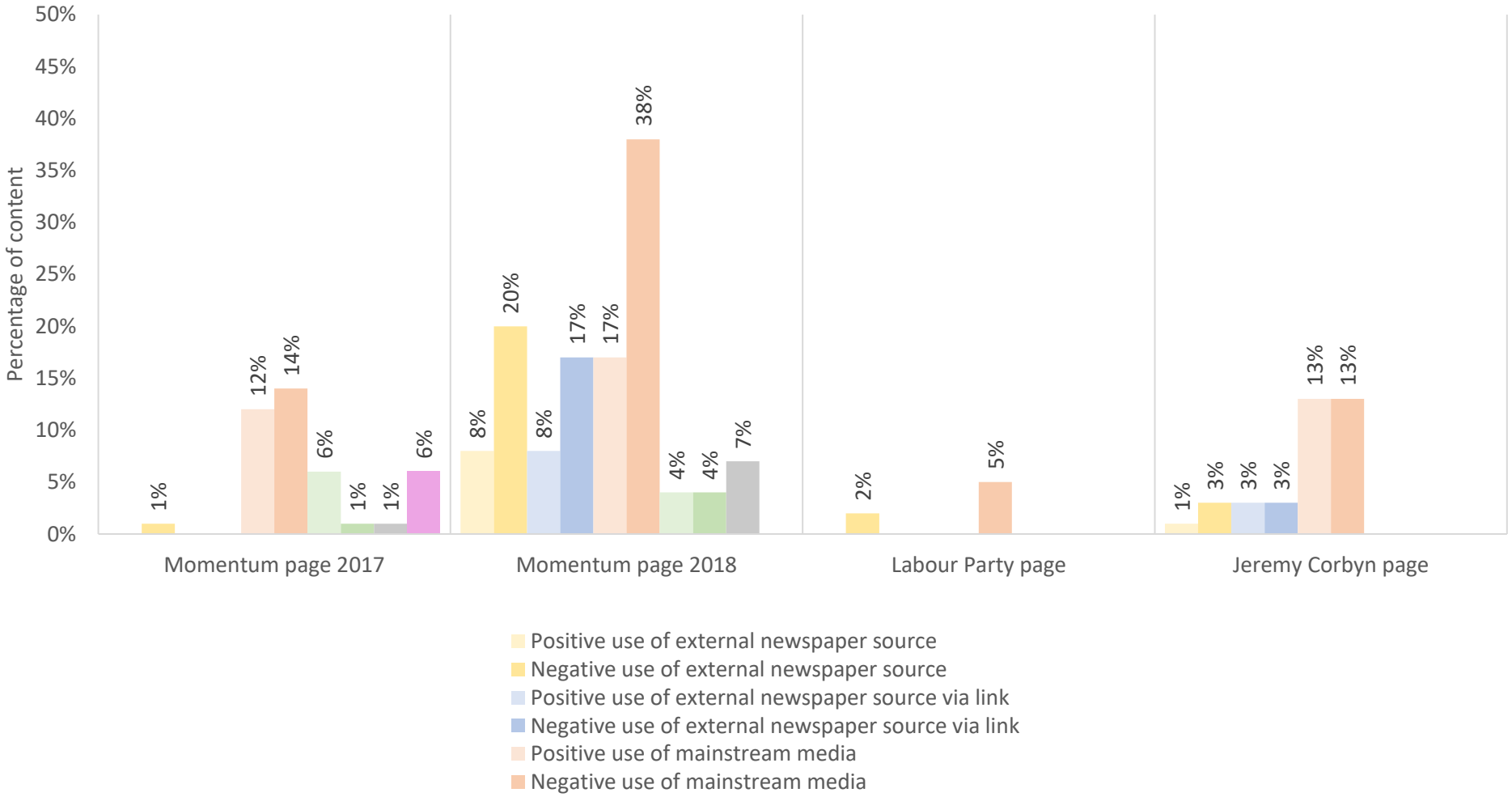


Image 32. 2018 Momentum use of alternative news source by link[81]

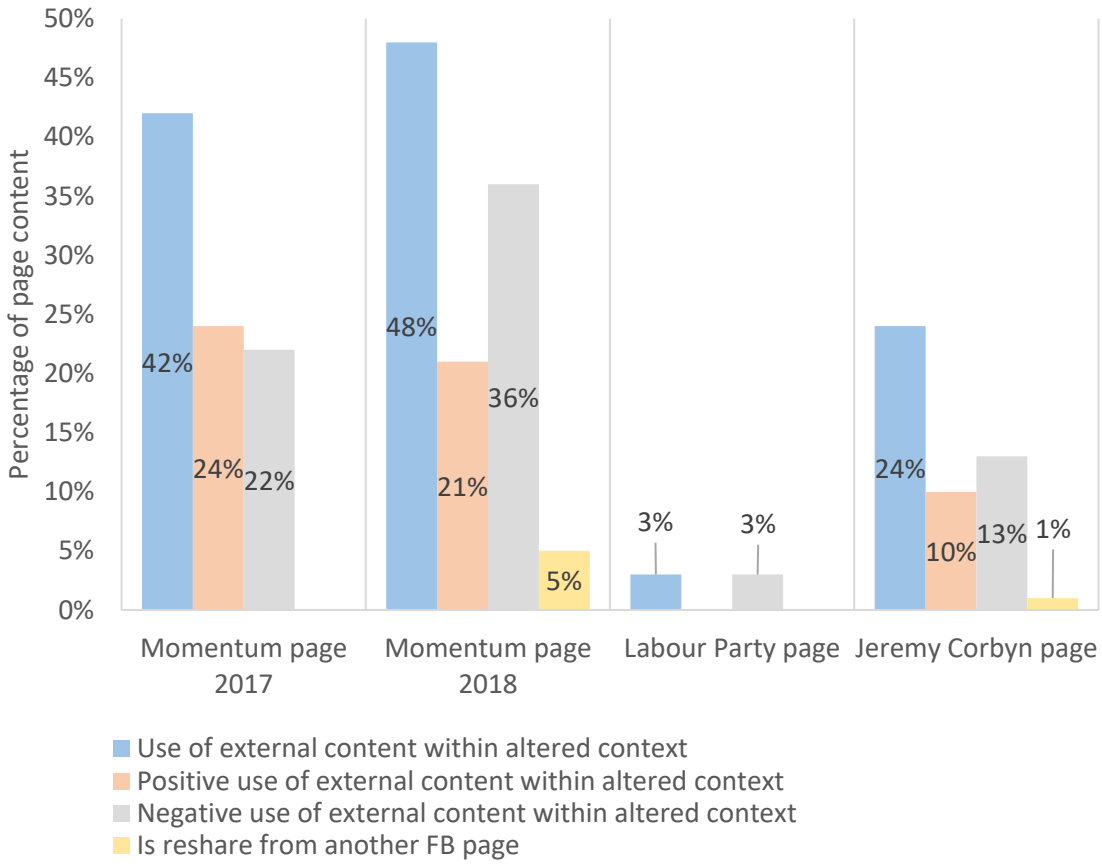
Image 33. 2018 Momentum use of mainstream news source by link[82]

[81] https://www.facebook.com/155710354774360/posts/584163171929074/ accessed 13/11/2019
[82] https://www.facebook.com/155710354774360/posts/652200975125293/ accessed 13/11/2019



Graph 106. Use of media sources (n=695)

Large changes occurred from the 2017 election to the 2018 permanent campaign. Bespoke content reduced during the permanent campaign; the page instead relied more on reposting other pages or groups content. Momentum more often reshared other Facebook page's content during the permanent campaign (5%), with a large shift seen in using mainstream media and news content. Momentum's use of news increased, with use of mainstream media content via sources and links, newspaper content and negative alternative media all increasing. The page also adopted a strategy of attacking media organisations such as the Sun and Daily Mail, 7% of all 2018 content attacked the media. This again speaks to Momentum trying to activate a smaller closer-knit band of supporters during the permanent campaign, generating a radical identity. As Dennis notes upon the permanent campaign; "rather than avoiding it, antagonistic news coverage of Momentum is embraced by the leadership and used to further claim that they are outsiders, somehow distinct from the norms of party-political organizing that have given rise to a sense of anti-politics in the UK" (Dennis, 2019, p.109). Momentum clearly use Facebook selectively depending on expected audience.



Graph 107. 2017 use of external content (n=695)

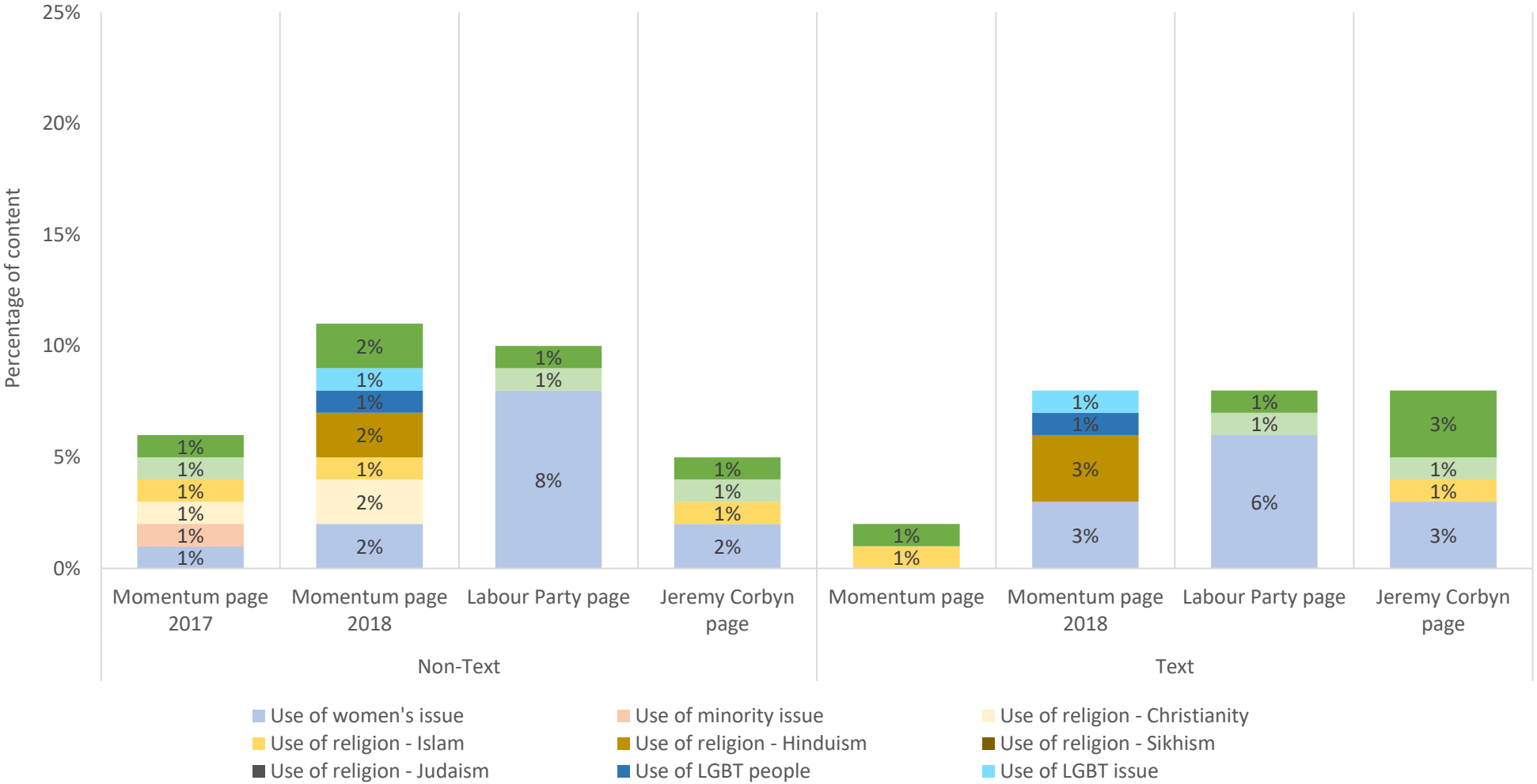
Examining the use of external content, across the 2017 election, Momentum were keener to reuse content than the other Labour pages, including positive and negative use of external content. 42% of Momentum's election content reused external content, as opposed to 24% of Corbyn's content and only 3% of Labour Party page content. Momentum used the platform to energise support via recasting and reacting to the news of the day, with a bonus being that news media provides a cheap, consistent and easy source of content. The reuse of external content was stable across the permanent campaign (+6pp), with large increases in negative use of external content (+14pp). Given reduced staff and funds, Momentum sought easy sources of content for the page.

Overall, the Labour Party was selective in how each page used media content. Momentum, and to a lesser extent Corbyn's page, are there to fit their campaigns into a more aggressive news-orientated environment, while the Labour Party page continued with its focus on policy information. The heavy use of linked media content during Momentum's permanent campaign shows a greater traditional/social media hybridity (Chadwick, 2013). Thus, the systematic reduced use of links to keep users on the platform via internal media hybridity is an electoral approach.

Does Momentum focus on depiction?

One would expect Momentum, as a younger more diverse organisation, to depict more diverse minority groups and wider issues. However, when examining the 2017 election in Graph 108[83], Momentum did not depict minority groups issues in the non-text and text elements of posts at rates higher than the other Labour pages. Reflecting the findings seen in topic choice, Momentum like the other Labour pages generally focussed on broader groups and issues.

[83] One should note that across text elements Momentum's use of depiction is consistently low because the group barely used the text element of posts, their average post word counts never went above 13 words.

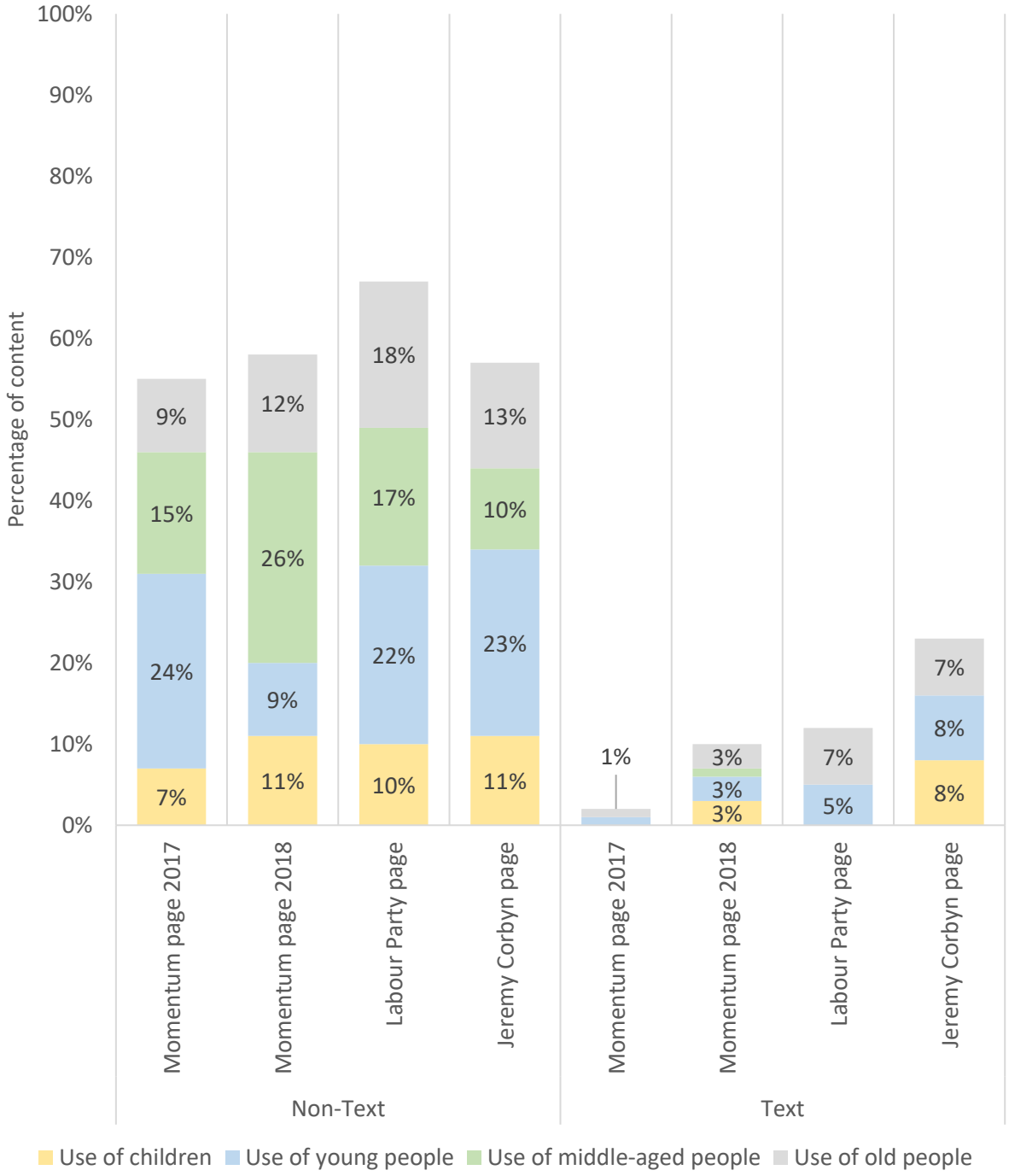


Graph 108. Use of depiction and issues (n=1,390, n of non-text elements = 695, n of text elements = 695)

Image 34. 2017 Momentum use of Christianity and Islam[84]

The only underrepresented group that is relatively depicted across the pages was women through use of women's issues. However, Momentum and Corbyn practically ignored the issue (only 1-3% across text and non-text elements) with the greatest amount of focus given by the party page (8% non-text, 6% text). Momentum showed no special interest in depicting or talking about issues concerning underrepresented groups. Greater depiction of these groups is seen across Momentum's permanent campaign. However, use only reaches 11% of non-text and 8% of text content. Momentum does appear to particularly care about minority issues, especially when speaking to their virtual members during the permanent campaign. Some narrowcast focus is seen, showing a more representative and radical internal political agenda. However, as seen next from the use of core groups, Momentum like all the other Labour pages' centrally focuses on broader groups and issues.

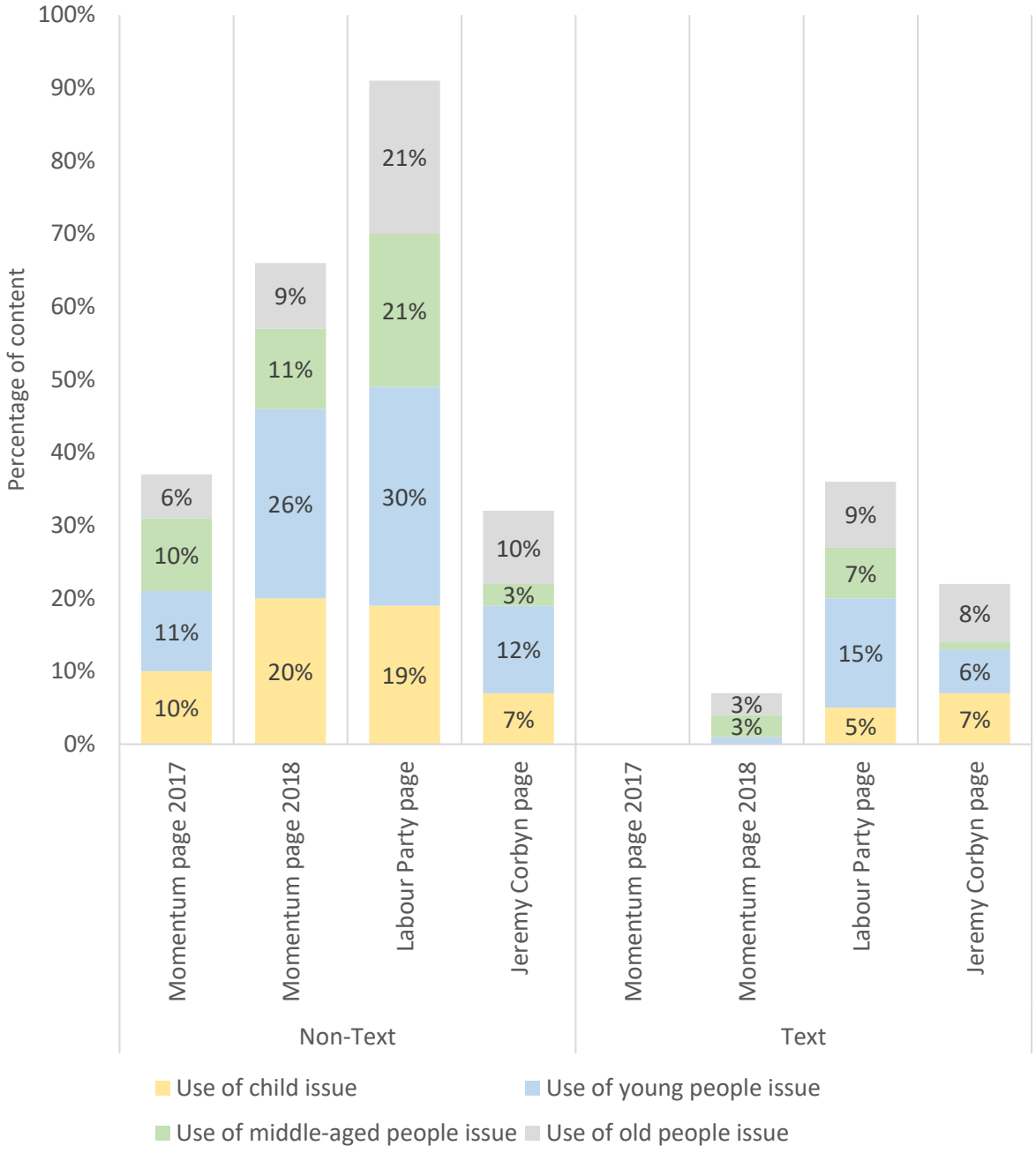
[84] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=460514247627301 accessed 12/2/2020



Graph 109. Depiction of age groups (n=1390, n of non-text elements = 695, n of text elements = 695)

Examining the depiction of core age groups during the election, Labour was not using Facebook to narrowcast campaign. Groups depicted and issues talked about concerned the many not the few. There were some page-based differences during the election campaign; Momentum generally depicted more young and middle-aged people, while interest in representing older people and children was

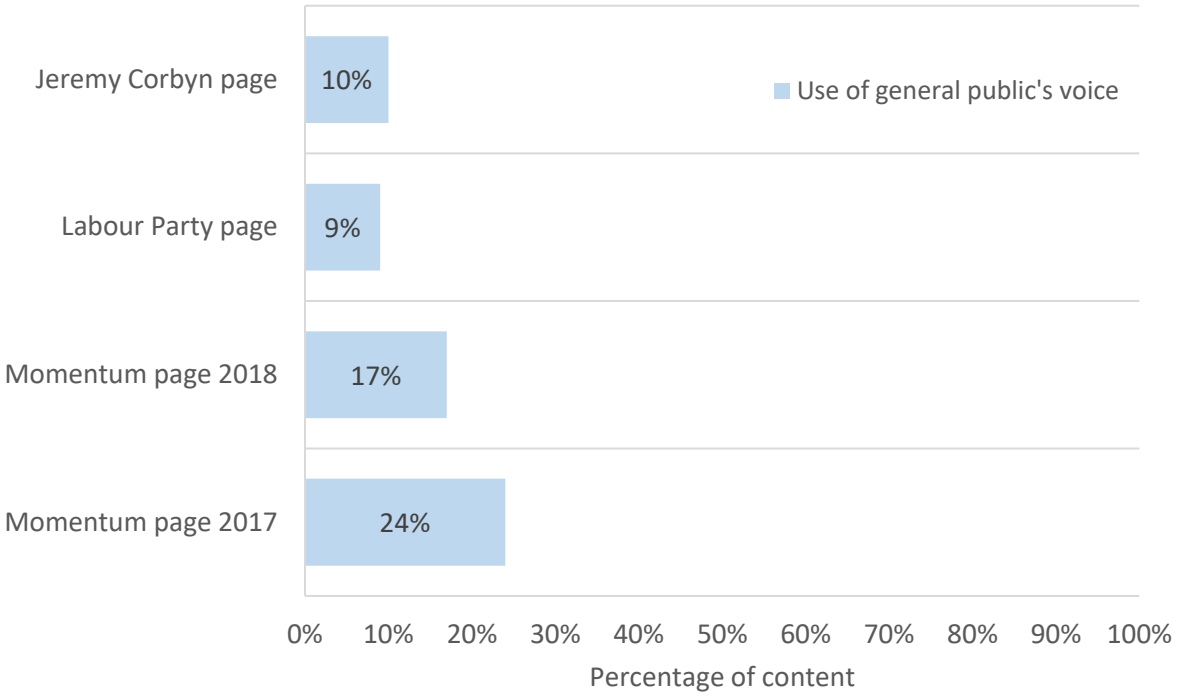
seen more via the party and leader page. This use of different pages to depict different audiences shows some demographic logic behind the traditional or new methods elements of the Labour campaign. Nevertheless, the clearest takeaway is that all the pages were geared to speak to the wider Facebook userbase during the election campaign.



Graph 110. Use of issues associated with age groups (n=1390, n of non-text elements = 695, n of text elements = 695)

Examining the use of issues associated with age groups presents a different picture, the data shows how the Labour Party page is the central vehicle used to talk about core groups issues, reflecting the page's policy and information focus. In contrast, the Momentum and Corbyn pages are not overly concerned with issue areas. What this tells us is that Momentum and Corbyn's pages were more concerned with the depiction and imagery of the public, rather than actual policy affecting the public. Their content was designed to resonate with the people on an emotive level. With political information kept as broad as possible, an inclusive vision was developed above narrowcast specifics. Investigating the permanent campaign across depiction and issue use, we saw a shift in Momentum's approach. The group increased their use of depiction and issue usage. Central shifts were in featuring more middle-aged depiction (+11pp), and far more interest in using issues effecting all age groups, especially young people and parents. Momentum during the permanent campaign were more interested in breaking down policy areas and narrowcasting ideas to groups, while not necessarily depicting these groups more.

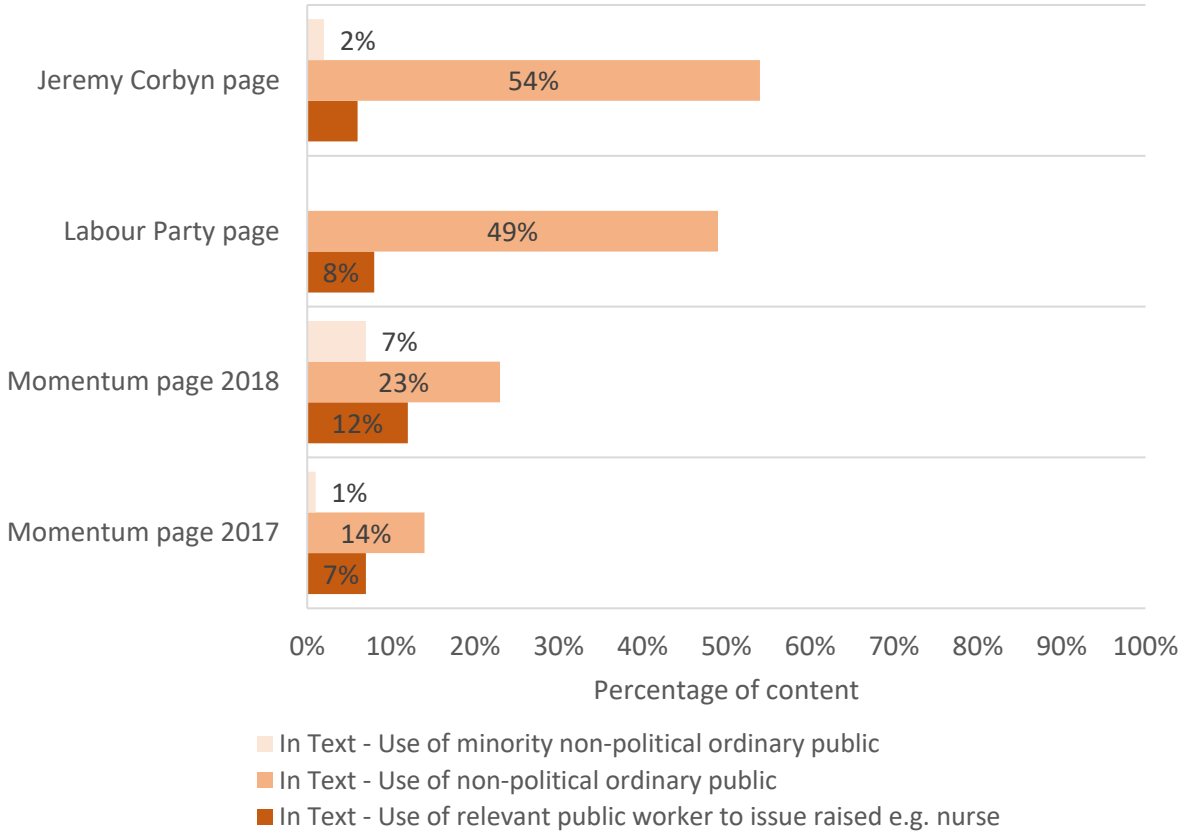
When questioning who these pages are depicting, examining the use of the public across the 2017 General Election in detail, Graph 111 shows Momentum's interest in using the publics' voice more than other Labour pages. 24% of their content used a public person's voice, in contrast to 9% of the party and 10% of the leader page. The group also used relevant public workers more than the other pages (27% Momentum, 17% leader, 21% party page). However, across other avenues of depiction, Momentum saw reduced use of non-political ordinary public especially minorities. Although depiction of these groups increased during the permanent campaign, it is clear Momentum was more interested than the party or leader pages in depicting the public through their voices rather than imagery.



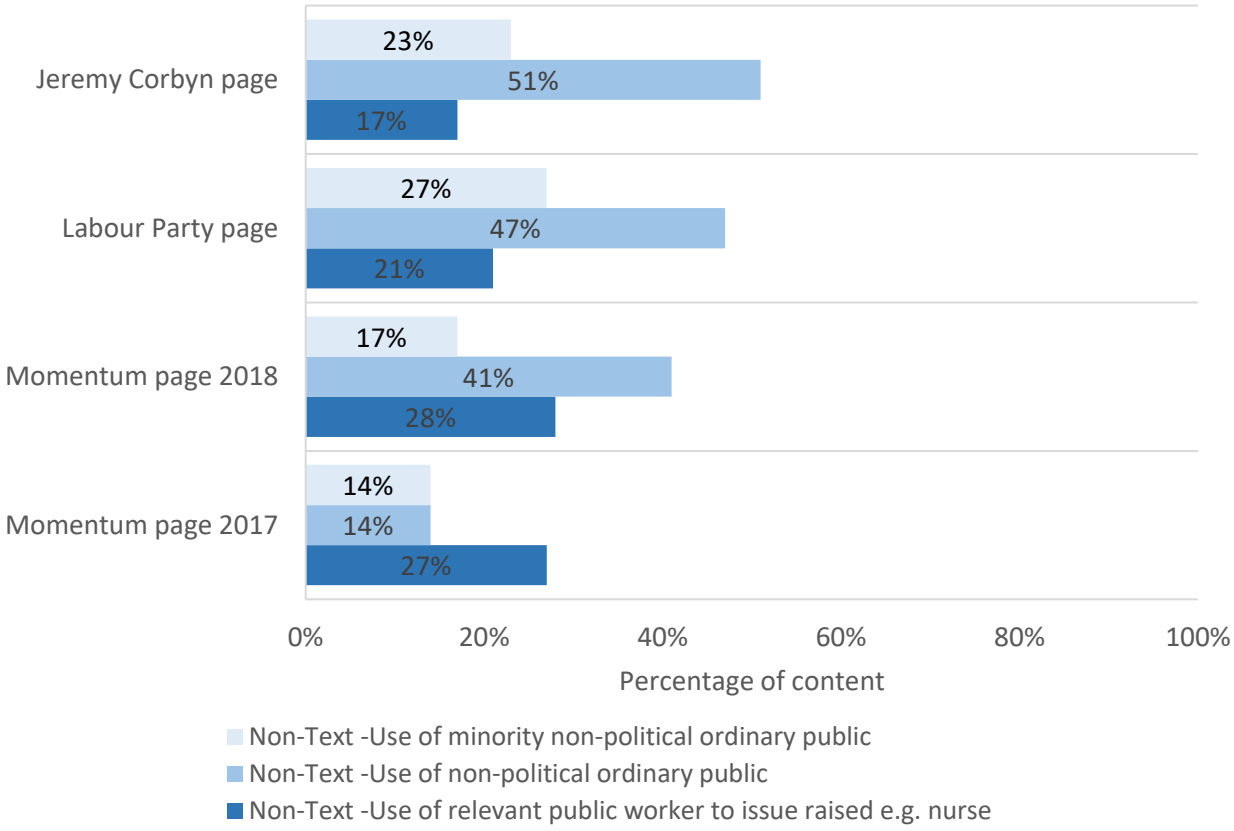
Graph 111. Use of general public's voice (n=695)

Image 35. 2017 Momentum use of general public's voice[85]

[85] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=462084734136919 accessed 2/2/2020



Graph 112. Depiction of the public in text content (n=695)



Graph 113. Depiction of the public in non-text content (n=695)

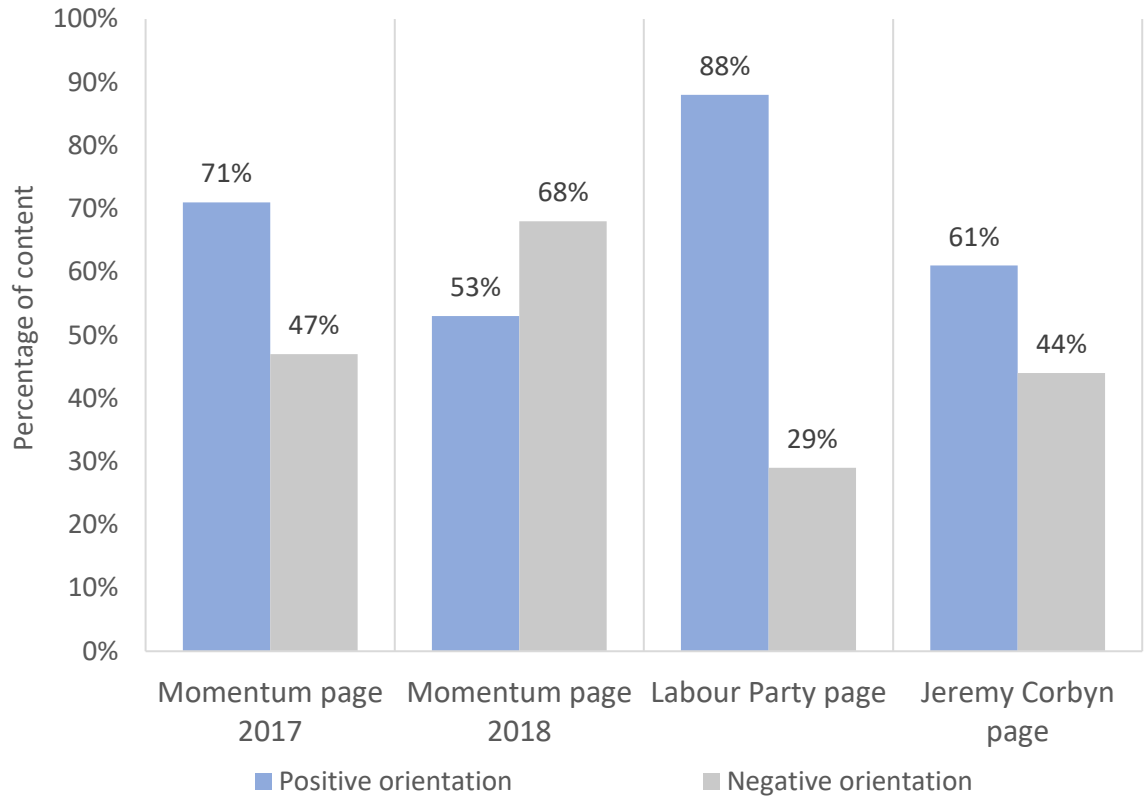
For Momentum depiction is about grass-roots political expression. Many videos used bespoke Vox pop style interviews of the public, opinion pieces of ordinary public members and edited Question Time audience member comments. Therefore, use of core groups was not reflected in use of issues during the election campaign. Momentum created the appearance of ground-up support for Corbyn through using and depicting the public, this was similarly seen via Corbyn's page. Momentum's use of imagery accelerated during the permanent campaign, reflecting a change in audience and reduction in bespoke campaign content, with the groups use of issues more tied to its use of depiction.

Overall, the common parlance is that Labour is identity obsessed. Depiction is common, but this is only for the broadest and most electorally important groups. Even within Momentum, the '*wokest'* element of Labour, we only see partially increased interest in depicting minority groups. Many within Momentum have highlighted a lack of representation as a major issue (Jossette, 2019), as Momentum like Labour and all other UK parties, is particularly white, male and middle class (Bale, Webb & Poletti, 2019). Nevertheless, Labour and especially Momentum is far ahead of its competitors in representing modern Britain via Facebook. Dennis notes in describing Momentum on Facebook, that they "use the language and imagery associated with movement politics to position the organization as representative of ordinary people who are mobilizing against political elites" (Dennis, 2019, p.110). Dennis notes an important trend that is clearly visible, however a very similar language and imagery approach is seen across all of Labour's pages. Labour, not just Momentum, was pushing themselves as the representative of ordinary people. However, it is important to note that the party's use of the public was grounded in symbolism and imagery not in dialogue. Momentum was the only page to frequently use more genuine representations of the public, allowing them to use their own voices to convey political ideas.

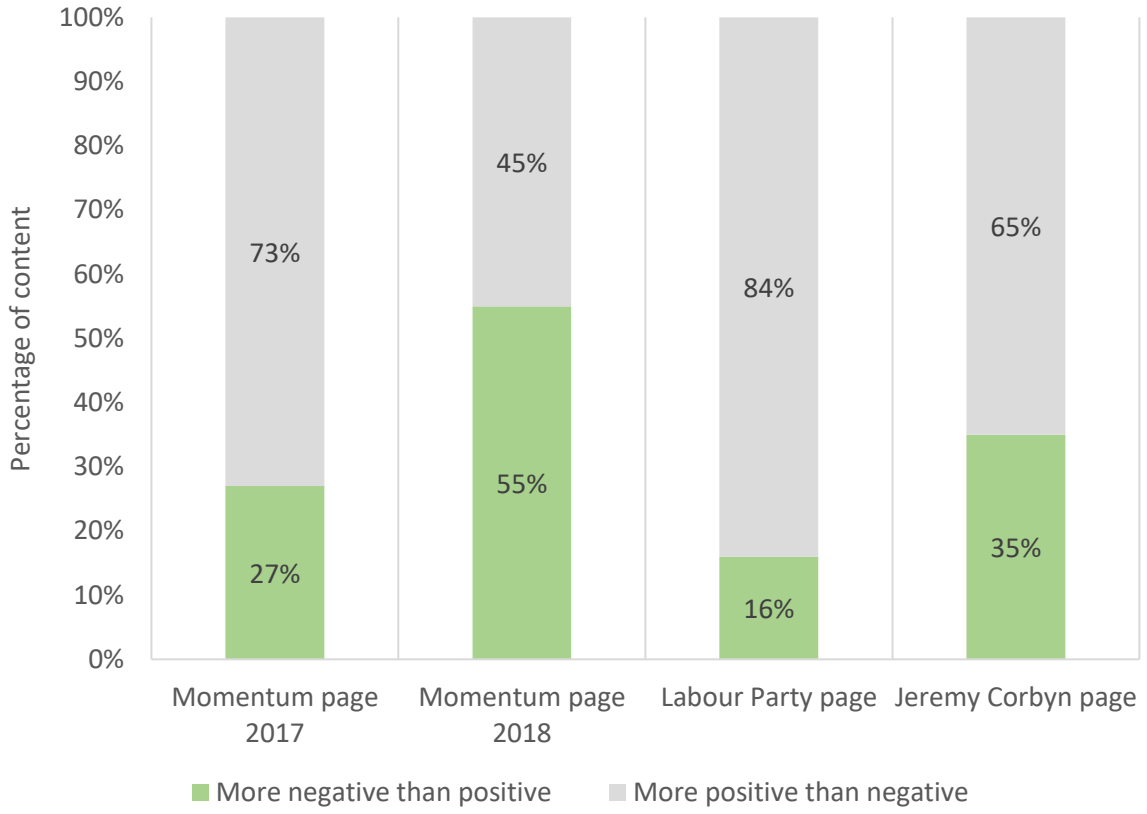
How is Momentum's content framed?

Momentum has been labelled a radical element within the Labour Party, with some commentators referring to it as a negative force. However, across the 2017 campaign Momentum was generally positive (71%), with the group more positive

than the leader page (61%) although not as positive as the party page (88%). The group utilised levels of negativity (47%) similar to the leader page (44%) but was far more negative than the party page (29%). Momentum clearly utilised sentiment more strongly than the other pages, with content tending towards sentiment extremes. However, the page was only similar in sentiment to Corbyn's page, the idea that the group framed content in a more extreme manner during the election campaign is not visible. Throughout the 2018 permanent campaign, Momentum did become more extreme in its sentiment. The group became less positive (-18pp) and far more negative (+21pp). The shift shows how Momentum was switching from positive content to energise wider audiences, towards negative content designed to activate partisans. Negative campaigning from the group appears to be saved somewhat for internal campaigning. The negativity seen from the group against other sections of the Labour Party was quite striking. Dennis notes in his analysis that "Momentum represent something dramatically different from the stage-managed communication that characterizes other actors… They develop this distinctive voice by sharing adversarial messages… This "us versus them" dynamic operates at multiple levels, as Momentum stands in opposition to its ideological adversaries" (2019, p.108). For Momentum, it appears their ideological adversaries are within the party as much as without, the group clearly present themselves differently during an election campaign,



Graph 114. Sentiment across Labour pages (n=695)

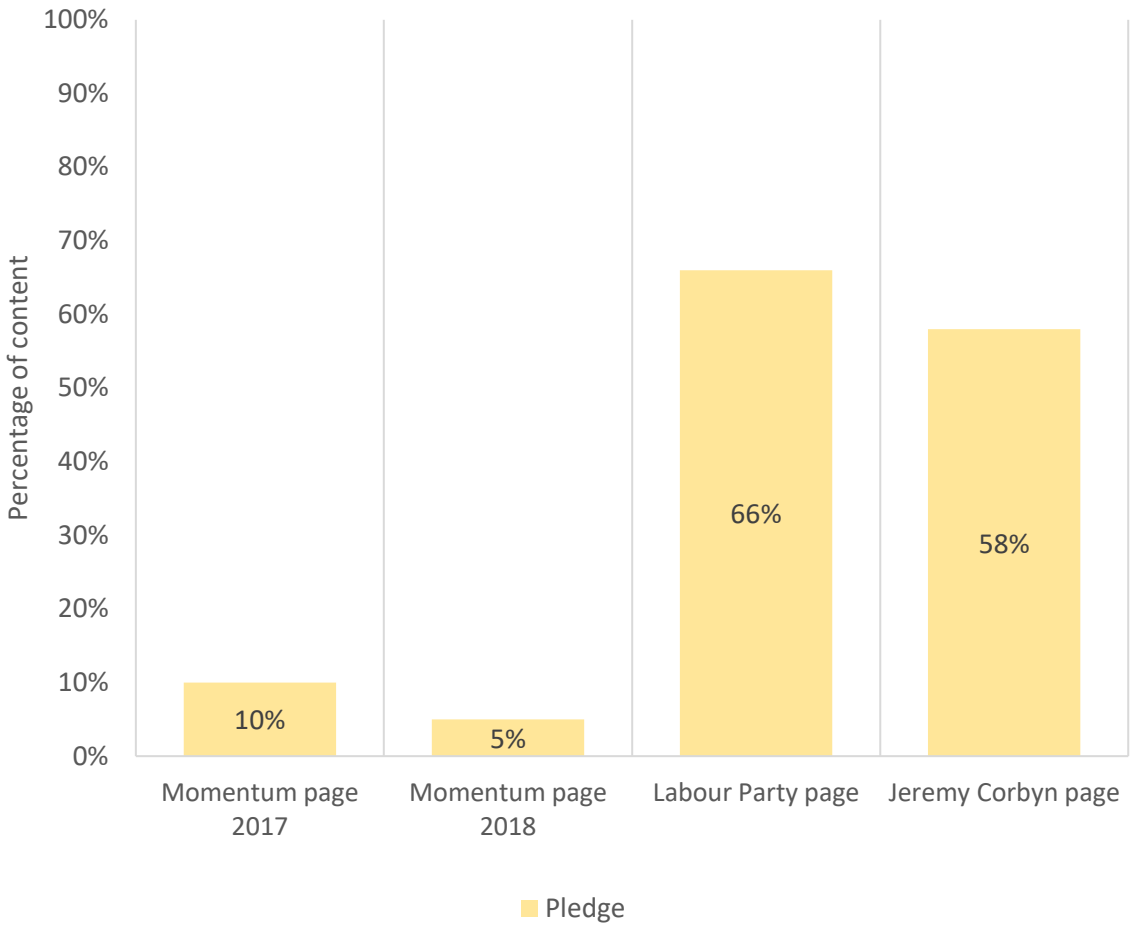


Graph 115. Explicit sentiment use (n=695)

Examining approaches to problems and solutions, across the 2017 election, Momentum's use of pledges was small compared to the other pages (10% Momentum, 66% party page), reflecting a low interest in policy content. Momentum's diagnosis of success was higher (27% Momentum, 15% leader, 21% party page), while use of how we solve problems was lower (52% Momentum, 90% party page). In most other aspects Momentum was clearly used in a similar way to the other pages, for example, Momentum utilised diagnosis content at rates (92%) akin to the party page (90%).

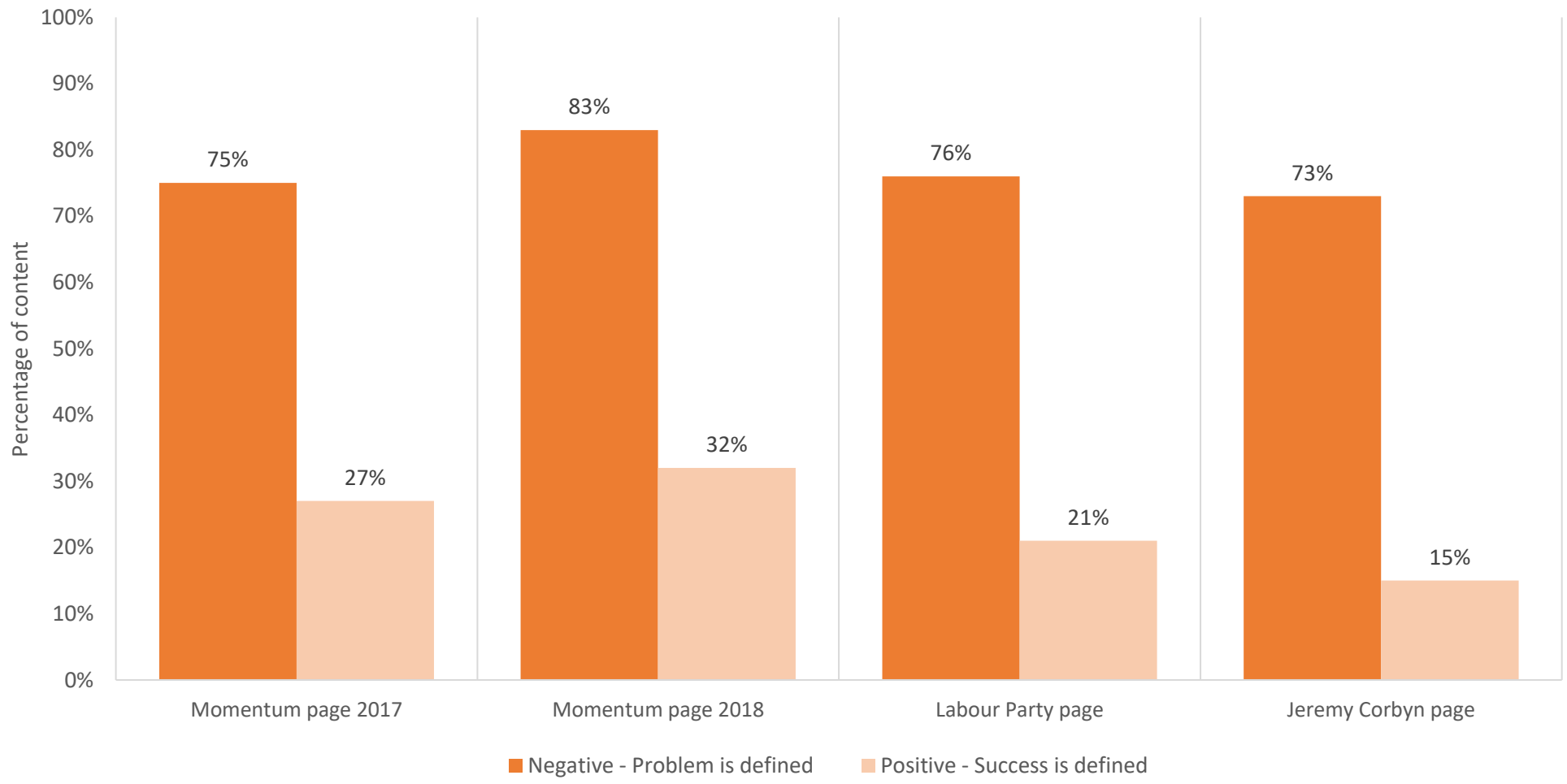
Image 36. 2017 Momentum use of diagnosis and negative problem is defined[86]

[86] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=460872907591435 accessed 16/6/2020

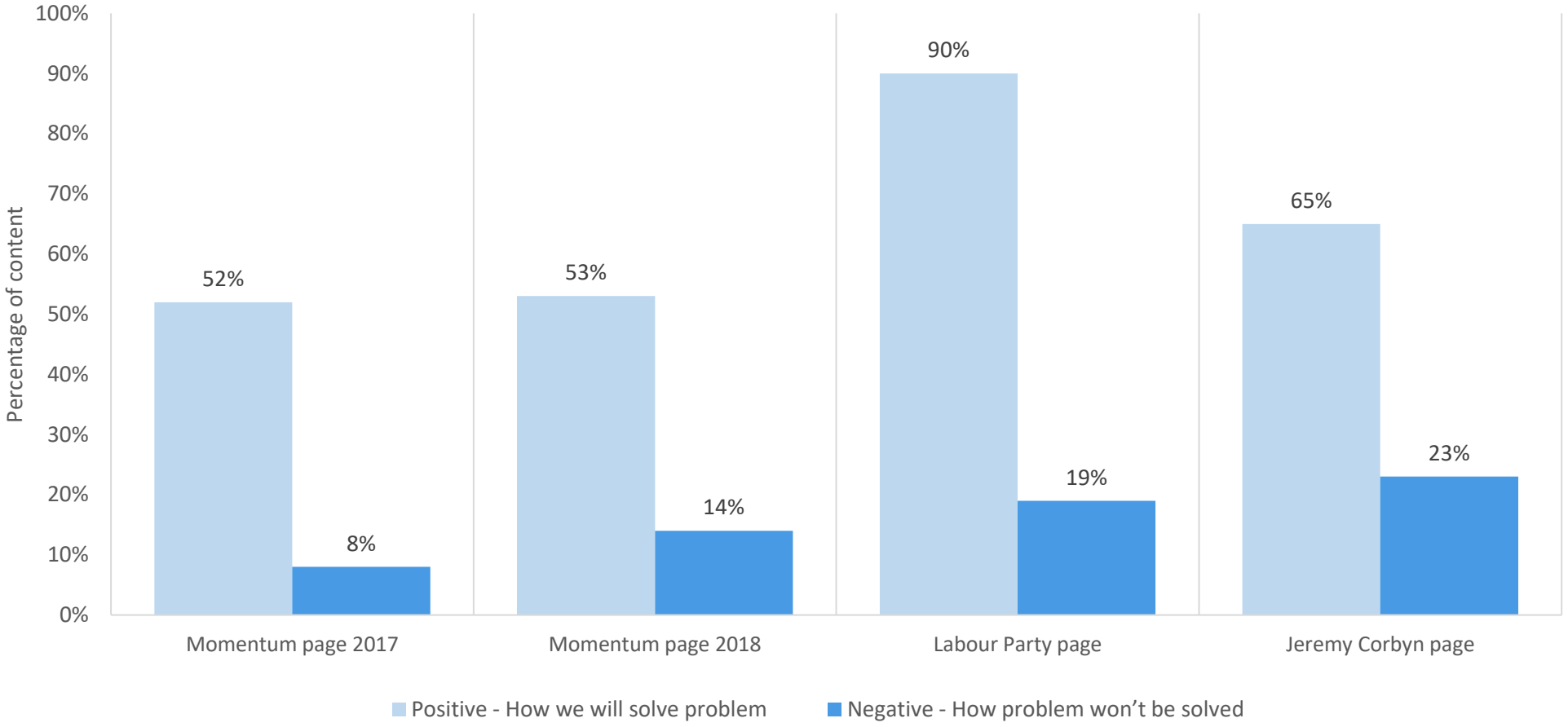


Graph 116. Use of pledges (n=695)

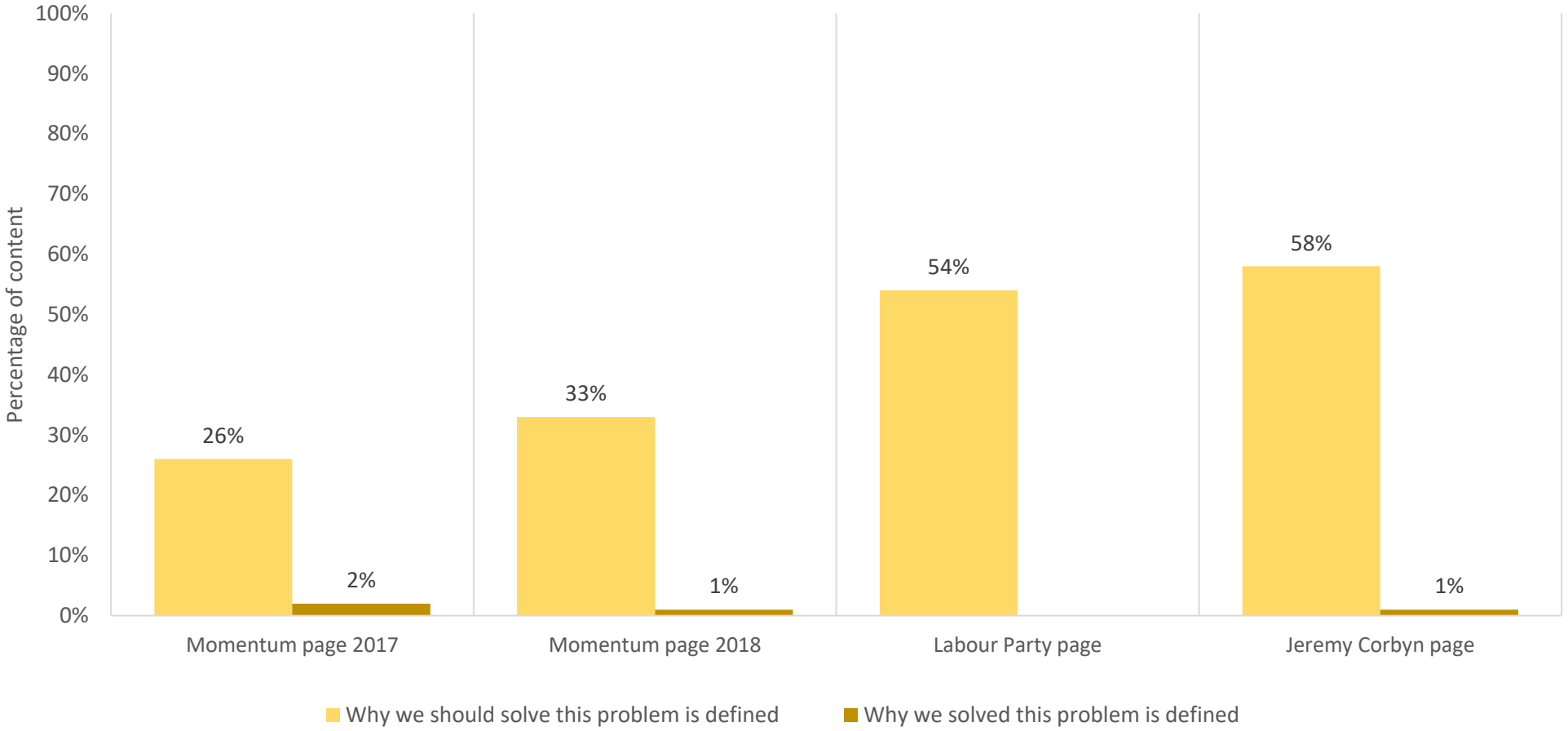
Although slightly more radical in its framing than the other pages, Momentum was still clearly centred on the public during the election campaign. Across Graph's 117, 118 and 119 framing approaches are seen in detail. Content was designed to cause reaction and influence people's broader political discussions and positions, but not be so radical as to become insular and incapable of spreading. Of interest is that the differences between the permanent campaign and the 2017 election appear to be relatively minimal. The page uses a set approach to problems and solutions across both temporal periods for internal and external campaigning. However, the increased use of negative problem is defined (+8pp), why we should solve this problem (+7pp) and motivation (+7pp), signals how the group was using more ideology and combative framing to campaign internally.



Graph 117. Approaches to problems and solutions, use of diagnosis (n=695)



Graph 118. Approaches to problems and solutions, use of prognosis (n=695)



Graph 119. Approaches to problems and solutions, use of motivation (n=695)

Momentum features incredibly short text messages, while videos are conversely rather long. This is because the organisation used several long Facebook Live videos in 2017, these included training videos of how to campaign on the doorstep, a 2-hour promotion of registering to vote and a long-form interview with Corbyn. Momentum's use of Facebook Live to organise and teach virtual members is a truly novel application of social media to an election campaign. It points to the interesting approaches the group takes towards activism online and offline. Excluding these longer approaches Momentum's video length is like the other Labour pages, shorter videos are becoming the norm. Momentum's video length was much shorter across the 2018 permanent campaign; videos were less complex with reduced uses of novel instances such as Facebook Live.

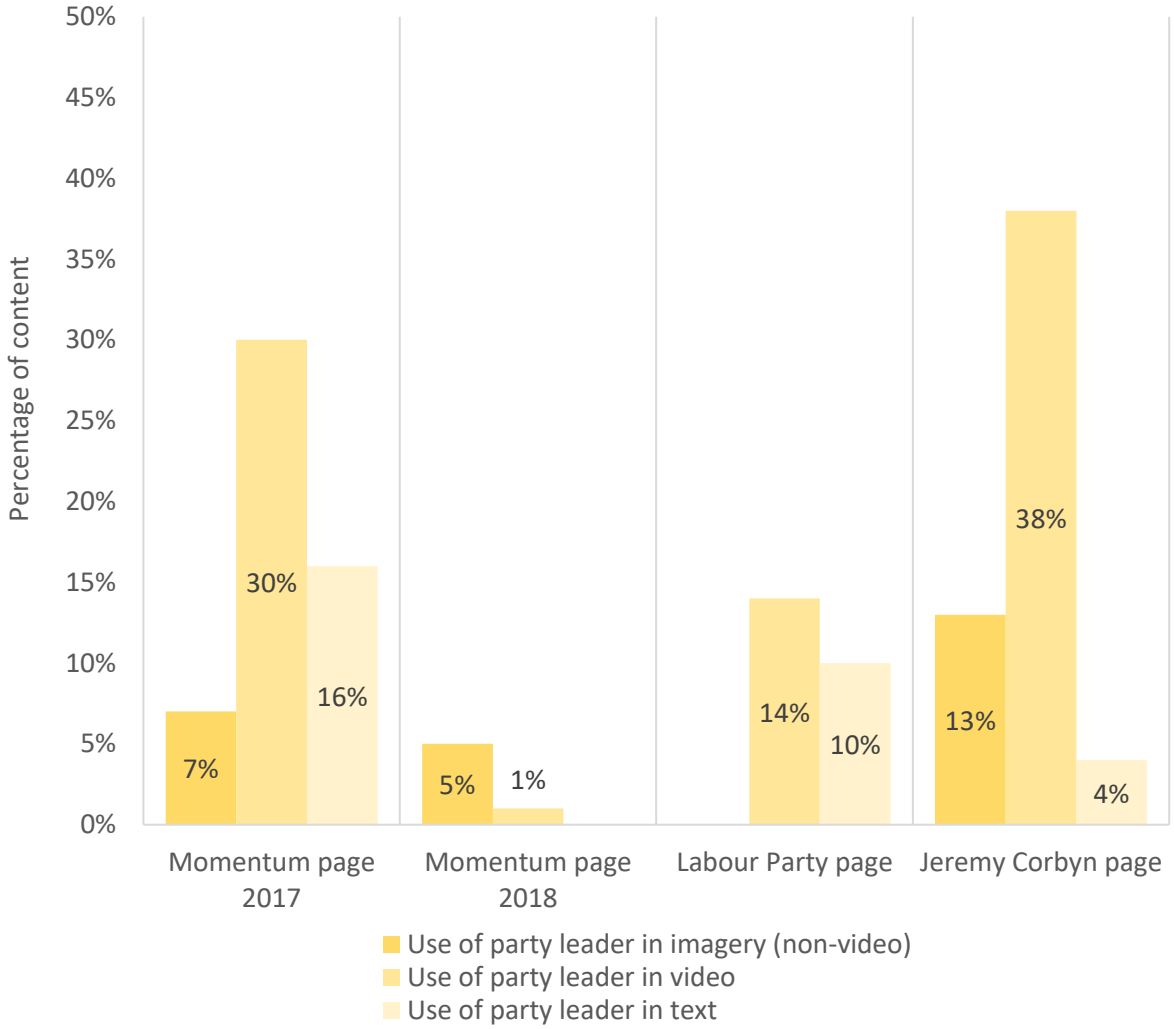
Table 37. Message length of text and video (n=695, n video posts = 551)

	n	Message length (no. of words)	n_{video}	Video length	Video length - short - under 1 min	Video length - medium - 1 min - 3 mins	Video length - long over 3 mins
Momentum page 2017	153	12	114	00:02:54	60%	31%	9%
Momentum page 2018	120	13	62	00:01:15	44%	51%	5%
Labour Party page	278	37	277	00:01:45	68%	25%	7%
Jeremy Corbyn page	144	50	98	00:01:33	58%	35%	7%

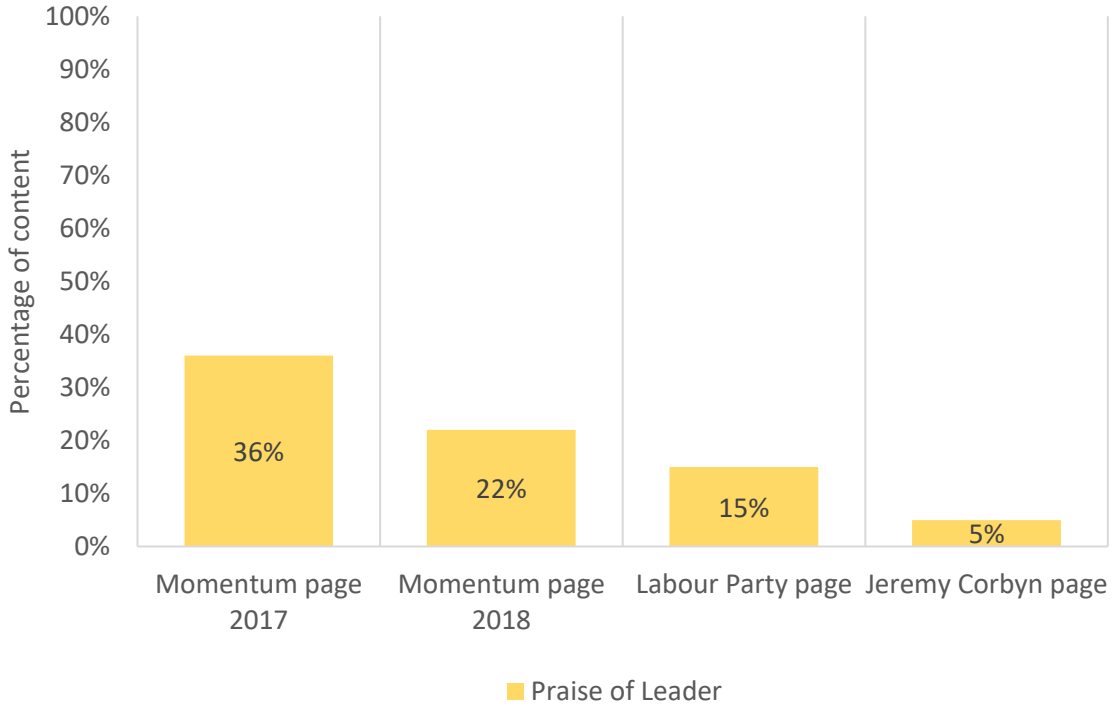
Overall, Momentum reflected many of the approaches seen across the other Labour pages especially during the election campaign. Momentum presented a friendlier more accessible face to the public during the election campaign, a broader approach reflective of Labour's wider campaign vision. However, when internally campaigning Momentum changes to a more negative ideological group.

Personalisation and rhetoric, a Momentum form?

As a group founded to support Corbyn and his politics, Momentum understandably heavily featured Corbyn in 2017, 36% of Momentum content praised Corbyn in contrast to 15% for the party page. Momentum had an explicit goal of promoting the leader, with Corbyn featuring in nearly as many videos via Momentum (30%) as via his own leader page (38%). Corbyn was also consistently referenced in the small amount of text Momentum content featured (16%). The former Labour leader appears front and centre in Momentum's campaign, with the group clearly a satellite of Corbyn rather than the Labour Party page.

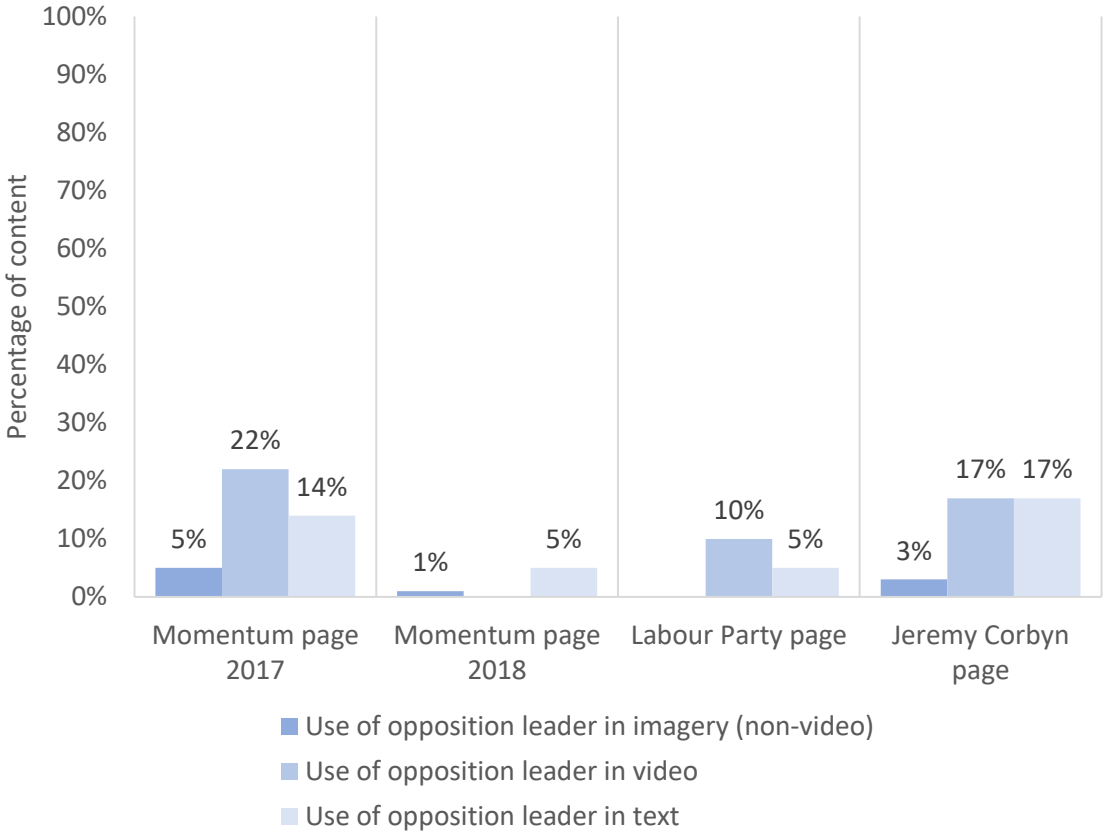


Graph 120. Personalisation, use of leader by form (n=695)

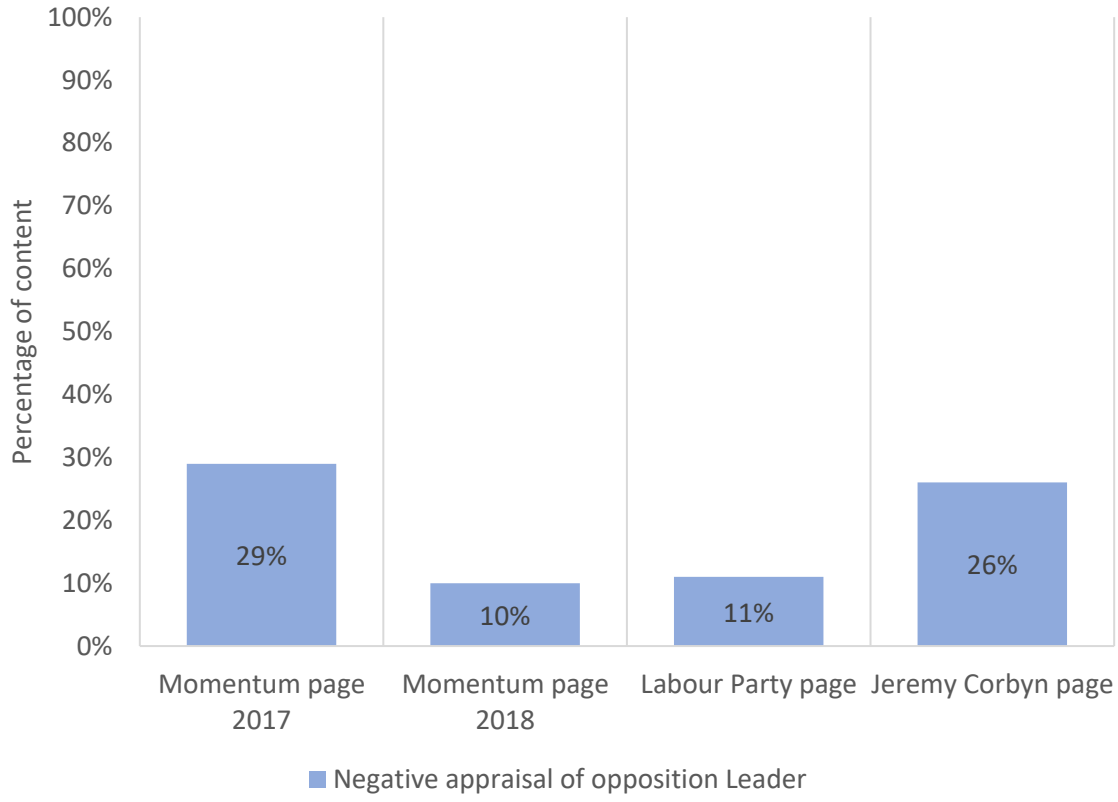


Graph 121. Praise of leader (n=695)

During the permanent campaign, there was a clear shift away from representing Corbyn. Although praise was still high (22%), use of Corbyn declined rapidly especially in video (-29pp) and text (-16pp). Momentum clearly saw value in promoting Corbyn across both the election and the permanent campaign, however the group saw greater value in using the leader during the election to energise activism and increase message reach. Nevertheless, praise continued to be very high during the permanent campaign (22%), showing how positive personalisation was central to Momentum's internal campaign. Negative personalisation was also heavily used by Momentum. 29% of 2017 election content negatively appraised opposition leader/s, with usage rates slightly above those seen by the leader page (26%), but far ahead of the party page (11%). Although negative personalisation rates were similar between Corbyn and Momentum's page in 2017, the way these attacks were carried out varied enormously. Given their position as a satellite page, Momentum was able to engage in humorous attack lines against opposition leaders, and unlike the other more traditional Labour pages, did not pull its punches.

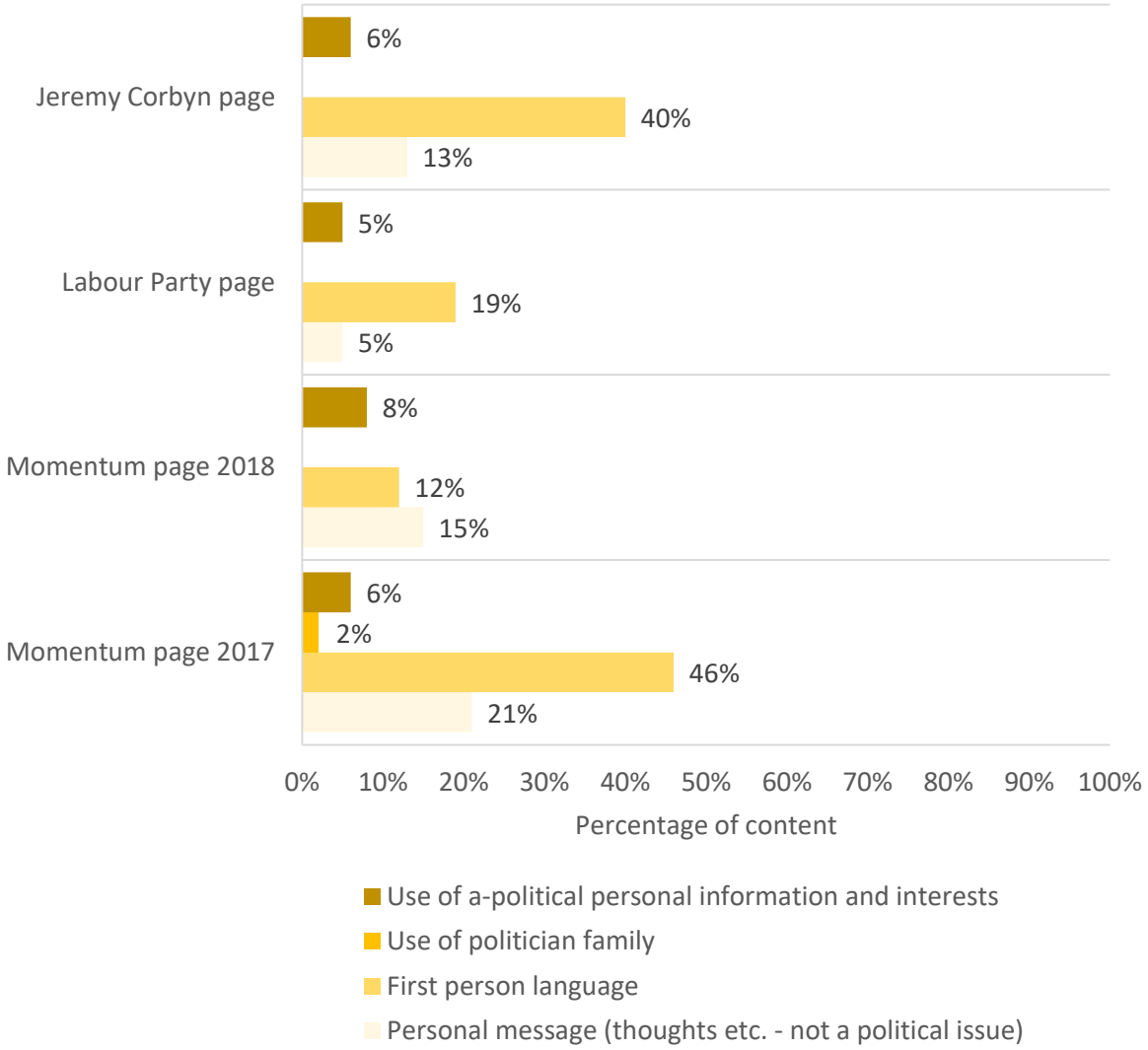


Graph 122. Negative personalisation, use of opposition leader by form (n=695)



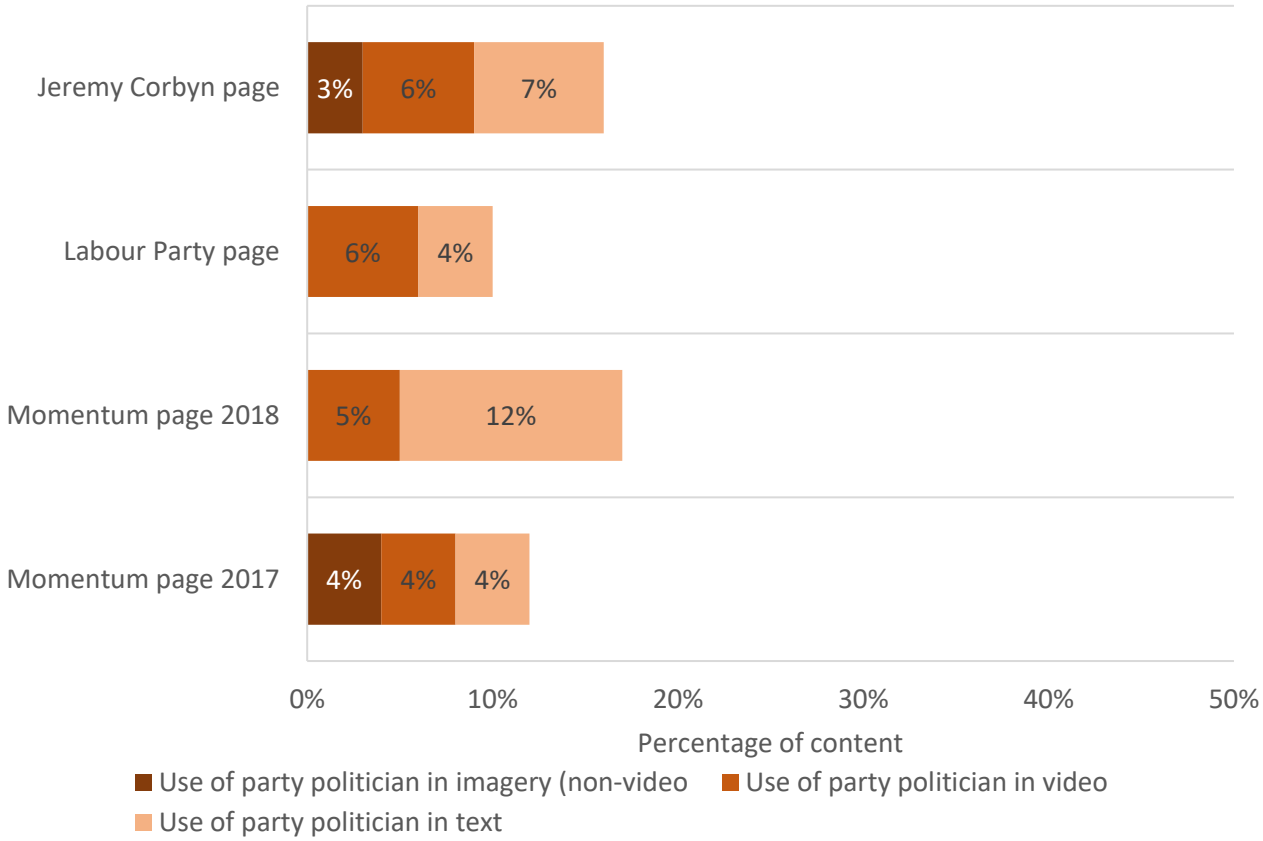
Graph 123. Negative appraisal of leader (n=695)

Momentum's criticism of political leaders was not just political but also included attacks on personality. For example, Theresa May was attacked for being like Alan Partridge and thus uncool. Momentum charged their negative leadership content with personalised antagonistic criticisms, rather than the more purely political nature of Corbyn or the party page's criticisms. Thus, although all the Labour pages used negative personalisation, Momentum utilised the form with true hyperbolic venom. This approach was clearly a tactic to energise and activate virtual members and potential supporters. Momentum's permanent campaign saw a large drop off in negative personalisation. This again suggests how the organisation switched from broader and catchier electorally focussed public content, towards a permanent role aimed at closer-knit existing (and potentially official) supporters.



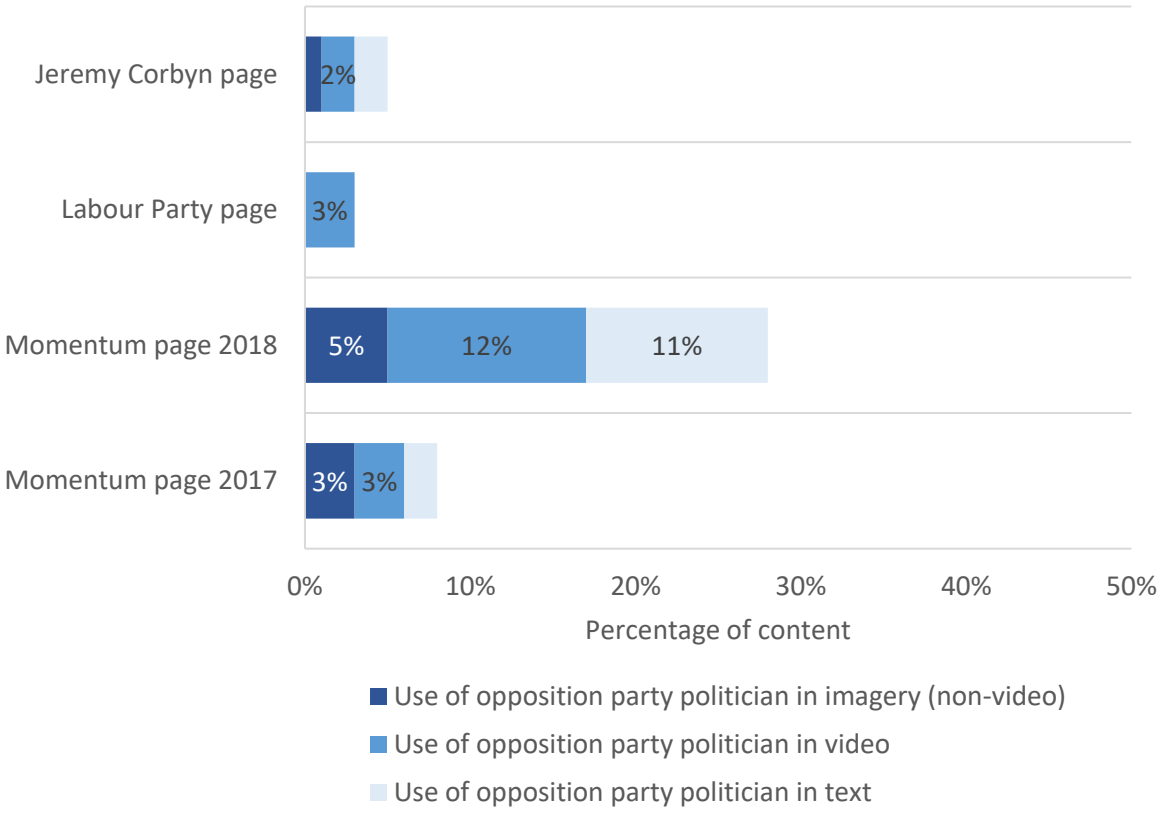
Graph 124. Other personalised communication forms used (n=695)

Chapter 6 showed that while use of leaders is high, elements of true personalisation are lacking during election campaigns. Leaders are used as figureheads with genuine personality diminished. Momentum bucks this trend, as the groups rates of real personalisation are akin to Corbyn's page. The use of personal messages is high at 21% of 2017 content, compared to 13% of Corbyn's content. First-person language (46%) was also high, with rates over double the party page (19%) and even higher than Corbyn's page (40%). Momentum used highly personalised language, offering ownership to the viewer in the way information and ideas are discussed. Further, when leaders or politicians were used, they often spoke personally from the heart. Momentum's personalisation approach presented a more genuine face to the public, without the hinderance of stultifying professionalism or traditional rhetoric. It was also a clear electoral approach as changes across the permanent campaign are stark. The use of personalised elements drops considerably, first-person language (-34pp) dropped especially. As such personalised informal communications were a clear set style of Momentum's attempts to reach out to a wider body of Facebook users.



Graph 125. Use of party politicians (n=695)

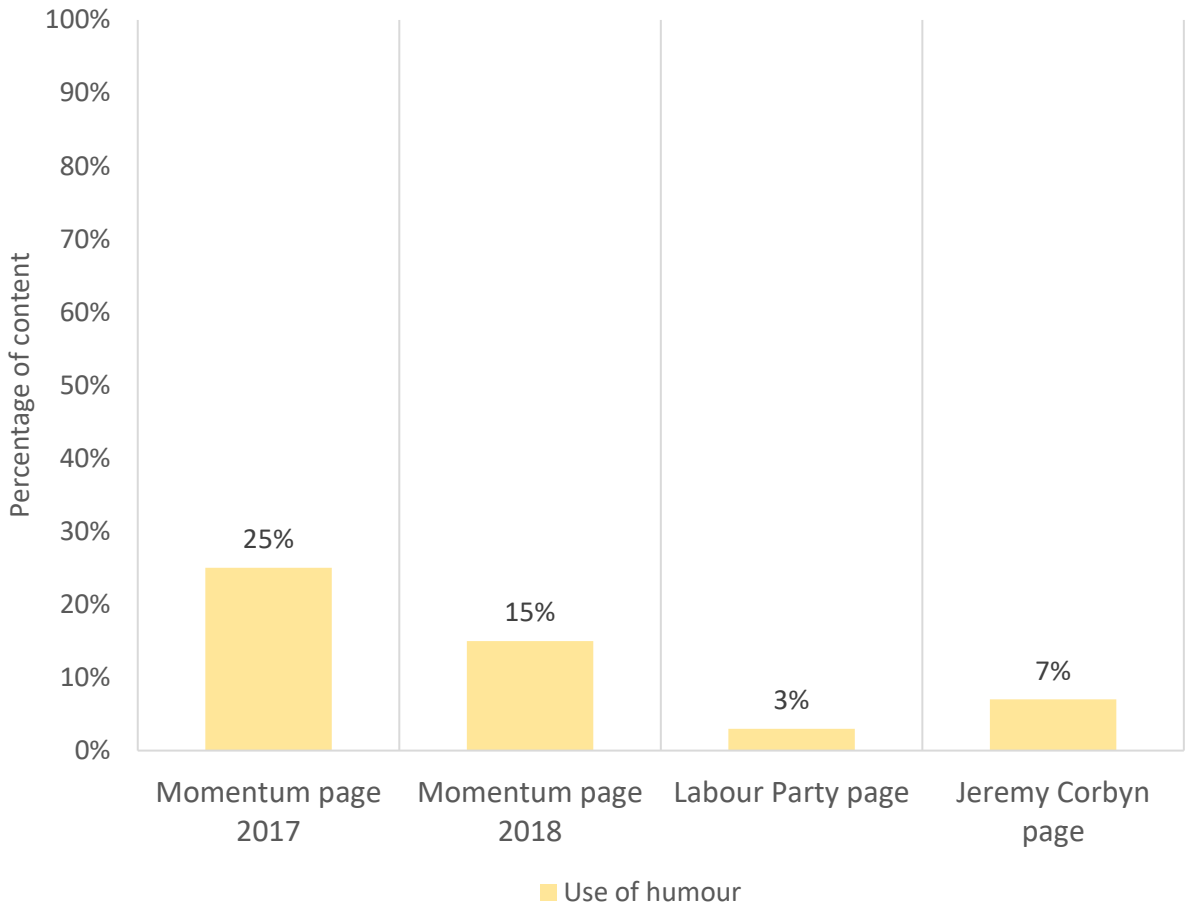
Image 37. 2017 Momentum use of opposition MP's[87]



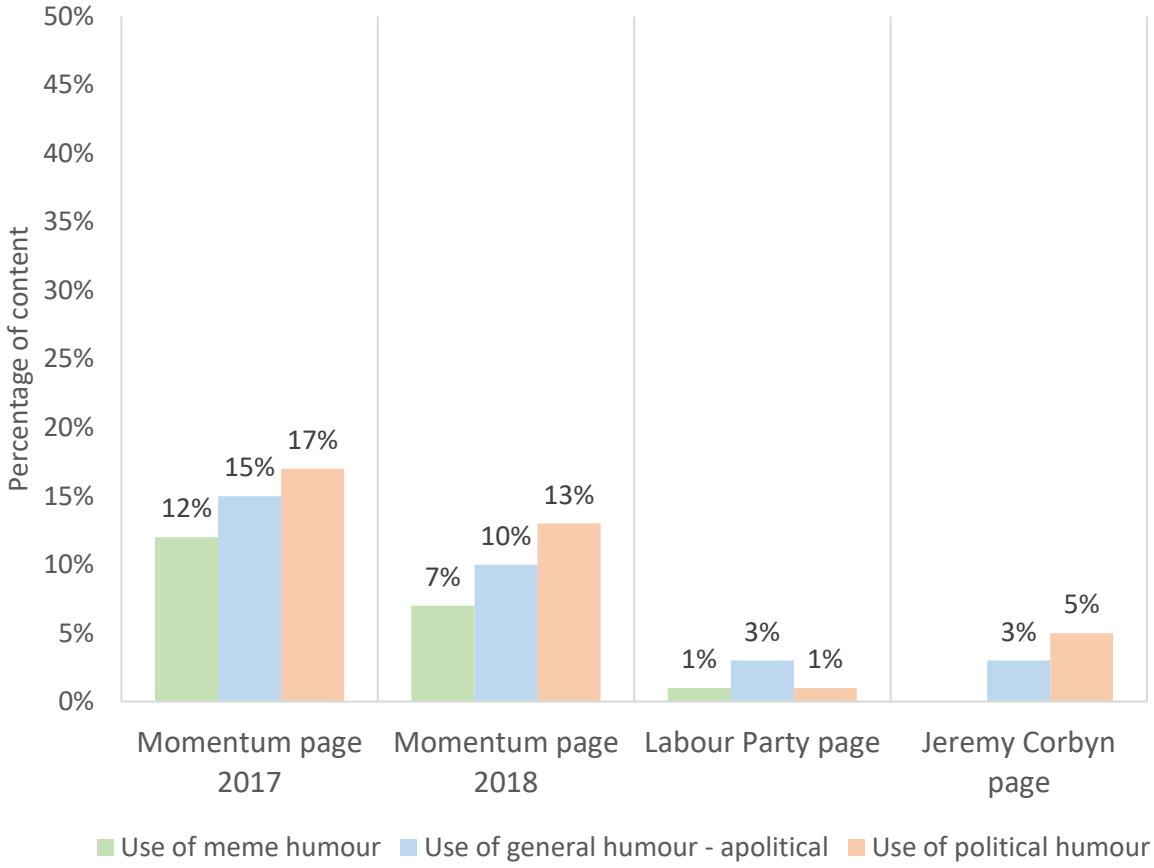
Graph 126. Use of opposition politicians (n=695)

[87] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=461672727511453 accessed 1/1/2020

In examining the use of party and opposition politicians during the 2017 General Election, Momentum uses Labour's wider base of politicians at similar rates to Corbyn's page. Rates are relatively low, with it clear that Facebook is a platform primarily used for the promotion of leaders not party politicians. The trends changed across the permanent campaign. Momentum became much more ready to use party politicians and opposition politicians (+8pp use of party politician in text, +9% in use of opposition politician in video). These trends are partly tied to both the #JC9 campaign as well as the local elections. The increased use of party and opposition party politicians was part of a clear strategy to energise membership support and increase politician awareness for internal campaigns.



Graph 127. Use of humour (n=695)



Graph 128. Use of humour in detail (n=695)

Humour was underutilised by the party and leader pages during the 2017 General Election; this is not the case with Momentum. 25% of all the content sent by Momentum in 2017 featured some form of humour, this contrasts with only 3% for the Labour Party page and 7% for Corbyn. The humour used was broader, as it encompassed meme, general and political humour at high rates. As such humour was used to broaden the potential reach of political information, as political humour was often merged with meme style humour. For example, in Set 1 a screen cap of a video entitled 'Theresa May is just like Alan Partridge' can be seen. Video's such as these melded pop culture and politics together and were very popular. The most popular Momentum video entitled 'Tory Britain 2030' with the by-line 'Brutal response 😂 (wait for it)', received 13,000,000 views and well over 100,000 shares[88]. Through these humorous video's Momentum achieved true virality while also pushing political messages. The use of humour clearly shows Momentum was

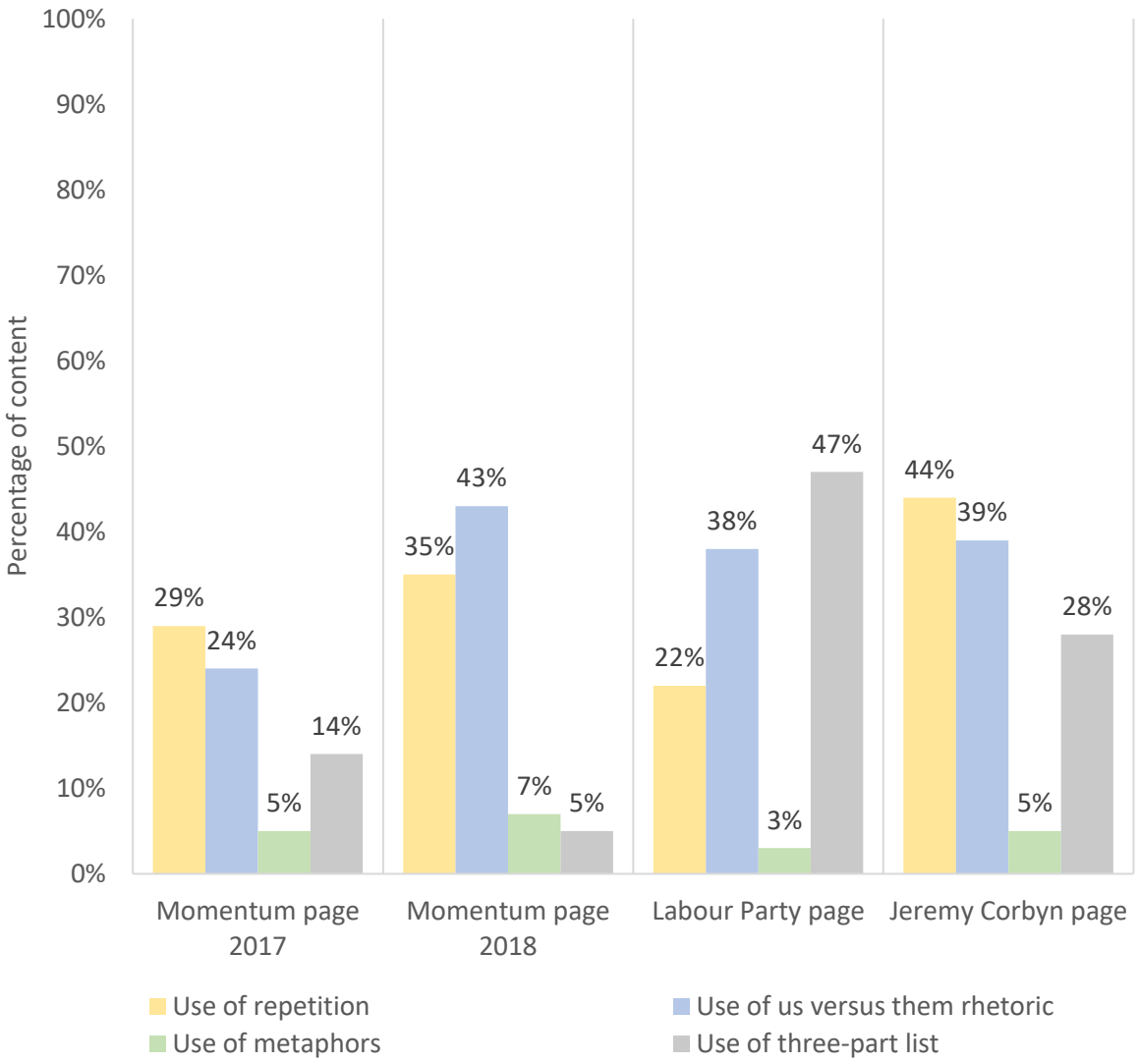
[88] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=459077241104335 – accessed 20/10/2019

trying to reach a different audience in a different way, fulfilling a role Corbyn or the party page could not. Given their success, the high rates in the use of humour continued across the permanent campaign, although there was some decline (-10pp). As such, the permanent campaign was likely not just solely focused on virtual members. Through humour, the group continued to try and reach out to wider audiences but also activate the base.

Image 38. 2017 Momentum use of humour and relaxed language in non-video content[89]
Image 39. 2017 Momentum use of humour and relaxed language in video content[90]

The use of meme style humour, an approach not seen in the party or leader page's, shows the unique way Momentum was communicating and who they were trying to reach. Momentum adopted the internet style of meme pages seen on Facebook, with their communications mirroring popular pages such as Lad Bible. As Dennis argues, Momentum "draws on a youthful, digitally-enabled civic vernacular that exists online. Whereas party political campaigning online often replicates professional norms refined across other media (Lilleker et al., 2017), Momentum embraces the humour and irony that typifies the social web" (Dennis, 2019, p.98). Momentum was aping a stylistic approach designed to engage younger heavy social media users.

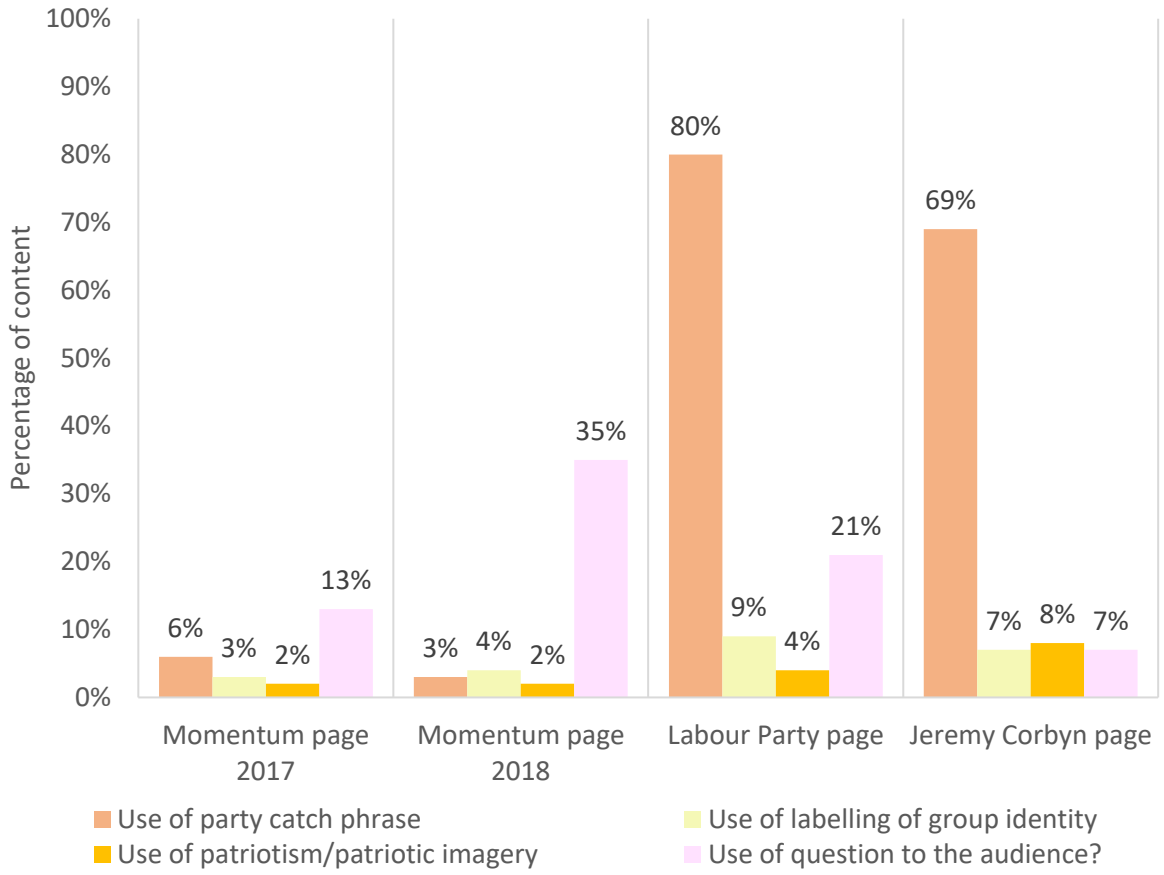
[89]https://www.facebook.com/PeoplesMomentum/photos/160217227657006.155710354774360 accessed 2/2/2020
[90] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=447414068937319 accessed 2/2/2020



Graph 129. Use of rhetorical tools (n=695)

Momentum also utilised a large array of rhetorical tools; however, rates of use were generally far below the other party pages. Party catch phrase use was particularly minimal (6%), showing how Momentum is a force apart from the official party and leader pages, where use was particularly common (69% leader, 80% party page). Repetition is seen (29%) with use higher than the party (22%), but lower than the leader page (44%), us versus them rhetoric is also favoured (24%) but again is seen less than both leader (39%) and party pages (38%). The lack of rhetorical tools is in part due to Momentum's style, text is fleeting with the organisation utilising a straightforward seemingly non-political approach favouring brevity over rhetoric. This rejection of traditional rhetoric is further seen in the utilisation of other communications forms. Emoji's are common, as is slang and informal language.

Examining the permanent campaign, there was a slight increase in rhetoric, the use of traditional political rhetoric appears to be favoured when Momentum is campaigning towards a smaller more political audience.



Graph 130. Use of rhetorical tools (n=695)

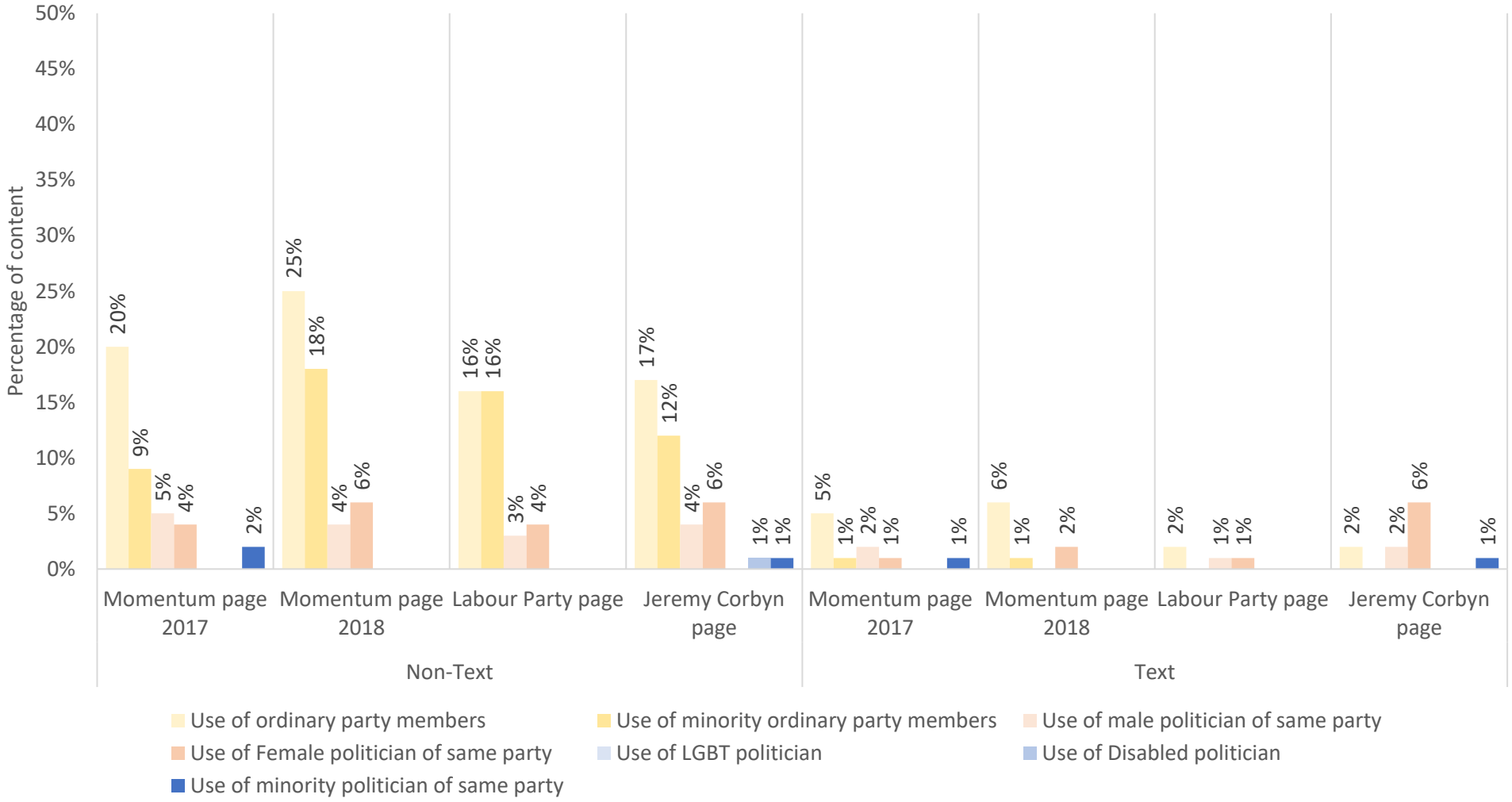
Overall, Momentum is clearly not a traditional campaign page; approach uses fewer formal communications. Momentum's professionalism is separate from that of the other pages, as its professionalization is in its 'internet style' communications, humour and nonchalance, as opposed to formal rhetorical political dialogue. Momentum heavily uses personalisation, Corbyn is widely represented and praised. However, alongside this figurehead use of the leader, the group also used more genuinely personalised approaches such as personal stories and language. This approach, alongside a focus on humour and informal communications approaches, shows Momentum as a page apart. The group used a novel communications approach to draw in a different type of support during the election, as well as to campaign permanently.

7.3: Momentum's participation approaches

Given the use of party action topic content, Momentum clearly operates as a distinctive tool to the other Labour pages, the page focuses on a different audience and speaks in a dissimilar way. This uniqueness is more clearly manifested when examining participation content in detail.

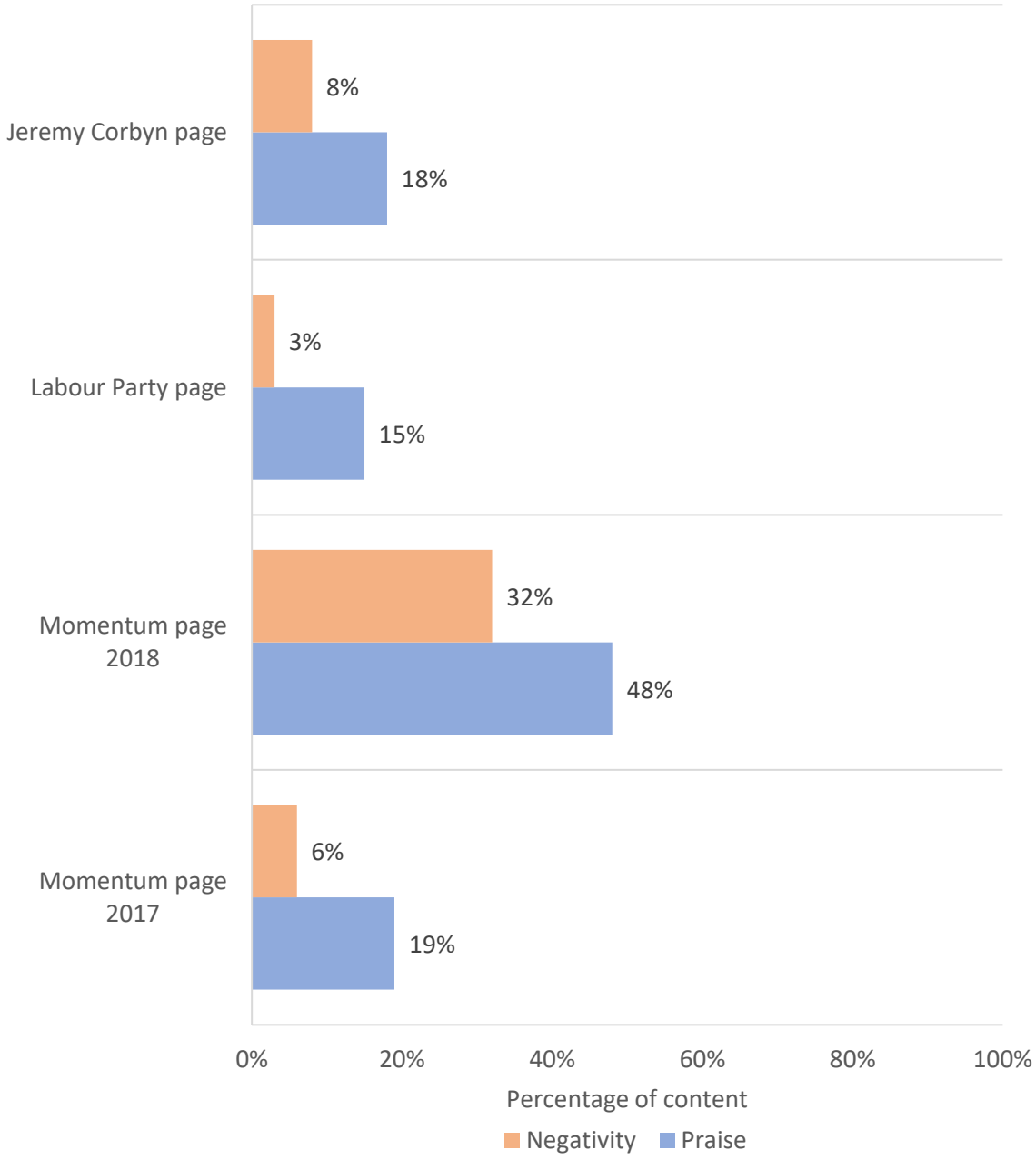
Does Momentum focus on partisanship and praise?

Labour focuses on depiction; this extends to the depiction of party activists and members with Momentum also using the form. Graph 131 shows that across Momentum's 2017 election posts, 20% of post in-text elements featured ordinary party members. However, use was not much higher than the other pages (17% leader, 16% party page). Momentum, like the other party pages, was more interested in representing the general public rather than members during the 2017 campaign. Reflecting earlier findings that Momentum is less interested in identity issues than one may expect, use of minority party members was seen less via Momentum (9%) than the other pages (16% party page, 12% leader). The only instance in which Momentum tried harder to represent membership diversity was via their depiction of minority Labour politicians (2%). Overall, during the election Momentum are shown to be interested in party member depiction at rates like the other Labour pages.

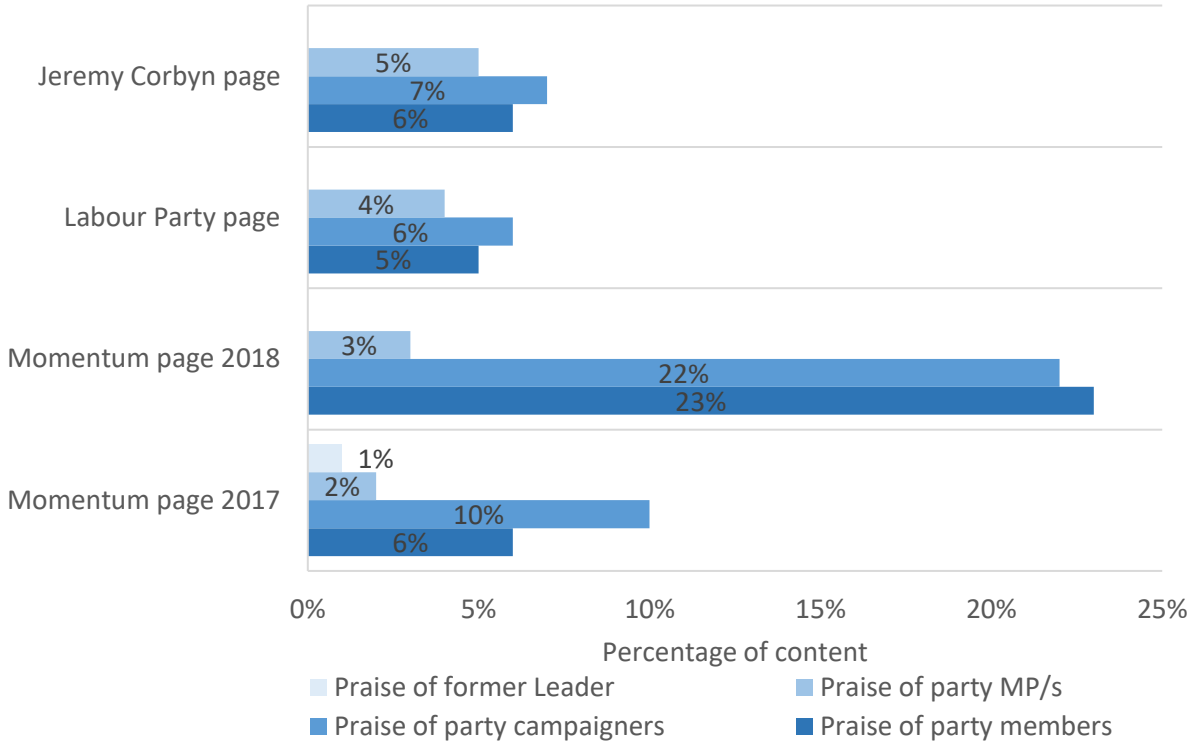


Graph 131. Depiction of political groups and members (n=1,390, n of non-text elements = 695, n of text elements = 695)

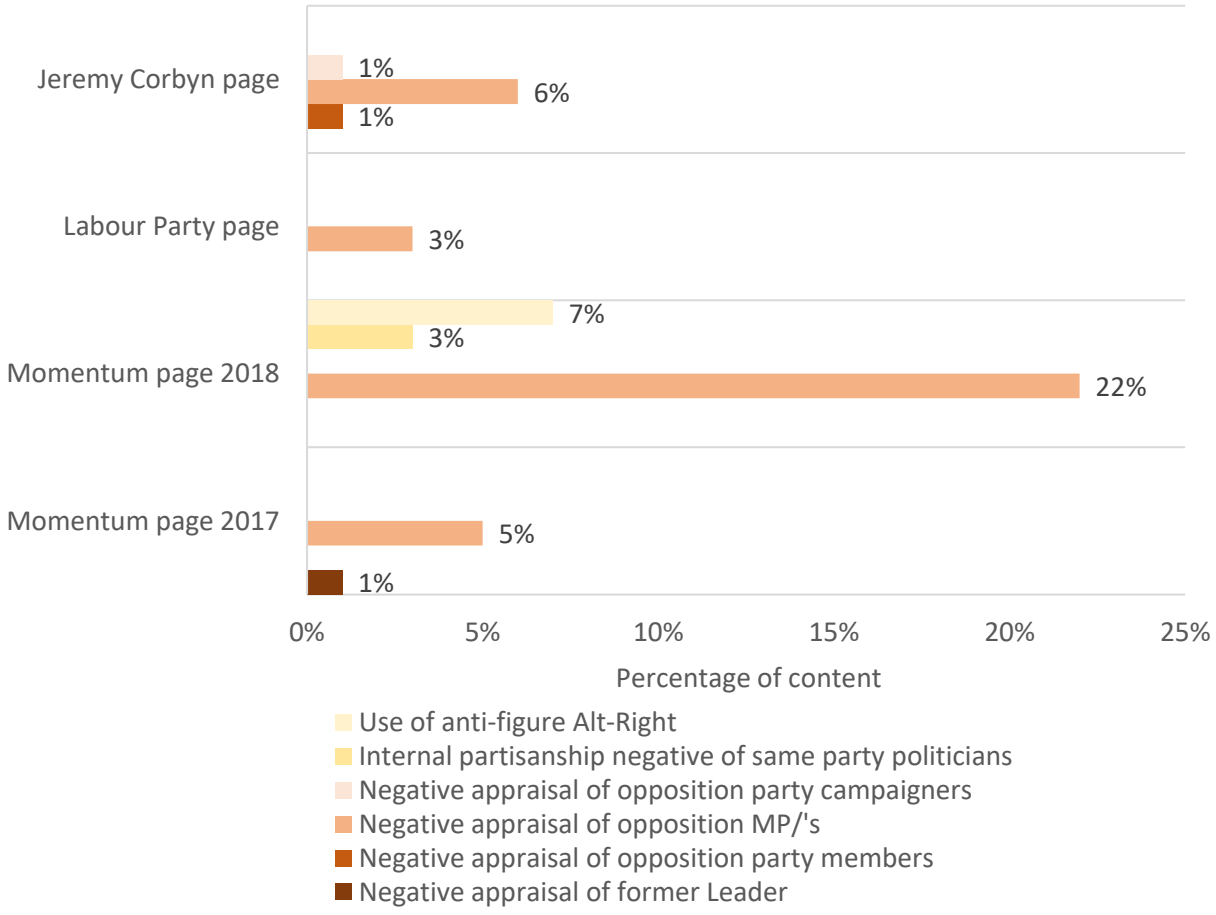
Across the permanent campaign increases were seen in Momentum's use of ordinary party members (+5pp) and minority ordinary party members (+9pp). This increase coincided with the organisation engaging in a campaign to "support and train 250 young BAME Momentum members from across the country in media and campaigning skills" (Josette, 2019). In 2018, Momentum became more interested in representing the diversity of Labour and Momentum members. This trend reflects a swing away from trying to reach the broader public, to drawing in new diverse grassroots members.



Graph 132. Partisanship, party praise or opposition focused negativity (n=695)



Graph 133. Partisanship, party praise in detail (n=695)



Graph 134. Partisanship, opposition focused negativity in detail (n=695)

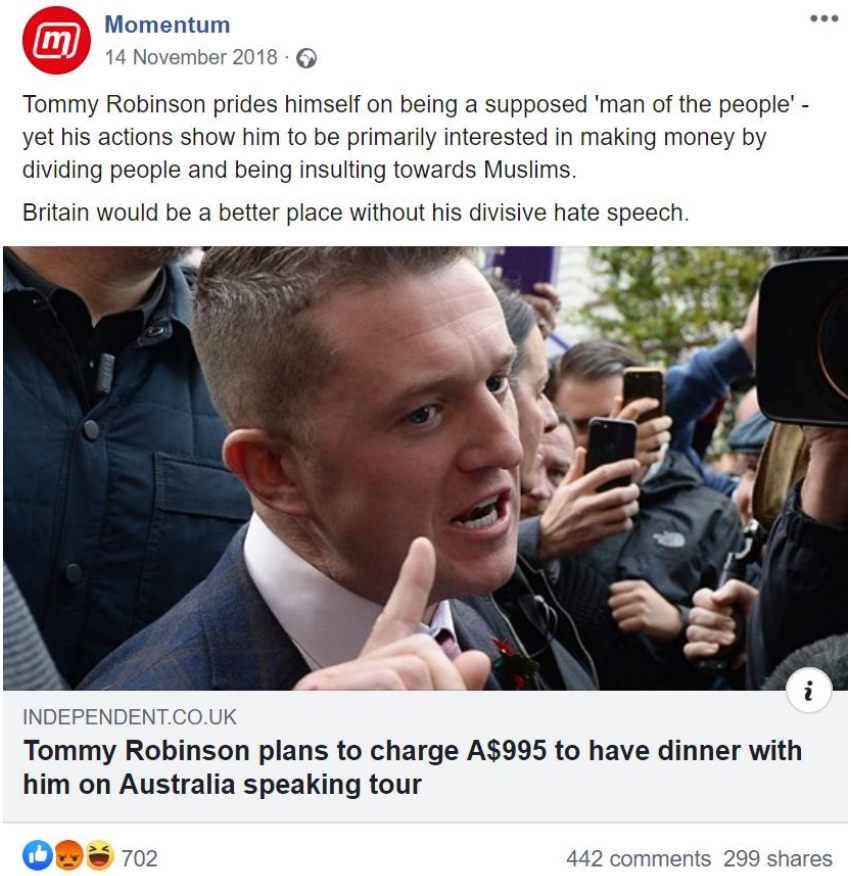


Image 40. 2018 Momentum use of alt/far-right figure[91]

Examining 2017 election approaches to praise and negativity, use of praise is very stable across the pages. Momentum generally follows the leader and party page in praising campaigners, members and certain MP's. However, the different Labour pages supported very diverse types of MP's. Momentum put great effort into supporting left-wing pro-Corbyn MP's such as Rebecca Long-Bailey. In contrast, the Labour Party page focused on certain core shadow Cabinet members like John Ashworth; while Corbyn's page focused on important politically allied politicians like John McDonnell and Diane Abbott. The different pages optimised their use of MP's for their intended audience.

In the negative use of opposition MP's Momentum's use (5%) was higher than the party page (3%), but reflective of the leader page's approach (6%). One area of interest was Momentum's negative appraisal of Tony Blair, with 1% of content during the election campaign negative about the previous Labour Prime Minister. This internal partisanship shows that the political battle within Labour

[91] https://www.facebook.com/155710354774360/posts/761506844194705/ accessed 5/9/2019

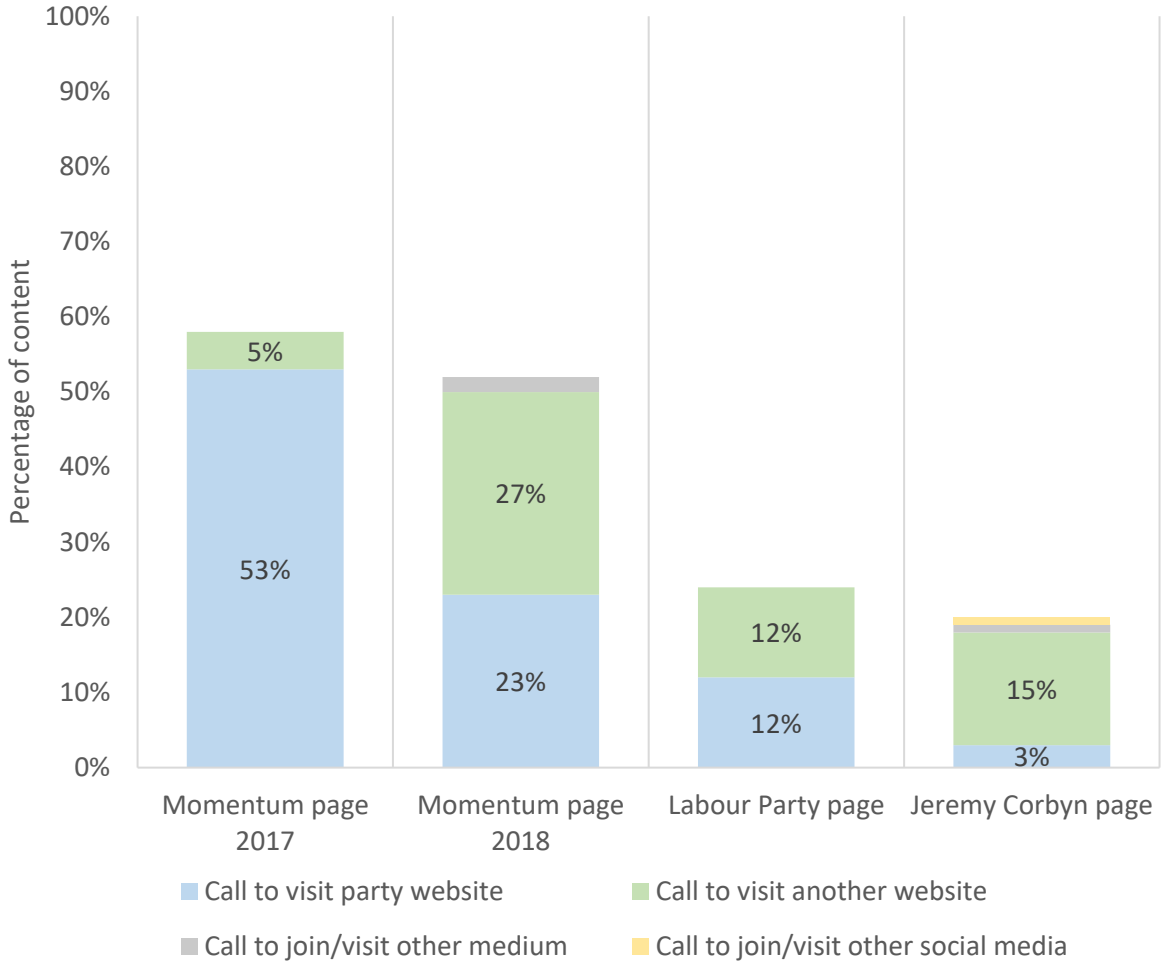
was not totally called off during the election campaign, with Blair negatively used by Momentum to activate virtual members and potential voters. Overall, Labour ran a positive campaign in terms of generating partisan sentiment, any negativity against the opposition centred on the use of opposition leaders, not politicians or party members.

Momentum's use of partisanship changed during the permanent campaign. Momentum became a more radical group in 2018. Their push towards internal politics shifted approach from a campaign page used to reach broader demographics, to an internal political tool. 3% of 2018 content saw Momentum being negative about other Labour politicians, this internal partisanship direction is very important for understanding the role and importance of permanent satellite campaigns. Momentum has already enacted many changes within Labour, with the influence the group exercised after the 2017 election important for appreciating how the Labour Party campaigned (and failed) in 2019. Outside of internal critique, Momentum pushed all forms of partisanship more during the permanent campaign. This also included the novel negative appraisal of alt-right figures (7%). Momentum, through approaches like these, was speaking to a smaller more partisan audience, focused on activating them for Labour's internal elections.

Overall, Momentum focused on partisanship and praise to a similar degree to the other Labour pages during the election campaign. The page like the others was clearly focused on reaching outside their own membership or virtual members. In contrast, Momentum's approach shifted post-election, the group refocused on internal campaigns and were happy to train their guns on the right-wing of the party itself. Momentum's success in the #JC9 campaign showed how they energised their supporters. This success from internal satellite campaigning clearly highlights the power of movement groups to successfully alter a wider party's politics.

Momentum’s links, internal or external?

Chapter 5 showed Labour and the Conservative’s to be disinterested in getting users to leave their Facebook page during the election campaign. Equally, within Labour during the 2017 election campaign, party websites were not heavily pushed by either the leader (15%) or party page (12%). Momentum breaks this trend as they heavily pushed their party websites (53%), they were focussed on activating and organising their online support. Momentum promoted participation extensively, with the group happy for users to be guided off their Facebook content onto party websites. This is because a core goal was participation not just information. In contrast to the use of party websites, Momentum used lower rates of calls to visit other websites (5%), than the party (12%) or leader page (15%). The central reason is because Momentum did not extensively link the UK Government’s register to vote website. The registration drive was mainly seen via the party and leader websites. The lack of this registration drive is because Momentum’s approach was dualistic, the page centred on informing the broader public as well as activating their virtual members, a group who given they are politically interested are more likely to be registered. Finally, the use of calls to visit other mediums and social media networks were not seen.



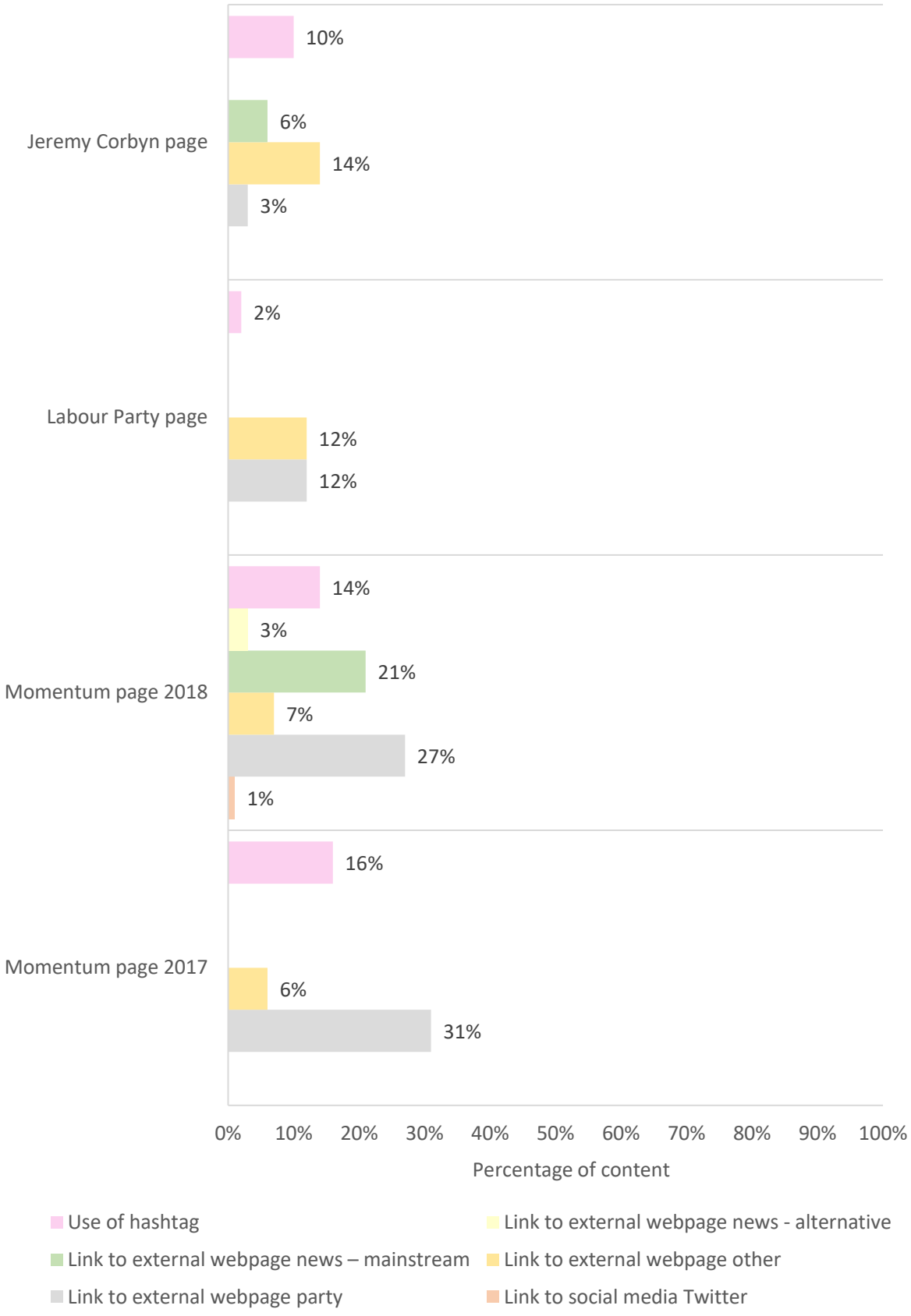
Graph 135. Calls to visit locations (n=695)

Momentum's 2018 permanent campaign saw pushes to get users to visit party websites decline considerably (-30pp), while calls to visit other websites increased (+22pp). This is because of news links; during the permanent campaign the group was less concerned about driving its audience off the platform to non-party websites for participation. Nevertheless, although seeing considerable decline, the continued high number of party website links (23%), at rates seen above the other Labour pages during the election campaign, shows the always on nature of Momentum. The group were continually searching for new members, organising virtual members and informing activists.

Image 41. 2017 Momentum use of link to party website for shop[92]

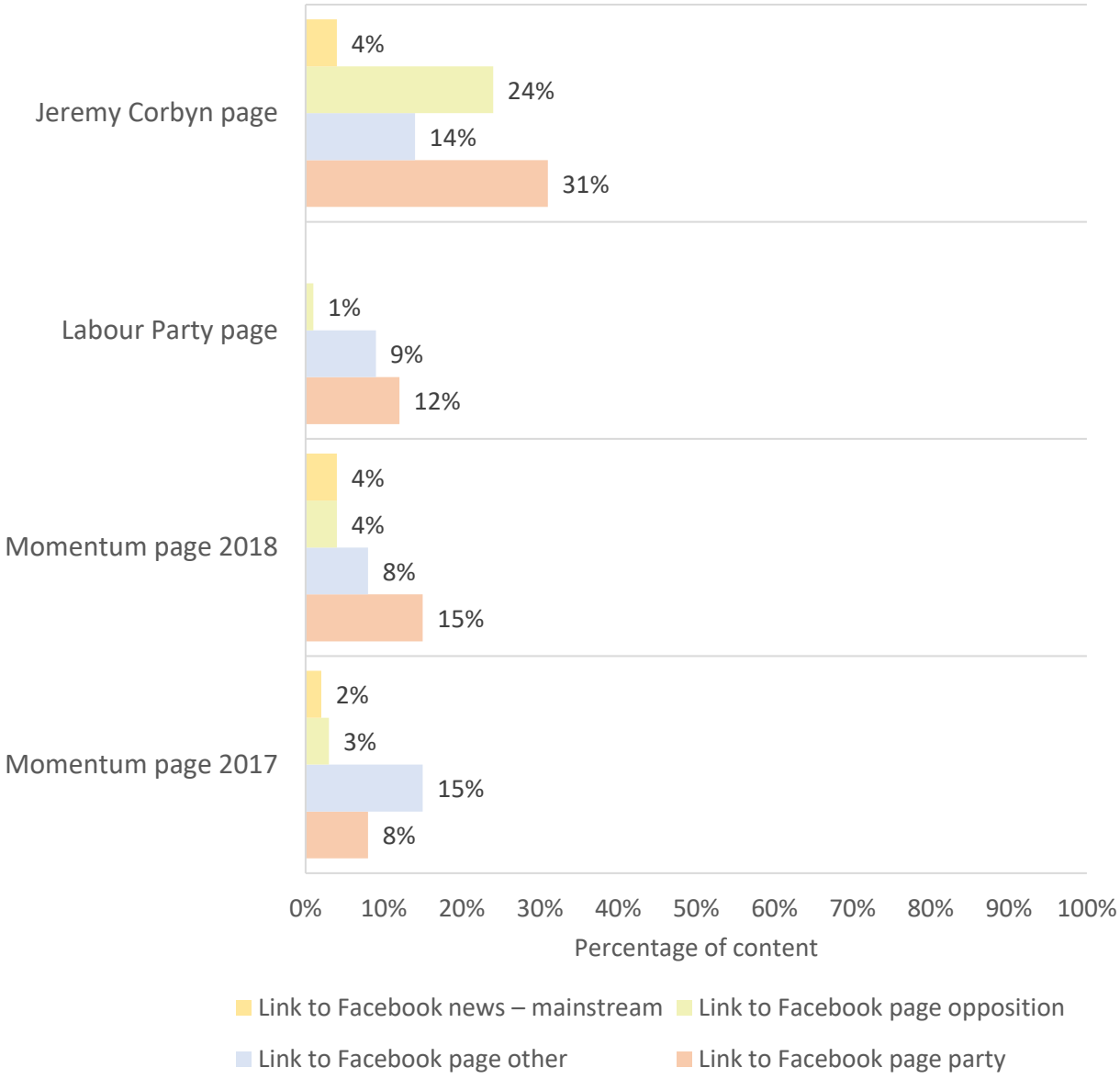
Graph 136 outlines the external links, and Graph 137 the internal links, used by the pages. It is important to note that some of the difference between Graphs 135 & 136 is because Momentum would often not provide a physical link to the web-location they pushed a user to visit. Examining external links, 31% of 2017 Momentum content linked to a party webpage, much higher than the party (12%) and leader page (3%). While, in contrast external webpage links were lower (6%) compared to the party (12%) and leader page (14%). Novel use of hashtags is more readily seen via Momentum, 16% of Momentum's 2017 content used the form, more than Corbyn (10%) or the party page (2%). The use of hashtags speaks to how Momentum was more up to date with communication tools, as use allowed Momentum to tie in Twitter and wider internet trends with their Facebook content. No links were seen to Instagram or YouTube, if YouTube content was used it was reissued via Facebook video.

[92]https://www.facebook.com/PeoplesMomentum/photos/a.160217227657006/458617567816969/?type=3&theater accessed 9/9/2019



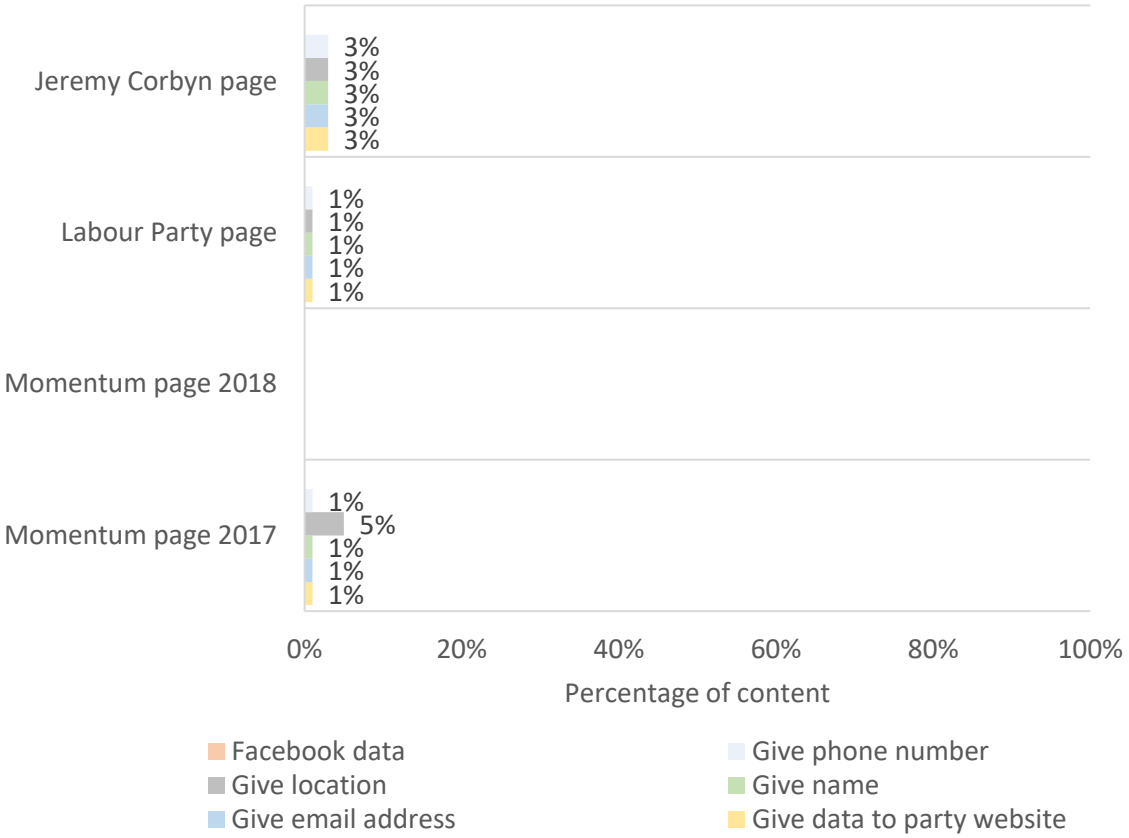
Graph 136. Use of external links (n=695)

Examining the permanent campaign, Momentum's approach was similar, although there was a large rise in news link content (+21pp) and a slight increase in alternative media links (+3pp). As campaign activists who created election content left the group, the page relied more on the content of others. The increased use of news content shows that resources were more limited, with news key for the permanent campaign due to ease of use. Further, during the permanent campaign, the page was much more willing to push users into the wider internet media system, showing the group to be less concerned about keeping users on their own content.



Graph 137. Use of internal links (n=695)

Examining internal links during the 2017 General Election. Momentum did not extensively link to any party Facebook page (8%), with rates like the party page (12%) but far below Corbyn's page (31%). Momentum was more self-isolated within the wider Facebook Labour network. Momentum, if it did internally link, linked to other non-Labour Facebook pages, these included people such as Owen Jones or celebrities such as Stormzy. This is interesting as approach shifted across the 2018 permanent election, with an increase of party page links (15%). The reason for this is because during the campaign Momentum was trying to connect to certain areas of Facebook's wider network, promoting audience exchange. During the permanent campaign we saw the internal #JC9 campaign. To push their candidates, Momentum used more party Facebook page links to get supporters to campaign across various Labour pages. This mirrors the way Corbyn used links to the opposition across the 2017 General Election, but in an internally partisan manner.



Graph 138. Use of data gathering (n=695)

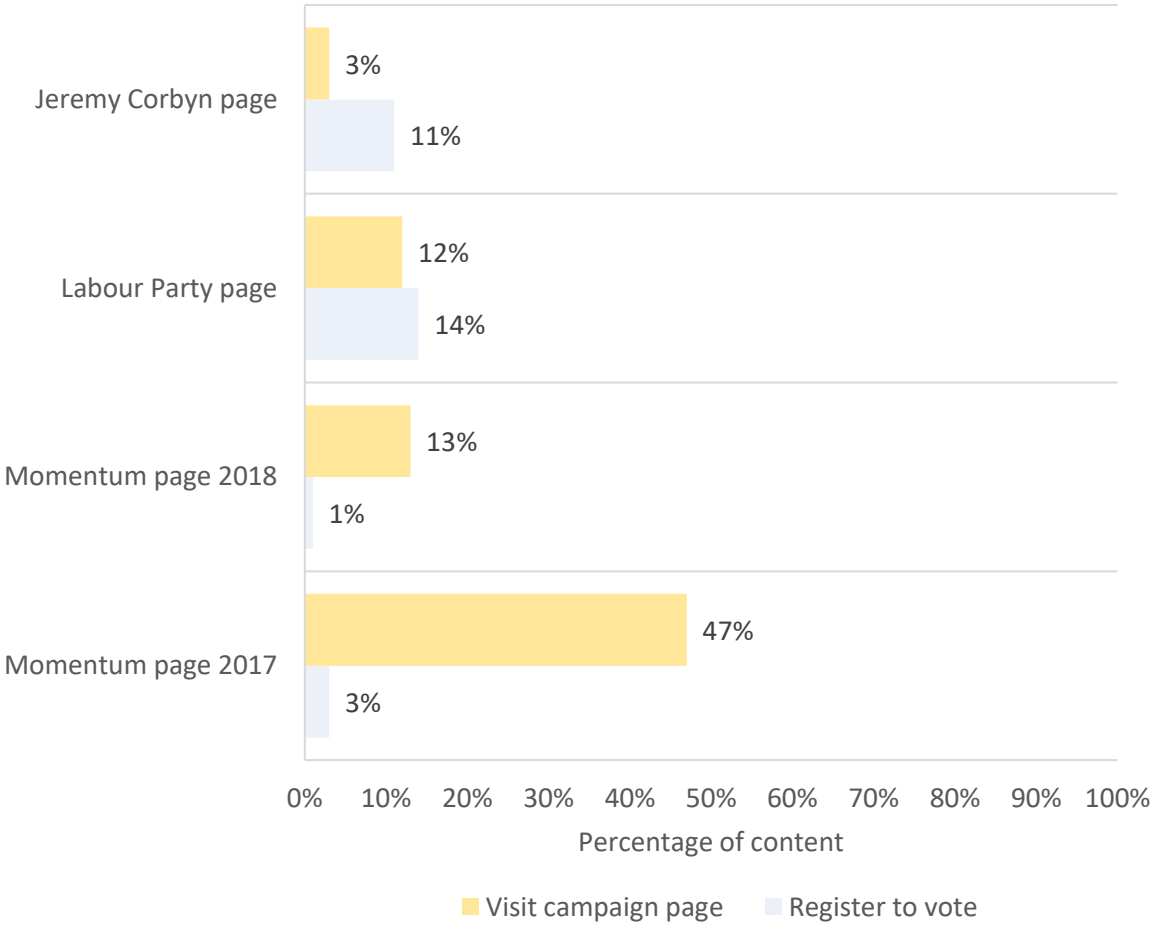
Data gathering practises were slightly lower via Momentum (9%) than for the leader page (15%), but higher when compared to the party page (5%). Momentum was clearly interested in gathering information from supporters, however this was mostly location information, because Momentum's tool 'mynearestmarginal.com' pushed users for location ID. The data shows that Momentum was driving individuals to their websites for other functions such as organisation, rather than for data gathering. Overall, it appears Labour centrally used Corbyn to gather data, with this a smart move because of the huge array of new support the leader brought in. The use of data gathering is also only seen during election time. Momentum did not see value in trying to gather information of the smaller core group of supporters that engage with content across the permanent campaign (0% of content).

Overall, Momentum in contrast to the party and leader pages, favours external links to internal links across both the 2017 election and 2018 permanent campaign. This shows the differentiated role the page has from the traditional Facebook campaign, Momentum are utilising their audience in a different manner, with the page much more comfortable sending viewers off Facebook because participation is a central focus. The group truly believed in the power of Facebook to reach out to and organise virtual members and the wider public.

Is Momentum using participatory practises?

As suggested earlier from the lack of external links, as shown in Graph 139, during the 2017 campaign Momentum was much less concerned with getting people to register to vote (3%), than the party (14%) or leader (11%) page. Momentum's limited voter registration efforts were centrally targeted at younger people, rather than the general approach seen via the other Labour pages. Instead of voter registration, Momentum concentrated on participation via getting viewers to visit campaign pages. The group showed a focus on a different class of audience than the party and leader page. Rather than the less likely registered, less politically attentive mass public; Momentum was centrally targeting both a wider band of the politically interested radical public, alongside virtual members. Overall, 47% of 2017 content prompted users to visit campaign pages including

‘mynearestmarginal.com’ and ‘Momentum.org’. In contrast, only 3% for the leader and 12% for the party page did the same function. These pages, especially ‘mynearestmarginal’, engaged in open ended ‘just turn up’ style electoral participation, promoting doorstep campaigning within important marginal seats. Momentum was clearly utilising a more fluid structure towards participation and organisation, showing some elements of what Margetts labelled the Cyber Party (2001).



Graph 139. External to Facebook non-member forms of online participation (n=695)

Examining the permanent campaign, interest in getting users to visit campaign pages was markedly lower (-34pp) but still used (13%), while registration efforts declined further (1%). This is due to both the local elections and the #JC9 campaign, effort was clearly proportional to both the importance of the election and breadth of audience. Momentum’s smaller permanent audience

are more likely to be official members and thus registered voters. Equally, the lack of party website use suggests Momentum's internal party election campaign was using other traditional avenues such as email or meetings.

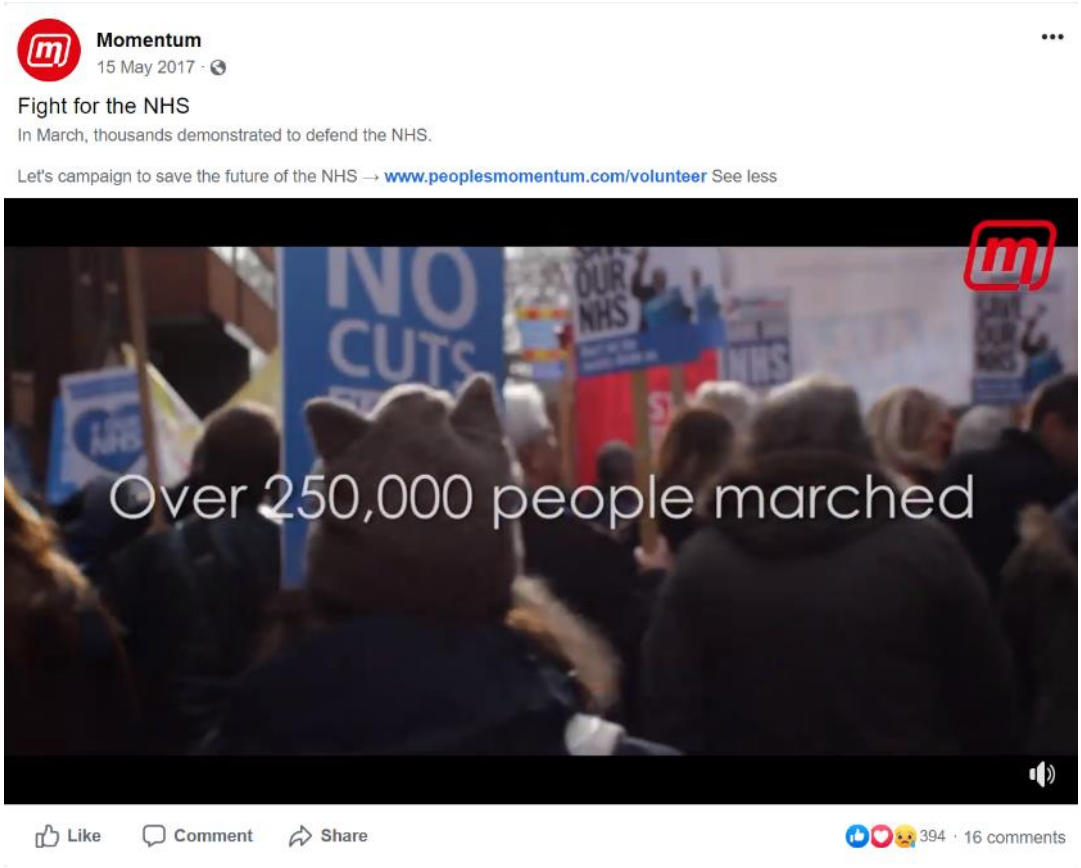
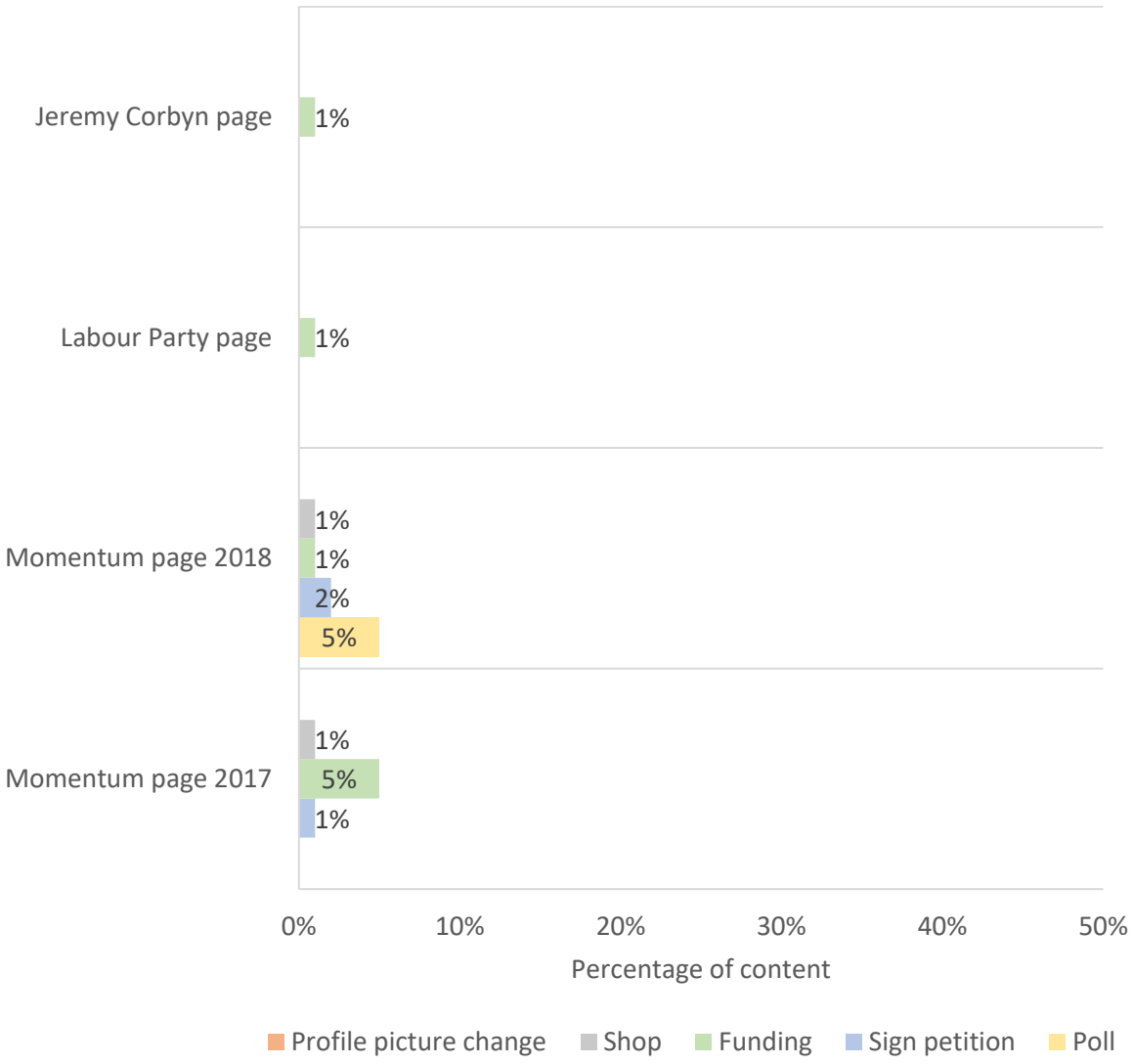


Image 42. 2017 Momentum use of link to party website for volunteering[93]

Other online forms of participation were also popular across both the election and permanent campaign. Graph 140 shows Momentum's 2017 campaign use of other approaches to online participation (7% total), was much higher than the other Labour pages (1% total). In terms of Momentum's focus, although signing petitions (1%) and a shop (1%) saw minimal use, funding was a clear area of interest (5%). Momentum was trying to monetarily capitalise on its newfound online support. This use of crowdfunding during an election campaign is novel, most groups gather resources before a campaign starts. The approach worked however, as the group raised £260,000 across the one-month campaign[94]. During the 2018 permanent campaign, use of some online

[93] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=444532175892175 accessed 10/10/2019
[94] https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/nov/04/labours-momentum-raises-250000-in-six-days-to-fight-election accessed 08/06/2020

participation forms increased such as interactive polls (+5pp), while others fell back such as funding (-4pp). Permanent campaign participation efforts thus transitioned from website-based forms to Facebook based forms, with a focus on less committal participation.



Graph 140. Other external to Facebook non-member forms of online participation (n=695)

Alongside a strong interest in pushing online forms of participation through Facebook activities and party websites, Momentum placed a huge amount of effort in getting supporters to volunteer and campaign offline. Graph 141 shows that during the 2017 General Election, Momentum was trying to use their virtual members and the wider public as offline activists. High rates of content pushed

virtual members and viewers to help doorstep campaign (48%), volunteer (49%) and sign up to campaign (42%). Momentum's rates of participation content were considerably higher than the other Labour pages, for example 49% of Momentum's content pushed for volunteering, vastly higher than the leader (2%) or party page (7%). Although much of this volunteering was filtered through Momentum's websites, thus showing a more traditional style of organisation. Participation was also directly generated via Facebook. Events and protests were encouraged (2% total), while organic information dissemination was promoted through asking users to talk to their friends and family (10%). This was also seen via Corbyn's page (6%), but much less commonly via the party page (2%).

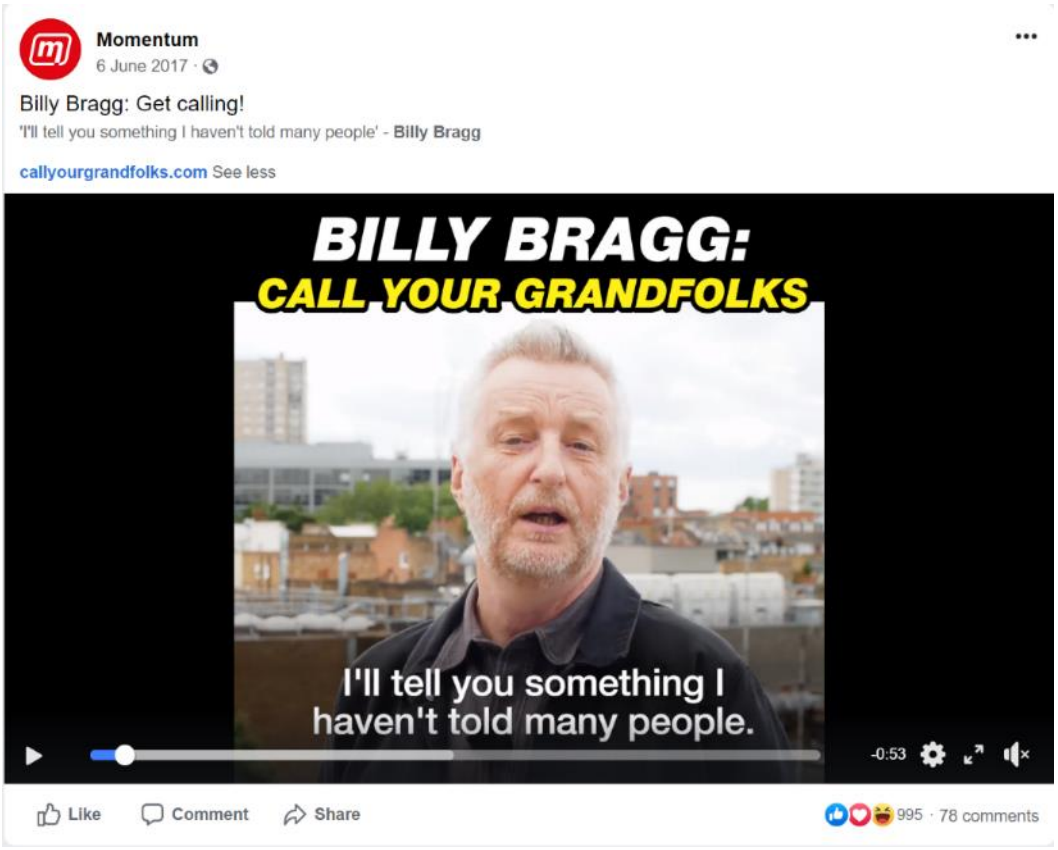
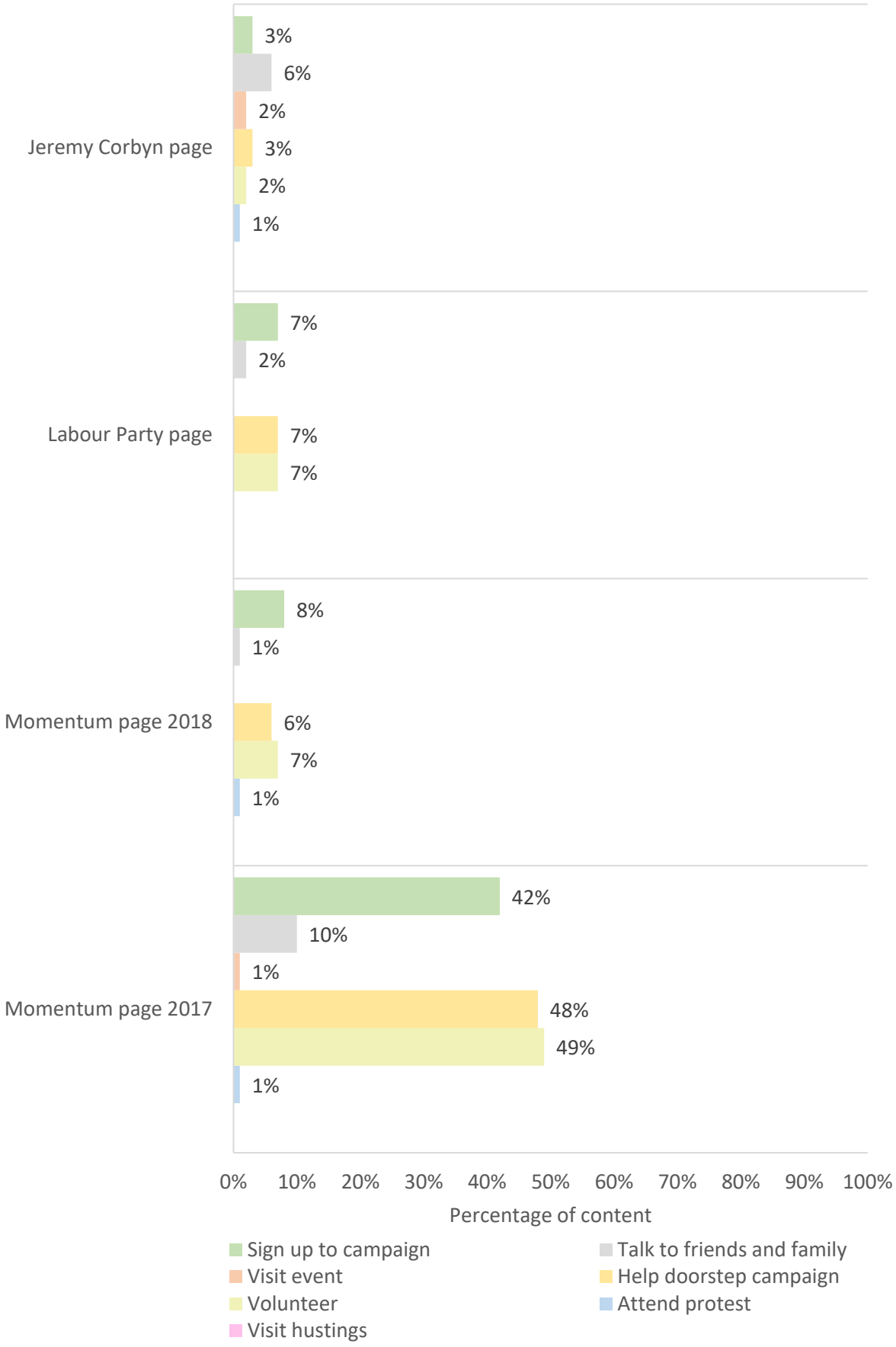


Image 43. 2017 Momentum call to talk to friends and family[95]

[95] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=461532570858802 accessed 16/12/2019



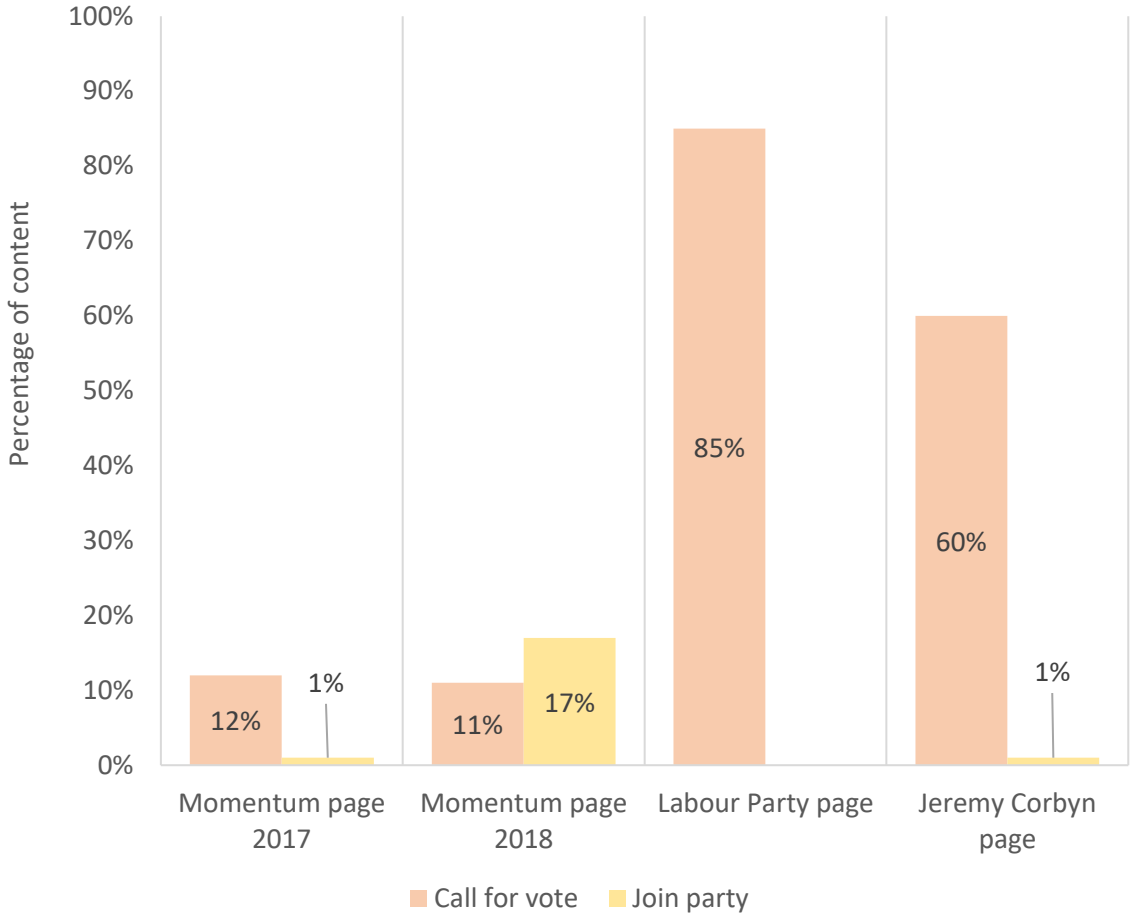
Graph 141. Core supporter forms of offline participation (n=695)

Momentum clearly believed in the power of individuals' organic communications and the sociological model. A major example of this tactic was the group's efforts in asking supporters to 'talk to your grandparents', pushing virtual members to phone up their family and persuade them of the importance of a Labour government. Momentum clearly threw itself into the idea that you can mobilise online support and break outside the echo-chamber, through utilising the genuine social networks individuals have. Usage of these offline participation forms radically dropped across the 2018 permanent campaign, for example volunteering fell by 42 percentage points. Nevertheless, Momentum's offline participation efforts during 2018 (22% sum), were at similar levels to those seen across the party (22%) and leader (17%) pages during the 2017 election campaign. Momentum was still interested in getting supporters to participate offline during the permanent campaign, however priorities shifted towards easier online activism and information provision.

Image 44. 2017 Momentum use of website and polling data[96]

[96]https://www.facebook.com/PeoplesMomentum/photos/a.160217227657006.1073741829.155710354774360/462304174114975/?type=3 accessed 1/1/2020

Examining calling for votes in Graph 142. Momentum across the 2017 election was very much trying to reach a broad, but clearly more partisan, audience than the other Labour pages. Although Momentum did call for votes (12% in 2017), usage was well below the party (85%) and leader page (60%). The group was clearly not part of the traditional Facebook campaign, but was orientated as much around participation as novel approaches to information. Though Momentum was still trying to speak to a broad audience, it was clearly not as broad as the other Labour pages and far more partisan and politically engaged. During the permanent campaign calls for votes remained stable at 11%, while calls to join the party considerably increased to 17%. Given the context of both local and internal Labour elections, the group was trying to activate their broader audience and virtual members to join and vote, while stimulating their official members to vote in the Labour elections. Core membership pushes via Facebook therefore occur months before, or straight after an election. The low level of interest during election campaigns is likely due to the page's not wanting to complicate party organisation during election periods.



Graph 142. External to Facebook non-member forms of offline participation (n=695)

Overall, the Momentum campaign was dualistic. Momentum's viral memetic information approach showed the group was trying to inform a broader younger radical public, de-aligned groups and radical voters who had drifted away from Labour. While equally, the group pushed open ended participation to activate this broader radical public, virtual members and their official members. Momentum's approach did not care about official traditional networks of party membership, instead Momentum pushed for participation without boundaries. The data shows that Momentum was clearly interested in novel approaches to participation, rather than traditional avenues like those seen via the party and leader pages. The heavy use of Facebook to develop offline forms of participation, clearly shows a movement that was engaging in a cyber-party framework (Margetts, 2001), as well as citizen-initiated campaigning (Gibson, 2015). The group utilised the free and open nature of Facebook, reducing to the minimum

any barriers to individual's participation, thus generating a novel system for online and offline Facebook campaigning.

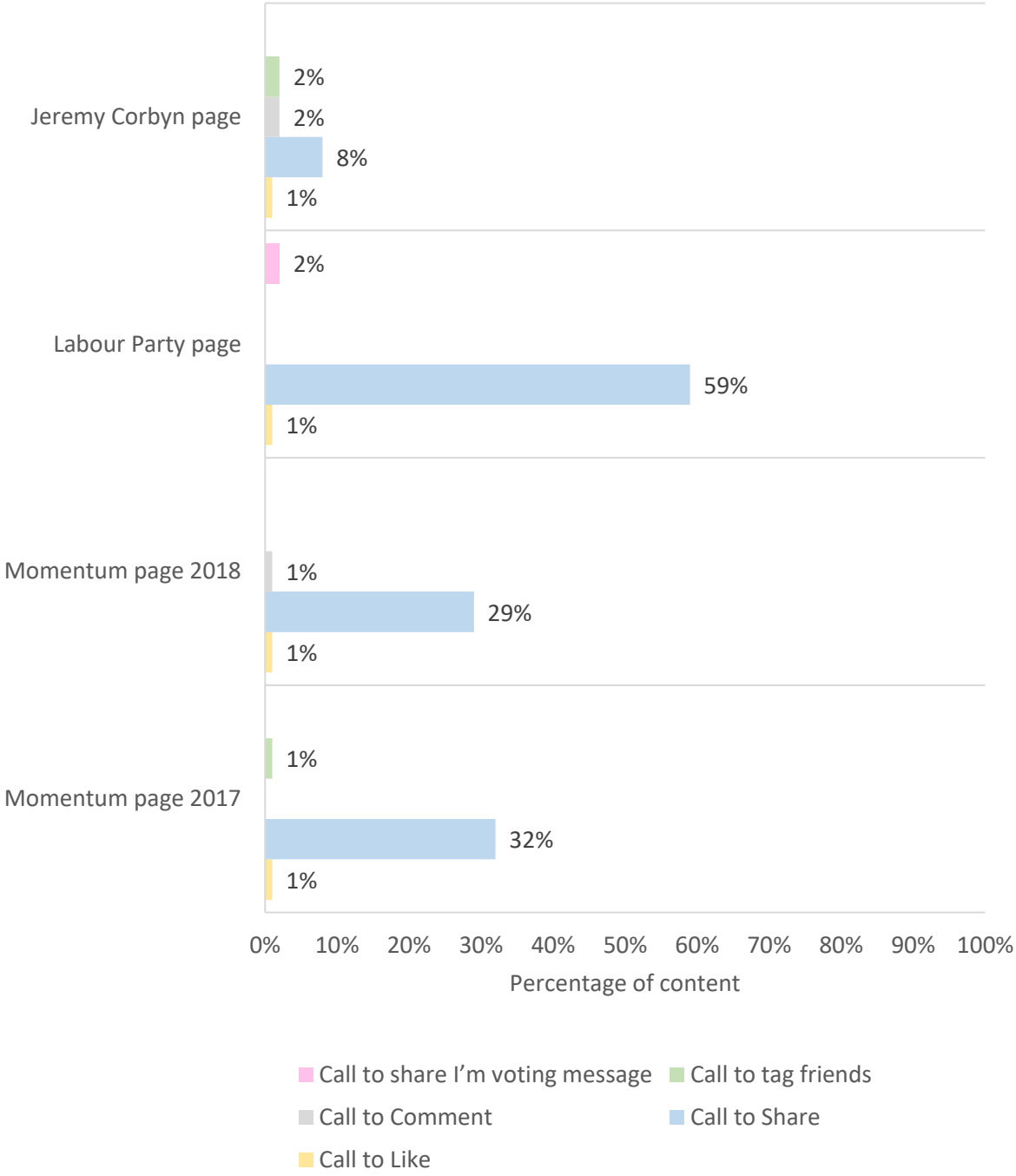
Image 45. 2018 Momentum call to join party[97]

Does Momentum promote engagement?

Although party and leader pages showed minimal interest in participation, they did appreciate the social nature of share engagement to improve the power of their communications. Examining Momentum across the 2017 election, the promotion of sharing is also popular. 32% of Momentum content pushed users to share, as opposed to 59% for the party, and only 8% for the leader page. Approaches to engagement were stable across the 2017 election and 2018 permanent campaign, with the promotion of shares slightly dipping by 3 percentage points. Over time blanket calls to share are declining, it is possible that the Labour Party is experimenting using Corbyn's page without the form. Given that the leader page receives far more engagement, the use of prompts for

[97] https://www.facebook.com/155710354774360/posts/742055756139814/ accessed 4/4/2020

engagement may appear unnecessary, with page operators intending to maximise engagement via not using traditional style calls to engagement.



Graph 143. Prompting of engagement forms (n=695)

Across all the Labour pages' engagement is shown to clearly be important. Labour in 2017 appreciated that the right sort of content, spread through the right sort of users, can get into important socio-demographic and cultural networks.

This is a system that is not easily replicable through other tools. For more internet savvy audiences, e.g. via Momentum and Corbyn's page's, engagement was less heavily pushed. While for more traditional Facebook content engagement was summarily prompted. Overall, engagement was used by Labour in a nuanced and subtle manner depending on page and audience. Labour pushed consistent (but undramatic) engagement via the party page, the leader page did not push engagement as it would appear impersonal, while Momentum engaged in a more speculative approach that sometimes led to impressive virality. Momentum wanted engagement but used pushes for engagement selectively, not at the risk of appearing demanding, obscuring the impact of content or looking impersonal.

7.4: Conclusion

What role does Momentum play in Labour's Facebook campaign?

Research question one asked the role Momentum has for Labour's campaign. Examining the 2017 General Election, Momentum clearly had a differentiated style, intended audience and political goal to the other Labour pages. Momentum evidently fulfilled a specific role, with approach informed by the core goals of the group, and what it could offer to the wider Labour campaign. Through supporting the leader, promoting broad novel political information and focussing on participation and organisation, Momentum offered to the Labour campaign something that was not available before. Dennis notes that; "Momentum replicates some of the organizing and campaigning practices of political parties (Kreiss, 2012; Stromer-Galley, 2014)… and draws on the organizational practices and modes of engagement associated with social movements..." (2019, p.110). However, as this chapter has shown, Momentum does more than just replicate the organizing and campaigning practices of political parties. The group goes much further than the other party pages, showing a genuine interest in the power of social media to change political campaigning. Momentum may draw on the 'organizing and campaigning practices of political parties', but as is seen, through utilising novel approaches the group is taking these elements further than the other party pages.

Across information the page was less focussed on policy and political detail, instead the organisation focussed on broader political ideas, harnessing areas of major ideological cleavage. Momentum activated ideas not policy detail, using experts and celebrities to inform groups who were looking for more spirited political campaign discourse. Momentum was clearly trying to activate its own support, alongside left-wing partisans and young people. As Fraser Watt, a campaigns officer for London Young Labour asserted in 2017, “Labour appealed to a generation that came of age during the financial crisis” (Savage & Hacillo, 2017). Momentum was also targeting people who had been pushed away by Labour’s previously centrist position, utilising a political platform and style that appeared anti-establishment and as far away from New Labour as possible. As Dennis notes, Momentum has worked hard to “position the organization as outsiders (see Watts & Bale, 2019), as they are simultaneously distinct from the norms and practices of Westminster politics but also dissimilar to competing factions” (2019, p.109). Overall, Momentum was clearly not targeting everyone, with their approach engaging, through virtual members, a wider group of the politically interested, who then in turn managed to reach the less politically interested. The groups viral success came organically from a combination of good content reaching the right initial, secondary, and then tertiary audience.

Emma Rees, national organiser for Momentum stated in 2017, “we’re out engaging ordinary people, making politics feel like… not politics. It’s something the Tories could never replicate” (Rees, 2017). Momentum’s humorous, frivolous approach using a language heavy internet-users understood, led to Momentum reaching a different audience. As Adam Klug, one of the Momentum’s central team asserts, "we way beyond our own bubble – we only have 24,000 members"[98]. McDowell-Naylor argues this more fluid ‘deterritorialization’ approach was important to Momentum’s success, as they could avoid the baggage of party bureaucracy (McDowell-Naylor, 2019). Indeed, through content designed to energise a broader partisan group that subsequently gained traction, Momentum achieved impressive virality. The group displayed the power of Facebook engagement, as well as the sociological nature of the platform,

[98] https://www.theweek.co.uk/general-election-2017/85501/how-momentum-helped-sway-the-general-election accessed 21/10/2019

breaking across many barriers. From a small core of under 300,000 virtual members, in the “last week of the campaign over 1 in 3 Facebook users in the UK watched an entire Momentum video. With the best performing video, ‘Tory Britain 2020’, reaching 5.4 million views in just two days” (Momentum website, 2019[99]). Thus, Momentum not only went viral to heavy internet users but also within the broader Facebook public. Momentum shows that consistent, negative, impactful and emotionally resonant messaging can spread unabated across a Facebook network population. Momentum’s information was hard to ignore, thus it subsequently reached voters across age, class, geography and political affiliation.

Participation approaches showed the group wanted to activate virtual members and the broader public. Margetts’ (2001) cyber party model was clearly apparent. Whereas the other pages pushed traditional avenues of political participation. Momentum used Facebook as a source of human resources without interest in presenting hoops for potential activists to jump through. From heavily pushing Facebook users to visit Momentum websites, to online training sessions and pushes to organise online. Momentum struck a very different approach to the other party pages. Little interest was shown in Momentum enforcing membership or any systemic approach to the utilisation of virtual supporters offline. Instead the group enacted a ‘just turn up’ policy. This approach was in part adopted from the USA, as Bernie Sanders campaign was actively copied by Momentum (Rhodes, 2019). The organisation was helped through direct advice from key Sanders campaign figures; Grayson Lookner, Jeremy Parkin, Kim McMurray, and Erika Uyterhoeven. these figures were brought in "to give advice in activist training sessions, focusing on sending activists to the right places and ensuring people turned out" (Savage & Hacillo, 2017).

Momentum’s copying of Sanders campaign was dualistic. Penney states “while the “official” Sanders organization-built applications to transform supporters into a tightly controlled distribution network for its social media messaging, this was complemented by “unofficial” grassroots networks that circulated more informal and culturally oriented appeals” via “self-organized connective action in digital social movements” (2017, p.402). Similarly, Momentum utilised both semi-official tools such as mynearestmaginal.com and the Momentum App, as well as

[99] https://peoplesmomentum.com/2018/01/12/2017-general-election/ accessed 21/10/2019

engendering ‘just turn up’ Facebook delivered participation. Overall, Momentum’s online activity via Facebook was effective, “volunteers signed up online to help and were dispatched to nearby marginal seats” (Savage & Hacillo, 2017). 100,000 people used the ‘mynearestmarginal’ app to canvass in key marginal seats (Momentum website, 2019[100]). As Tariq Parkes, activist and branch secretary in Hastings and Rye said, “we had 10 times more activists than in 2015… Momentum activists were at the college and the university – signing people up left, right and centre” (Savage & Hacillo, 2017). These offline activities are on top of other successes in online activation, such as in funding or in talking to friends and family. Momentum’s efforts for organic participation online and offline led to real results.

One may question the value of the study of Labour and Momentum, as it may be argued to be a very specified example of a satellite campaign and thus offer little insight into other satellite campaigns. However, Momentum as an organisation is of direct pertinence to understanding other satellite campaigns from the activities of *Latinos for Trump* to *Unison*. This is because of the way Momentum uses social media and the goals it has, alongside its relationship to its mother organisation. Firstly, the findings from this chapter speak directly to other cases across the world, because although a left-wing group within a left-wing party; Momentum’s approach is to activate support based around a selected in-group or an out-group through appropriate means. This is the same process that we see for other satellite campaign examples, including various identity focused Facebook pages that support Trump or activist pages create to support party factions. Content sent is specifically designed for the satellite campaigns purpose, for Momentum it is to gather and organise like-minded people to push for left-wing reform within Labour and during election times a Labour government. This goal is clearly seen in the content the organisation sent, showing that satellite pages have an ability to activate small but enthused audiences, including clear evidence that these individuals can be made to do complex campaign oriented activities such as doorstep campaigning. This is a vital finding that is of pertinence to understanding other satellite campaigns, as these capacities can be harnessed to achieve their disparate goals. Momentum proves that satellite pages have a

[100] https://peoplesmomentum.com/2018/01/12/2017-general-election/ accessed 21/10/2019

clear content function that is going to continue to grow in importance, as the fracturing of audience online is pushing the need for a core Facebook campaign and a growing periphery of satellite campaign. The second key reason Momentum is a pertinent example is its relationship to the core Labour campaign. The group is part of big tent party that is representative of many larger parties of government seen across the world. Momentum is, like these other satellite campaigns, trying to navigate internal political struggles and seek greater influence. The dynamics of how Momentum operates across the permanent campaign as well as the election campaign gives wider insights into how satellite campaigns act within party structures. Momentum within the Labour campaign thus offers a powerful case of how satellite campaigns fit into the wider campaign, and how they allow a big tent party to address issues of political division and disillusion.

Thus, although a specific party in a unique political circumstance, Momentum's campaign within the Labour Party although not perfectly generalisable offers clear insight for other satellite campaigns worldwide. Across Momentum's use as a satellite campaign, the permanent campaign and Janus-faced campaigning, Facebook is not just adding to the campaign toolkit but does represent a fundamental change. Facebook has offered parties new avenues for their communications that were previously not available, with the implications of this impacting on the parties themselves. Overall, Momentum as a satellite campaign offered the Labour Party a source for new volunteers, a viral engaging source for information delivery and the capacity to reach different audiences. Table 38 overleaf outlines a comparison using the findings of this chapter, it clearly summarises the differences between the pages, and thus the exact function of the Momentum satellite campaign.

Table 38. Central approaches of the pages

Approach	Labour Party page	Labour Leader page			Momentum page	
Content structure	Video	Video	Photo	Link	Video	Photo
Structural forms	Infographics	Mainstream media	Posters	Government website	Mainstream media	Twitter, memes
Topic choice frequency	High topic frequency	Medium topic frequency			Medium topic frequency	
Topic choice diversity	Specific focus on economy, health and social care, party action	Broad focus but core approached towards economy, protection, health and social care, party action, leadership			Specific focus on economy, protection, party action, leadership	
Policy detail and political information	High policy detail High levels of positive political information High mixed sentiment, use of position issues	Medium policy detail Negative mixed sentiment political information Low position issue use			Low policy detail Negative mixed sentiment political information Medium negative use of position issues	
Expertise and celebrity	Celebrity over expertise High celebrity use, low expertise use	Celebrity over expertise High celebrity use, low expertise use			Expertise over celebrity High use of both	
News media use	Low negative mainstream media use Low reuse of external content	Medium mainstream media use equally positive and negative Use of newspaper sources and newspaper sources via link Medium reuse of external content			Medium mainstream media use, equally positive and negative Use of alternative media, polling High reuse of external content	
Depiction	Use of women's issues and depiction Low interest in minority depiction Balanced depiction of all age groups and issues associated especially the young Low use of general public's voice High use of public and relevant workers	Low interest in women's issues and minority depiction, Depiction of all age groups and issues associated but focus on young and old people Low use of general public's voice High use of ordinary public and relevant workers			Low interest in women's issues and minority depiction Depiction of all age groups and issues associated but focus on young, middle-aged and children High use of general public's voice and relevant workers, but low use of ordinary public	
Framing	More neutral than other pages, more positive than negative High focus on pledges, diagnosis, prognosis and motivation Short videos, medium length messages	Mixed, equally negative and positive High focus on pledges, diagnosis, prognosis and motivation Short videos, long messages			Bipolar, very positive and negative High focus on diagnosis and prognosis, low motivation content Long videos, short messages	

Personalisation, rhetoric and humour	Some praise of leader, low use of Corbyn in content Low use of opposition leader, low negative appraisal of opposition, Low personalised language Low use of humour High use of rhetorical tools especially us versus them rhetoric, catch phrase, three-part lists, questions and repetition	Low praise of Corbyn, high use of leader in video, imagery and text High use of opposition leader, high negative appraisal of opposition High personalised language Low use of humour Medium use of rhetorical tools especially us versus them rhetoric, catch phrase and repetition	High praise of Corbyn, high use of leader in video, imagery and text High use of opposition leader, high negative appraisal of opposition High personalised language High use of humour Low use of rhetorical tools especially repetition and us versus them rhetoric
Links	Medium calls to visit party website Medium calls to visit other websites Medium party website links Low use of hashtags Low data gathering Medium party internal links, low opposition internal links Low links to other Facebook pages	Low calls to visit party website Medium calls to visit other websites Low party website links Medium use of hashtags Medium data gathering High party internal links, high opposition internal links High links to other Facebook pages	High calls to visit party website Low calls to visit other websites High party website links Medium use of hashtags Low data gathering Low party internal links, low opposition internal links High links to other Facebook pages
Partisanship	Medium use of party members High use of minority party members Medium praise of campaigners	Medium use of party members Medium use of minority party members Medium praise of campaigners	High use of party members Low use of minority party members High praise of campaigners Negative appraisal of same party leaders/MP's
Participatory practices	Medium register to vote Low visit campaign page No other forms of online participation Low talk to friends High call for vote Low call to join party	Medium register to vote Low visit campaign page No other forms of online participation Medium talk to friends Medium call for vote Low call to join party	Low register to vote High visit campaign page Low other forms of online participation, polls, petitions, shop, medium calls for funding High help doorstep campaign, volunteer and sign-up, Medium talk to friends Low call for vote or to join party
Engagement	Low interest in engagement High promotion of sharing	Low interest in engagement Low promotion of sharing	Low interest in engagement Medium promotion of sharing

What are satellite campaigns used for during the 2018 permanent campaign?

Research question two asked; what are satellite campaigns used for during the 2018 permanent campaign? It is important to note that Momentum's role does not end at the election campaign, its role as a permanent campaign vehicle is as important. With the groups approach explaining how Labour changed from the inside after Corbyn's rise to power. As Emma Rees, national organiser of Momentum asserted three weeks after the 2017 General Election, "…we're entering permanent campaign mode... This must be the mentality of both Momentum and the Labour Party. If the wicked don't rest then neither can we, and a permanent campaign footing – a sense that our movement is always both potent and fragile – is how we'll keep up our guard while pushing for a new, emboldened politics" (Rees, 2017). Momentum early on saw the value of the permanent campaign, however in reality the permanent campaign is not purely about beating the opposition as Rees alludes to above. Instead, the permanent campaign appears to have as much of an internal partisan role as an external role.

Dennis noted the possibility of some element of campaign hybridity between an external election campaign focus, and then an internal permanent campaign focus (2019). Examining Momentum across 2018, the group clearly became an internal partisan campaign group. Across the #JC9 campaign, the organisation pushed for the left of Labour to be in supremacy, alongside securing Jeremy Corbyn's premiership. In information approaches the permanent campaign saw the organisation focus on a smaller more partisan blend of political areas. Leadership content declined as Corbyn's position stabilised after the election success, while the page was trying to reach and inform a less broad audience. In participation, Momentum's strategy adjusted towards smaller scale activation of party members, campaigning directly to these individuals to help elect the #JC9. Momentum switched from a page trying to reach and organise a larger base, to a place for the activation and organisation of a smaller band of engaged users.

The internal political dimension of satellite campaigns also presents new questions for parties like Labour. As Dommett and Temple state; "satellite campaigns also raise multiple questions regarding party control, specifically in terms of how parties should link to and work alongside these campaigns" (2018, p.197). It

has been argued that “satellite campaigns appeal to activists who consider themselves as ‘doers’ and not ‘joiners’ (Scarrow, 2015). If these satellite campaigns become more embedded in the campaign landscape in the long term; negotiating the boundary between a satellite and central party page will become key (Dommett & Temple, 2018). This is because satellite campaigns can change the nature of the mother party.

In Momentum’s case there have been consistent tensions between the group and many of the Parliamentary Labour Party, with this often playing out on social media. Although the Parliamentary Labour Party has re-asserted control via Keir Starmer’s election, despite a great challenge Labour has changed dramatically since Corbyn was elected. Today a large segment of membership consistently supports Corbyn-style politics, with groups like Momentum playing an important role in policy direction. This political makeup did not develop in isolation, groups such as Momentum have been pushing for radical change from the inside for three years. Facebook has given satellite campaign groups a novel avenue for influence, with Momentum’s skill on social media leading to continued relevance. This will lead to a strange party-political dynamic as the left continues to maintain influence online, whilst the right maintains structural power.

Despite this ideological battle, it is important to note the importance of both wings working together. In 2017, the party found an appropriate balance between left-wing radical and centrist moderate vision. This was successful sold to the public through smart use of pages in a Janus-faced way. However, by 2019 the left of the party was in total control, the left took the wrong lessons from 2017. Success was attributed to themselves, rather than a big-tent left and right collective effort, an approach this thesis has shown. between. This led to hubris and failure, during the campaign there was a less moderate approach across the different Labour pages. For example, Corbyn’s page became more like Momentum’s meaning the party was speaking in a more extreme manner. Labour thus failed to “reach or win over a wide enough range of voters”, recreating a more insular version of the radical elements of the 2017 campaign (Labour Together Report, 2020).

As Rees argues, “political transformation isn’t bracketed by electoral cycles… this is how we’ll transform Britain. Not merely by occupying the halls of Westminster, but by bringing politics into the community” (Rees, 2017). Momentum is now a spearhead of Labour politics; as a growing force it is one that is going to continue to

influence Labour. Momentum is becoming a core part of the Labour movement with this largely due to Momentum's permanent campaign practices. Table 39 outlines the approach Momentum took across the 2017 General Election and 2018 permanent campaign.

Table 39. Comparison of Momentum's permanent vs. electoral campaign approach

Approach	Election campaign	Permanent campaign
Audience	Broader public, but continuing focus on members and virtual members	Focus on core support, members and virtual members
Content structure	Heavy use of video, some photo no link content	Video but in lower quantity, less photo but much more link content
Topic choice	Medium topic complexity, core issues of; party action, leadership, economy and protection. Core issues favoured over smaller issues.	Medium topic complexity, core issues of; party action, leadership, economy and apolitical. Core issues see decline to benefit of partisan issues.
Policy detail and political information	Low policy detail, but lots of more general political information. Approach bipolar very positive and negative. Low use of position issues	Low policy detail, but lots of more general political information. Approach more negative than election campaign. Huge use of positive position issues.
Expertise and celebrity	Expertise over celebrity. Medium use of experts and heavy use of celebrities	Expertise over celebrity. Heavy use of experts and low use of celebrities
News media use	Medium news use, mainstream media used via sources not links, use of polling	High news use, mainstream media and newspapers used via sources and links, use of alternative media, attacks on media
Depiction	Low interest in depicting smaller groups, only interest in in larger age groups. Focus on young people and middle-aged depiction. Focus across all age groups in issues used. Heavy use of general public's voice and relevant public workers. Medium use of ordinary public.	Low but larger interest in depicting smaller groups, only interest in in larger age groups. Focus on middle-aged people depiction. Focus on young people and child issues in issues used. Medium use of general public's voice. Large use of general public's voice and relevant public workers. Large use of ordinary public.
Framing	Overall positive, but uses bipolar sentiment, is rarely neutral. Focus on diagnosis of problems and prognosis of how to fix them. Longer videos.	Overall, more negative but uses bipolar sentiment. Focus on diagnosis of problems and prognosis of how to fix them. Videos shorter.

Personalisation, rhetoric and humour	Heavy use of leader in video and text, medium in image content, alongside consistent praise of Corbyn. High use of opposition leaders. High use of genuine personalised communications, first person language and personal messages. Low use of party and opposition politicians. Heavy use of humour, especially political humour. Medium use of rhetorical tools.	Heavy praise of Corbyn, but low use of leader in video, image and text content. Low use of opposition leaders. Medium use of genuine personalised communications, first person language and personal messages. Medium use of party and opposition politicians. Medium use of humour, especially political humour. High use of rhetorical tools.
Links	High use of calls to visit party website, low calls to visit another website. Low news links. Medium data gathering. Low party internal link use, medium another page internal link use.	Medium use of calls to visit party website, medium calls to visit another website. Medium news links. No data gathering. Medium party internal link use, low another page internal link use.
Partisanship	Medium use of ordinary party members, low use of minority party members. Low praise of members, medium praise of campaigners, low negative appraisal of opposition MP's.	High use of ordinary party members, medium use of minority party members. High praise of members, high praise of campaigners, high negative appraisal of opposition MP's. Use of anti-figures e.g. Alt-right.
Participatory practices	Low interest in registering people to vote. High interest in getting users to visit a campaign page. Medium interest in other forms of online participation. High interest in promoting offline participation, especially volunteering and signing up to campaign. Medium interest in calling for vote or asking to join the party.	Low interest in registering people to vote. Low interest in getting users to visit a campaign page. Medium interest in other forms of online participation. Low/medium interest in promoting offline participation, medium interest in volunteering and signing up to campaign. Medium interest in calling for vote, medium interest in asking to join the party.
Engagement	High interest in call to share, no interest in other engagement forms.	High interest in call to share, no interest in other engagement forms.

Is Labour engaged in Janus-Faced campaigning?

Research question three asked; was Labour engaged in Janus-faced campaigning? Labour was utilising both a *traditional Facebook campaign*, as well as a *new methods* campaign. Labour's approach to Facebook showed capacities for both "controlled interactivity" (Freelon, 2017) as seen via the Labour Party page, and "self-organised movements" (Penney, 2017) as seen via Momentum. Across the two pages that made up the traditional Facebook campaign. The Labour Party page was the positive 'official' professionalised presence of the party on Facebook, it focussed on detailed political information of a core array of electorally important topics. The page was designed for the public, linking mainly to government and party websites, using catch phrases, celebrity over expertise, and focusing on infographic videos. The page focussed on information over participation, depictions of the public and fact over emotion, with any focus on participation surrounding the act of voting and registering to vote.

Within the traditional Facebook campaign, across the leader page element, Jeremy Corbyn's page was a mixed sentiment leadership vehicle for a more radical and emotional version of the party page's politics. Both negative and positive, and often targeting opposition leaders. The page focused on a broader array of political topics, through more varied structural approaches that featured less political detail but used more emotion and personalised communication. The page was designed to activate the public, using celebrities over expertise, public depiction, mainstream media content and a focus on information over participation. Internal links were common, while participation was focussed towards voting and registering to vote. Corbyn was vital to both his personal page and Momentum's campaign, as Matt Zarb-Cousin, Corbyn's former spokesman stated, "he was much more recognised as an opposition leader than Ed Miliband" (Savage & Hacillo, 2017).

Outside of the traditional Facebook campaign, we saw Labour utilising new methods through its satellite campaign Momentum. Momentum's page was designed for a combination of core virtual members and the radical public. An innovative vehicle for participation, the group pushed for fluid, barrier free, online and offline participation. Their approach to information was emotive, humorous and deliberately lacked detail, content was often video based, mixed in sentiment, using attacks on opposition and even its own party. This promoted user engagement and

virality. Focussing on a few core areas especially leadership and party action, political information was ideological and general, but used expertise over celebrity. Partisanship was pushed and campaigners praised, with the page splitting from Labour's recent past to speak successfully to a new audience of younger people. Keen to use the public as its voice when using its own narrative, Momentum used an 'internet style' in its communications.

Momentum offered Labour many benefits. One of the major ones is a new resource for activists. As Dommett & Temple contend; "Enos and Hersh's work (2015) has shown parties' reliance on members that are unrepresentative of the general public can prove counterproductive in attempts to campaign" (2018, p.198). Momentum through its more fluid approach to activism, offered to the Labour campaign a new online and offline resource that could be harnessed. These younger individuals were also more diverse and active online, capable of appreciating how to help content go viral, and more technologically competent than average Labour activists. Momentum also offered innovation. As Dommett and Temple assert, satellite campaigns are "organisations less restricted by legal requirements and responsibilities, these bodies have the space to innovate and trial new tools that parties may be wary of promoting" (2018, p.196). Momentum were radical, using humour and a less serious nature to create engaging content, they could use less stringent sources and campaign more around ideas than policies. This offered Labour fluidity in the messages they could be sending, as they already had policy covered by the party page, and leadership covered by Corbyn's page.

Overall, Labour ran a successful 2017 General Election campaign, "…people felt Labour's message was authentic and speaking to them and their lives. You see that in things like the polling on what policies people recall – they recalled positive offers from the Labour party and negative things about the Conservatives" – Labour campaign source, 2017[101]. Part of this was because Labour was communicating to people via Facebook through varied and appropriate ways. Labour was using different pages with different approaches to reach different audiences, presenting different faces of the same political party to the public. With the successful implementation of this strategy likely at the centre of Labour's 2017 campaign success. While their failure to utilise the same system as effectively in 2019 appears

[101] https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/jun/10/jeremy-corbyn-youth-surge-votes-digital-activists accessed 21/10/2019

a likely part of their failure. This will need to be studied in detail, with it clear that in 2017, Labour was using Momentum, the party and leader pages in different ways for different purposes. Table 40 outlines Labour's approach to Janus-faced campaigning via the party, leader and Momentum pages. It is vital we appreciate this new phenomenon. This is because the evidence suggests that campaigning is not blending particularly between offline and online, or through traditional and new media forms (as per Chadwick, 2013). Instead, Facebook campaigns are becoming more distinct from other approaches, with greater internal complexity.

Overall, this chapter has shown satellite campaigns and Janus-faced campaigning to be new core approaches to how parties are using Facebook. Although multi-faceted approaches are not revolutionary, their use via Facebook represents a huge evolutionary leap in how parties are campaigning on the platform. Momentum are revealing the future direction of campaigns, because they clearly engage with the idea that online activity can lead to offline action. Lines were blurred between online activism and offline action, with the party interested in more fluid conceptions of membership and how to run a political campaign. At the edges of the Labour campaign we are therefore seeing the rise of new methods in Facebook use, as well as the lines of distinction between online and offline campaigning being blurred. As such, further study of Momentum must occur given they are altering how Facebook is used as a campaign tool.

Table 40. 2017 General Election Labour party-controlled Janus-faced campaigning of three core pages

	Party controlled		
Theme	**Traditional Facebook campaign**		**New method example**
Page type	Party Page	Leader Page	'Party movement satellite campaign'
Party Control	Central office control	Central office and leader office controlled	Party-linked and influenced but operates via Momentum offices
Example	Labour Party Page	Jeremy Corbyn Page	Momentum Page
Target audience	Public Facebook users	Public Facebook users, virtual members and supporters	Centrally virtual members and supporters but also public
Attitude to parent organisation	Represents Labour officially	Represents Labour officially, but represents leader specifically	Internally partisan represents Labour left-wing
Information or participation focus	Information	Information	Participation
Information approach	Broad public focus, focus on core important policy and political information	Broad public focus, focus on wide policy, core policy and political information	Mixed focus on public and supporters, focus on political information but not on policy detail
Participation approach	Broad public focus - Focus on participation as voting	Broad public focus - Focus on participation as attendance of events and as voting	Narrow focus on virtual members – Focus on participation via organising virtual members and official party members to campaign offline
Goal	Promote Labour Party policy and ideas, win elections for Labour	Promote Labour Party policy and ideas, win elections for Labour, promote Corbyn as leader	Promote Momentum membership, Corbyn as leader and the left of the Labour Party
Professionalisation	Is a professionalised entity using bespoke content in a formal style	Is a professionalised entity using bespoke content in a formal style	Is less professionalised entity, uses some bespoke content, but also reissues others content, also utilises a less formal approach including the use of an 'internet' style and humour
Sense of self	Formal party	Formal party leader	Grassroots organisation viewed as a 'movement' with direct relationship with the people
Personalisation	Depersonalised, Corbyn absent	Corbyn heavily personalised and used	Corbyn heavily personalised and used
Sources	Labour website's, mainstream news via video edited content	Labour website's, mainstream news via video edited content, news links	Twitter screencaps, Momentum websites, mainstream and alternative news
Depiction	Uses public, activists and party politicians	Uses activists, public and leader	Uses activists, public and leader

Conclusion

8: Conclusion

The central research questions of this thesis are examined in reverse order due to their specificity. Analysis covers data gathered, created and analysed within this thesis, alongside pertinent areas of discussion related to the 2019 General Election and more recent developments. Subsequently, across methodological, theoretical, and conceptual flaws, the limitations of this research are explored, with future essential analysis outlined.

8.1: How are parties making use of Facebook in terms of the scale of communications, the dissemination of information and the encouragement of participation in the content they post?

The use of Facebook's features by parties since 2010 is clearly a story of evolution not revolution. Although clear differences in approach are seen across time periods, parties, page types and election years, a picture of slow evolution is apparent. This evolutionary approach is marked by clear strategic undercurrents that have influenced how political parties have used Facebook since 2010. The key political undercurrent has been that parties have been using Facebook as a broadcast tool, appreciating genuine capacities to speak through virtual members to the broader public. This strategic foundation mirrors Vissers' vision of parties 'preaching through the converted' (2009) and Gibson's ideas of 'citizen-initiated campaigning' (2015). It is a feature that has strongly influenced how the platform has been used over the last decade. It will also likely continue to influence how parties use Facebook's features in future.

Throughout this thesis' examination we have seen a continued interest from parties in maintaining and not threatening broadcast use of Facebook (a trend seen in other studies e.g. Lee & Campbell, 2016; Bene, 2017; Gerbuado et al., 2019; Heiss et al., 2019). This prerogative has in turn also informed the development of more novel uses of Facebook's features, through other avenues such as satellite pages. Facebook is used differently by parties depending on intended audience. Thus, although still centrally a tool used in a cautious way,

novel avenues are being developed that do unleash alternative and powerful features of the platform. Overall, by the 2017 General Election all the studied parties were making adept use of most of Facebook's features for a new *scale* of communications and reach. However, in examining *information* and *participation*, although Labour made more use of the features of Facebook, both Labour and the Conservatives deliberately underutilised Facebook's features for their central campaigns. Instead, as Labour showed with Momentum, powerful features of Facebook were used selectively via satellite campaigns, with approach more adventurous due to audience and aims.

Across the theme of scale, Facebook offers to parties an infinite canvass for messaging, as well as the ability to create many different pages. However, the most important factor is the ability to gather virtual members for their pages. Firstly, Facebook does not require traditional resources and thus offers a novel creative canvass for political messaging. Parties can now campaign permanently and during election campaigns at very high intensity levels (as seen in other studies of posting frequency e.g. Lilleker, 2016; Bene, 2017). The ability to permanently campaign is powerful, given the high levels of engagement parties receive year-round. It is thus a feature that has been taken full advantage of. Permanent campaigning also offers a key role to satellite pages internal campaigns, as Chapter 7 showed, Momentum exhibited internally targeted partisan content shifts across 2018. Permanent campaigning means both parties and pressure groups have gateway access to the public all the time. Parties are using their pages to send many messages every day, especially during election time, with frequencies generally increasing over the last decade. However, parties are careful to not over saturate their audience, as such the parties are not sending as many messages as they physically could, instead focusing on quality over quantity. This is a deliberate action to increase the effectiveness of their communications, as parties' central goal is to influence and activate the broader public, through getting their virtual members to share their content. Sending too many messages means that engagement gets spread out over too many messages, limiting parties' abilities to break out of partisan echo chambers through multi-level communications flow.

Secondly, in the creation of pages, we have seen parties take advantage of Facebook's abilities to take up political space and develop nuanced communities. Although studies have examined leader pages (e.g. Gerodimos & Justinussen, 2015) as well as satellite pages (Dennis, 2019), this thesis has outlined in detail the wider campaign presences parties use. The nature of parties' campaigns on Facebook is becoming more complex over time, as presences are split across different pages for diverse audiences. The internet's power comes with its capacities for personalisation, with parties following this trend on the platform. Today, alongside the central core of party and leader pages, we also see MP pages, local pages, and a wide variety of satellite pages. Currently the logic of British political page development follows geography, the nature of offline political organisation, political position, or interests. Our parties could instead do more through creating socio-demographic, or interest based, political pages. This would help them enhance their audience saturation of certain groups. This is something we see from the 2020 Trump campaign; through large Facebook pages such as Evangelicals for Trump, Students for Trump, Veterans for Trump and Black Voices for Trump. This divergence of presence, as part of Janus-faced campaigning, will be the principal campaign trend we see for the next decade on Facebook

The most vital aspect of scale is in parties' abilities to generate and sustain virtual members. Facebook allows parties to not only 'preach to the converted' (Norris, 2003), but also 'preach through the converted' (Vissers, 2009). As we saw clearly in Chapter 5, huge levels of party engagement are seen, actioned primarily through virtual members. Margetts' cyber party model (2001), avowed that the internet would create a more fluid relationship between parties and internet users. We would see reduced costs to political participation, and party organisation reinvigorated through online meetings and canvassing. This new online support could engender "virtual belonging towards specific online groups, enhanced by the possibility of interacting directly with likeminded people" (Bartlett et al., 2013, p.11). In virtual membership there is a real benefit for parties given; declining official memberships, the potential to develop different more diverse audiences than their official members, and the potential of message spread through virtual member engagement.

This thesis has found virtual membership is clearly of value, standing between official membership and indifference. Virtual members are politically interested but do not necessarily want to be official members. Facebook is the perfect location to attract, socialise and activate this wider group of people, a cohort who otherwise would be inaccessible and thus unorganisable. Virtual belonging has also been generated through parties developing broad content that most effectively speaks to who their virtual member audiences are. Pages can also generate and maintain virtual members, as Chapter 4 showed, although now saturated, numbers of followers can radically increase, but rarely decline. In Chapter 4 we saw that leader pages surpassed party pages in virtual member numbers in 2016. By the end of 2017, Labour was amassing a huge amount of its virtual member support through Jeremy Corbyn, rather than via the party page.

Differences in virtual membership are seen across party and page types. As Chapter 4 showed, virtual membership is offering all the UK parties access to a larger, younger and more female group of people than their official members. Through virtual member engagement, parties can reach a vast swathe of the UK's 40 million strong online public. This is important, as the UK Facebook userbase is more representative of the UK electorate, than other platforms such as Twitter. Virtual member demographic differences are seen across page types, for example, the data shows older people prefer to follow leaders over party pages. Parties must therefore appreciate the abilities and pitfalls different pages bring in virtual membership. Political parties have over time through virtual membership, developed a real opportunity to influence more varied socio-demographic strata. However, this ability to speak through virtual members, utilising their sociological characteristics and networks, requires content that is engaged with. This is not a given, as Chapter 5 showed that engagement is volatile and discerning. Parties must therefore develop engrossing effective content that speaks to audiences effectively.

Although an important new resource, it is important to note some limitations of virtual members. The virtual members the parties have gathered on Facebook are older than the average UK Facebook population, with big demographic differences by party. This trend is especially seen for right wing parties. Although left-wing parties' virtual members are more representative of the

UK Facebook population, given the greater age skew of right-wing parties official memberships, right-wing parties have the greatest benefit from Facebook virtual members. The overall trends show that parties must use other social networks and other offline campaign tools to reach the total public. Facebook may cover a broad group of people, but given changing patterns of social media, parties must utilise a patchwork of platforms. For example, TikTok to reach Generation Z and Instagram for Millennials. Overall, the political parties studied have fully utilised Facebook's abilities to *gather* virtual members. However, as seen within parties' approaches to participation, the use of virtual members is generally limited to their use as mouthpieces via engagement. Only groups like Momentum are attempting to use these individuals as traditional style campaign human resources, upsetting the organisational barriers between official and virtual memberships.

In information Facebook offers new features for how parties can communicate. Facebook gives parties a tool that allows information to be delivered straight to the public without any intermediary, the platform therefore offers complete artistic control. The platform offers novel capacities across structure, style and content type, with the options available to parties having evolved over time (reflecting other content studies' results Conroy et al., 2012; Gerodimos & Justinussen, 2015; Bene, 2017; Gerbaudo, 2019). Today, a wide range of structural communications forms are available such as video, live video, posters or memes. Upon this creative foundation parties have carte blanche to utilise stylistic forms, with the content options parties can use limited by determination not technology.

In the specifics of approach, Facebook offers a wide range of options. For example, topic content can be delivered in a complex way through policy detail or broadcast uses of simpler political information. New information features have become well used. In Chapter 5, the rise of photo and then video content is seen across all the political parties. Thus, parties are willing to alter approach and utilise more of Facebook features if they clearly benefit. However, the broader trends seen in information dissemination show a deliberate evolutionary conservatism. Central party and leader page campaigns are cautious, while more radical utilisation is seen from smaller satellite pages such as Momentum. This differentiation is related to the audiences' the parties wish to reach through the

different pages, and how they believe they can effectively communicate with them. Thus, through information provision a dynamic between a traditional Facebook campaign and a new methods campaign becomes apparent.

Parties have opportunities to develop novel content by using other sources. Parties can create content such reused or edited news. This is powerful, because parties can harness trusted sources with the ability to edit the content to their own narrative. Posts can also use interesting ways of framing content, such as in the use of humour (reflecting Bene, 2017; Dennis, 2019) or in the depiction of groups (also see identity ownership Kreiss et al., 2020). Overall, Facebook offers parties a superior creative canvass. How parties can communicate is freer than in the past as stylistic options are less bounded, with the central limitations to parties' information approaches, an appreciation of what the page's audience likes to consume. It is this political reality that has meant that parties' information approaches are not using all the features Facebook offers, instead focusing on an evolved traditional communication approach.

In Chapter 6 we saw that Labour and the Conservatives, through their leader and party pages, are careful of how they send information, because their central focus upon broadcast style communications. The platform is used as a mainstream information tool, with parties utilising select features that can enhance broad campaign learning and persuasive impact. Chapter 6 showed how we have seen high levels of; policy detail, expert and celebrity use, edited media sources, broad group depiction and leadership personalisation. These core elements are well used because they promote virtual members' engagement but without putting off or excluding certain groups. Facebook is thus centrally used by the parties for inclusive content, with more specified content avenues used via other subsidiary pages such as Momentum. In Chapter 7 we gained insight into Momentum's new methods campaign. The page saw wholesale use of more adventurous information features including the use of; meme's, pop culture, negative personalisation, internal partisanship and greater levels of aggressive partisan content. This approach was successful, the page was able to reach out to younger and more partisan voters in a language and style they appreciated. However, this approach has natural limitations. This vigorous style, if replicated through the other Labour pages, would have likely done more harm than good.

Thus, through a Janus-faced approach, Labour used Facebook's information content features in a nuanced manner depending on audience.

Overall, the party and leader pages could have been more adventurous and used more novel information features like we saw via Momentum. However, this fails to appreciate the reasoning behind the parties' approaches on Facebook. Through the traditional Facebook campaign, the platforms' information capacities are deliberately underutilised, as we see parties using Facebook as an online recreation of traditional campaigning best practice. This sees parties push a broad campaign centred on campaign learning. A radical use of all of Facebook's features would likely be inefficient given the different page's audiences, with avenues such as Momentum the appropriate location for these more experimental applications. Given the vital nature of campaigning is - sending the right message to the right person in the way that is best for them, this natural limitation has seen parties engage in caution on Facebook. Focus has clearly been set on big tent broadcast approaches, while more novel approaches were seen via smaller more precise avenues. However, as the radical approach of the Conservative Party in 2019 shows, tactics can evolve and change, with engagement volatility showing that to gain attention parties must continually innovate.

Facebook has powerful features for generating participation online and offline (Bimber, 2014; Boulianne, 2018). There are potentials in the promotion of core electoral forms of participation within the broader public, such as voting mobilisation or registering to vote. Equally, there are opportunities to organise and develop other diverse forms of participation more likely of interest to virtual members, such as; joining a party, doorstep campaigning or filling in a poll. Finally, through user engagement, parties can spread their information or participation messages throughout virtual members' networks. Thus, through Facebook parties have new abilities to develop user participation of different forms online and offline.

Overall, despite clear capacities, participation content via Labour and the Conservative's party and leader page's is unadventurous (reflecting some studies findings of the underuse of dialogue and participation e.g. Klinger, 2013; Ross et

al., 2014; Oelsner & Heimrich, 2015; Lee & Campbell, 2016; Gerbaudo, 2019)[102]. Use of participation is conservative, as Stromer-Galley states "campaigns ultimately construct and use citizens as objects they need to manage through controlled interactivity, in order to reach their objective" (2014, p. 177). Neither major party is making the most of Facebook's participation features except through the promotion of broad participation forms and engagement.

As seen in Chapter 6, from the 2015 to 2017 General Election, the party and leader page's participation content shifted from prompting users to visit traditional party websites, to Facebook located activity. This was a clear evolution in approach, with the shift towards Facebook as the medium and location for participation, showing the parties moving away from structurally hybrid campaign systems (Chadwick, 2013). Differences in participation content were also seen via page type. For Labour, adventurous uses of internal-to-Facebook participation were generated via Corbyn's use of opposition leader links, while in contrast, the party page pushed more traditional online to offline conversation. There were also clear differences between the parties. Although both Labour and the Conservative's centrally used engagement and other broad forms of participation. Labour clearly had a greater focus on electoral participation than the Conservatives across both elections. For example, Labour placed much greater focus on registration, voting and organised conversation content. The Conservatives are clearly not as focussed on Facebook's abilities for complex participation, instead focusing solely on information, voting and engagement.

Thus, across both parties participation content is seen, but focus is upon wider core avenues of participation such as voting and getting people registered to vote. As such, the traditional Facebook campaign shows the parties' having little interest in using virtual members as official members, with any Cyber Party framework underutilised (Margetts, 2001). In Chapter 7, outside the traditional Facebook campaign, party difference is heavily exacerbated by the role of Momentum. The group used more of Facebook's features for participation and organisation. This included; breaking down activism barriers through using a just turn up logic, the use of events, training videos and bespoke activism websites.

[102] However, the thesis' results when compared to other studies (e.g. Magin et al., 2017), show British party interest in participation higher than that seen in other European countries.

These efforts were designed to get Momentum's virtual members working like official members.

In contrast to more advanced elements of participation, engagement is a clear focus, with parties clearly pursuing virtual member engagement. Rather than using virtual members as offline human resources, the parties are centrally using them as online mouthpieces to influence their subsequent online networks. Virtual members are centrally a digital resource used to propel messages forward, campaign online and potentially be drafted in as official members. As such, virtual membership for the parties stands in a middle position between; Margetts theorised fluid "technologically-aided relationships between party and voters" (2001, p.1) and Margolis & Resnick's ideas of politics as usual (2000). Thus, virtual membership stands as a looser semi-utilised party/voter relationship. This focus on engagement from the parties, shows they view Facebook as an influential additional location for socialisation, network building and limited organisation, a useful tool in an era of declining social capital and the breakdown of offline community (Putnam, 2000). However, as Momentum's approach shows, virtual members can be used in a manner akin to official members. Given that the direction of travel of the traditional Facebook campaign is currently an unknown, we may see more adventurous uses of virtual members in the future.

Overall, although parties have amassed large online virtual memberships that are younger, more representative and active in online engagement. Parties are shown to be mainly interested in gathering their engagement and activating core forms of participation such as voting. Parties are currently showing limited interest in using virtual members to campaign in complex ways. Only via more specified avenues, such as Momentum, do we see barriers between official and virtual membership more dissolved. Instead, the data shows that party and leader pages are cautious (as per Kalsnes, 2016), working hard to 'preach through the converted' (Vissers, 2009). This focus on engagement shows the parties centrally appreciate the sociological nature of the Facebook network (as per Lazarsfeld, 1944; Bond et al., 2012). Parties are using their virtual members as modern-day digital doorknockers within their own networked digital doorsteps. Virtual members are being used to deliver broad leaflet style communications to their local networks. Clearly parties do not view engagement as echo chamber

slacktivism, but a force that can have real impact, given how virtual members can influence their own networks. Parties today can generate and maintain local experts, individuals that maintain strong influence within their communities, in a manner unlike the past. The power to steer influential voices, whilst still allowing the messages to be personalised by sharers local and socio-demographic characteristics, is a system that is bringing a fundamental campaign power online. This ability to push party politics through enthused individuals, within a more fluid but still sociologically led network, is a vast power the parties are clearly centrally focused upon. This externalising capability (for the moment) outweighs any capacity or potential from the use of virtual members like traditional official members.

A further question this thesis has investigated is the equalisation or normalisation debate. In examining the use of Facebook's features by party size, Chapters 4 and 5 showed the two major parties are better able to use the platform. Not only have the two major parties gathered larger virtual memberships, but they have also consistently used more complex content forms such as video. However, there is also a large degree of volatility between equalisation and normalisation. For example, although in the content features used, Facebook generally supports a framework of normalisation (supporting Van Aelst et al., 2017). As shown in Chapter 5, smaller parties can make big impacts as well as utilise a large amount of Facebook's features (supporting Gibson & McAllister, 2015; Samuel-Azran, Yarchi & Wolfsfeld, 2015). For example, in terms of engagement UKIP was a colossal phenomenon from 2013-2015. Small parties can gain huge impetus on Facebook. Equally, in the use of participation and information features, satellite group Momentum, shows that reduced resources do not mean novel impactful viral content cannot be created. Thus, although generally presenting a normalised environment, Facebook clearly offers opportunities for smaller parties.

The structural character of page types also provides debate, with how different types of pages use Facebook's features a further question of importance. Leader pages generally lagged the approach seen via party pages, such as in the use of video or personalisation. However, by 2017 leader pages were pushing ahead, using avenues such as leadership personalisation and live events. Today, leader pages have overtaken party pages as a campaign tool. However, given

how tied to political personalisation leader pages are, usage can fluctuate considerably. For Labour, the leadership of Keir Starmer presents new issues, his small virtual membership is in great contrast to Boris Johnson. Labour to some extent is now having to build up from nowhere on Facebook, a similar situation to what faced the Conservatives in 2017, due to Theresa May's small audience. The parties should be smarter, permanent pages that can be handed on to the next leader should be developed.

To conclude; in scale, parties have taken full advantage of Facebook to develop virtual membership bases, create new political pages and send many new forms of communications. However, within the heart of campaigns via central party and leader pages, approach to information and participation is more conservative. Information is valued over participation, with content that could spur complex offline participation underutilised. This conservatism is however deliberate, because the Facebook features parties' are centrally interested in are those that have the widest impact. Facebook is used by parties as a mass broadcast tool for information dissemination and basic participation forms such as voting. More radical avenues for information and participation are instead seen by subsidiary satellite campaigns such as Momentum. The more radical role of Facebook, via the use of virtual members as official member human resources, is currently subsidiary to other roles. Thus, parties are not making the most of Facebook's features, but they are making the most of Facebook's aptitudes.

8.2: How does the content posted on Facebook by parties retain the features of traditional campaign material?

Facebook is used dualistically, with the way parties are using the platform best understood through the concept of Janus-faced campaigning, via the traditional and new methods Facebook campaigns. As outlined across Chapters 6 & 7, the concept defines that through Facebook, parties are *using different pages with different approaches to reach different audiences, thus presenting different faces of the same political party to the public*.

Firstly, parties' use of Facebook embraces some of the most important as well as most mundane aspects of traditional campaigning. In the traditional campaign literature, parties send voters information to develop campaign learning, prime voters and persuade them to vote in a certain way. Political campaigns thus disseminate authoritative and persuasive information to the voting public, with resultant campaign learning able to influence election outcomes (Lenz, 2009). Traditional campaigns use communications mediums such as the media, leaflets, or face to face contact, to prime individuals on what issues they should evaluate the candidates. This process is being replicated on the platform through the traditional Facebook campaign. This approach gives political parties the ability to take the best elements of tried and tested traditional campaign approaches and recreate them online. As such, Facebook's use as a campaign tool has not started from zero, its use follows the model seen in other tools. We see billboard style posters recreated online, PPB's rebroadcast or recut into new videos and interactive infographic content developed akin to leaflet content. Facebook use by parties is thus generally reflective of other tools, with organic Facebook communications a middle tool between targeted advertising and leaflets.

Similarities to traditional campaigning in how parties are communicating are very clear. A considerable amount of professionalised evolution has occurred in order to reach a position where parties are effectively recreating enhanced traditional campaign content online. This structure has taken time to develop. For example, from 2010-2012 it was not uncommon to see wordy reposts of entire speeches or large amounts of apolitical content. Today, information approaches are focused on core policy and accessible political information. Equally, factors designed to enhance message effect are kept broad, such as public depiction, use of experts and celebrities, alongside negative and positive leadership personalisation. Facebook is thus operated within a wider campaign mindset, that holds that voting behaviour can be affected by awareness of political parties, candidates and associated causes (Schmitt-Beck, 2004). As such, the Facebook content we see today is akin to vastly enhanced interactive leaflets. However, the key for party campaign's is that rather than being delivered by partisan doorknockers, with content left lying on doormats or thrown straight in the bin.

This content is delivered via people's friends and family, and thus can cause discussion and wider impacts. Thus, the broadcast focus seen, is because the parties' clearly believe Facebook is giving them opportunities to inform social groups in an accessible impactful way. Facebook therefore represents an evolution of the traditional campaign, rather than something that cannot be compared to what came before.

Secondarily, at a smaller scale (for the moment), during the 2017 General Election Labour was using a new methods campaign through satellite page Momentum. Satellite pages offer parties an important subsidiary avenue to campaign, with Facebook (and the internet) offering democratic intermediaries something new rather than stasis (supporting Edwards, 2006; in contrast to Bryan, Tsagarousianou & Tambini, 2002). Through the subsidiary use of different pages and thus audiences, Labour could benefit from being more adventurous in information and participation approaches. Momentum for example, showed the revolutionary implementation of novel participation and information content. This Janus-faced campaigning approach meant Labour were able to match messaging more effectively with audience. The party were able to reach partisans and younger people via Momentum, while the broader public were reached through their leader and party pages. Facebook was thus used in a dualistic manner; used both in the model of a traditional campaign with all the benefits that entails, alongside a more radical manner offering new features for their campaign. It was this balance that Labour struck so well in 2017; radical politics were matched by sensible broadcast representations of policy. In contrast, Labour lost control of this delicate balance in 2019. The parties' success in 2017 arguably led the left of the party towards hubris, believing it was the radical elements not also the mainstream elements, that had led to a successful campaign. The party did not focus as much on a broad mainstream campaign to balance out Momentum style partisan content. While most problematically Corbyn's page, a page that previously struck a powerful position via mixing politics, personality and emotion, became in content approach, more akin to Momentum. Thus, the entire campaign was not as effective in utilising a Janus-faced approach, as a radical more partisan style overtook the vital but unflashy traditional Facebook campaign.

Overall, Facebook gives parties the best of both worlds if used correctly. Parties have been given both an evolved and more powerful traditional campaign tool, alongside avenues for more radical applications of Facebook features. The balance between these elements will likely shift in future, depending on Facebook's userbase and parties' audiences. The concept of Janus-faced campaigning is fluid, as the idea does not define the weight of the two campaign elements, but instead their existence. Campaign approaches will shift, a traditional Facebook campaign in 2024 may include shitposts and memes, rather than infographics and posters, an evolution of the small-scale application we saw from the Conservative Party page in 2019. Thus, a key element in delimiting the concept is in appreciating what is at the centre of parties' approaches on the platform, and how other peripheral party pages on the platform operate. It is possible that we may see a switch. The new method campaign may grow in importance over time, to a point where is overtakes the traditional campaign. In this situation the concept of Janus-faced campaigning continues, but with a shift of the new method campaign to the central core of how parties use the platform, while the traditional campaign lies around the periphery.

8.3: What are the likely longer term implications of parties' use of Facebook, in terms of broader campaigning practices?

It has been argued that there is nominal difference across the fundamentals of what we term the 'ground war', with campaigns in key seats "conducted along similar lines" (Lilleker & Pack, 2016, p.42). Today, the Facebook catalyst is offering political parties superior abilities and tactics that have led to a more volatile political campaign environment. New complexities have shaken the once rigid foundations of campaigning, as posters, canvassing and television have been reinterpreted via Facebook. Facebook shows a wide level of difference across party tactics, audience and impact. Although clear overall trends are seen across parties, it is apparent that the era of nominal campaign difference is over. Led by Facebook, social media have ushered in an era of change for party campaigns. Although approach will shift in future as the userbase and audiences

the parties' have on the platform change, for the near future Facebook presents the greatest single campaign tool available to political parties.

This thesis has found that at the core of party campaigns on Facebook is the recreation of a traditional campaign online. However, this lack of radical change does not mean that Facebook fails to present new implications for party campaigns. This is because Facebook is offering the enhancement of previously understood campaign avenues, with the impact Facebook has had on party campaigns centrally within the functionality of broadcast campaigns. If we saw volatile risky approaches as the central way of campaigning, this signals a small audience and reduced electoral impact. Despite a radical change in technology over the last decade, parties are not flying blind, as they are able to combine new technology with previously effective political campaign content. Facebook offers new implications for party campaigns because it is a tool that offers the choice of revolutionary and evolutionary campaign capacities, within a powerful sociological network. The central limitation occurring from how parties are using the platform is tactical choice, as Facebook offers abilities to mix novel with traditional styles. In scale, information, participation and organisation, Facebook allows for parties to engage in effective applications of new, improved or replicated capacities. Facebook's impact therefore occurs from its pluralistic abilities, rather than the more limited impacts of each separate capacity.

During a traditional campaign, parties send voters information to increase campaign learning, prime voters and generate participation. Information can increase voters issue knowledge (Seldon & Snowdon, 2005; Fridkin & Kenney, 2011), determining how voters make up their minds via issue saliency (Iyengar & Simon, 1993; Togeby, 2007). Facebook offers parties an enhanced electoral and permanent campaign, information and participation tool. Evidence for social media's impact on participation is growing (Boulianne, 2018), with Facebook a tool clearly used by parties campaigns for basic forms of participation and mobilisation. Facebook can be used like leaflets, tv ads or posters, while novel application such as live-stream video or memes, can be deployed. Approach can be dictated by data, both from previous content, as well as from a deep understanding of audience. Content can be A/B tested and refined, alongside targeted or boosted, with the line between organic content and targeted

advertising an important future research question. Broadcast and narrowcast approaches are available, meaning that Facebook can be used by parties to inform a range of voters. Facebook thus offers new implications for party campaigns because of the flexible ways parties can use information for campaign learning and participation. The platform offers abilities to develop novel approaches, as well as utilise traditional campaign factors, all within an environment that enhances effect.

Alongside content abilities, Facebook offers new implications for party campaigns because of its options for identity flexibility. From the use of leader pages to satellite pages, Facebook's ability for using different page types, offers parties total control in how their voice is projected to different groups. This brings new implications for party campaigns, as parties would be able to localise content but not combine broadcast and narrowcast applications like they can do today. Message differentiation has always occurred, such as via different content approaches through billboard or newspaper advertising campaigns in different electoral seats. However, Facebook offers considerable improvement over previous capacities, giving parties the best of both worlds. Today, through Janus-faced campaigning, Facebook can be used in a manner that matches approach to audience. Parties can use the novel content aspects of Facebook to attract partisans and younger voters. Whilst through more mundane communications, parties can reach older voters in a manner to which they are accustomed. Thus, parties through using different pages can not only utilise traditional structures of voter behaviour, but also activate different avenues to socialise new groups, such as through speaking to identity, interests, ideology or representation.

Facebook also offers further flexibility from its ability as a permanent campaign tool (supporting Vergeer, Hermans and Sams, 2011; Dennis, 2019). A radical new ability for parties, Facebook shows continuous campaigning by politicians is on the rise (updating evidence from other earlier studies, e.g. Klinger, 2013; Enli & Skogerbø, 2013; Strandberg, 2013). Parties are consistently trying to inform, persuade, organise and activate their virtual members. This thesis also supports Ceccobelli's findings that there are; "qualitative and quantitative differences between campaign and peace-time periods" (2017, p.122). Today, socialisation elements that used to occur closer to election time can now be

utilised permanently, helping parties to inform and socialise voters, develop members and organise.

Facebook also presents new implications for party campaigns through the development of virtual members. In traditional campaigning, parties' support mobilisation concentrates on making sure that pre-identified supporters have voted (Denver & Hands, 2002). Facebook has empowered parties to reduce support mobilisation challenges (Ward et al., 2008; Gibson, 2012), because parties can build online communities and engender activities (Gibson, 2015). Usage of virtual members is however not utopian; virtual members are not generally used as human resources like official members. This refutes what Chadwick and Stromer-Galley argue as the idea of; "digital media foster(ing) cultures of organizational experimentation and a party-as-movement mentality that enable many to reject norms of hierarchical discipline and habitual partisan loyalty" (Chadwick & Stromer-Galley, 2016, p.283). Instead, parties are so far being cautious, with satellite campaigns such as Momentum, the location for cyber party style experimentation. Although not a revolution, virtual members are a radical opportunity because they have rejuvenated the political parties activism networks. Through their engagement and online activism these individuals rebroadcast party content, acting like digital doorstep campaigners, delivering political content with their own social characteristics. This is a fundamental power that other networks do not offer in the same way, because other networks are less focused on real-world offline connections. If as Lazarsfeld et al. state, "social characteristics determine political preference" (1968, p.27), then Facebook is opening new avenues for political parties through virtual member activism. This is because people do not trust politicians, they trust their friends and family.

Facebook offers parties a different audience as well as a novel location to speak to audiences. Unlike other social networks, Facebook contains many older, rural and less wealthy voters. While, when compared to the UK population, still offering a proportionally young and more female userbase. As such, unlike other social networks, a traditional Facebook campaign makes sense, with Facebook offering a location for both specific and general campaign approaches. Therefore, more specific campaigns are something we see occur via other social networks, such as in the targeting of young people via Snapchat, or the highly partisan via

Twitter. Although Facebook is only one of several social media platforms used by parties, and clearly successful campaigns use each medium for its audience. Facebook is by far the most diverse and impactful. Currently, only Facebook offers a broad range of voters who can be reached in one place. This in turn promotes what this thesis describes as Janus-faced campaigning. Other social networks do not have the same impact as Facebook, because their userbases are more specific, networks are interest based and users less representative of electoral populations. Facebook as a space is instead far less partisan, more representative of users real offline social networks and thus more emotionally resonant. Thus, the power and impact of a traditional or new methods campaign is multiplied on Facebook.

Beyond the general audience available, it is the nature of the Facebook network - a system that bridges party to public, that is the central reason why Facebook is having an impact on party campaigns. Although parties only use the public as mouthpieces, with the platform not used for genuine two-way dialogue (as per Oelsner & Heimrich, 2015). Facebook, through engagement and followership, offers parties a clear novel avenue for campaigning. This is because of new capacities for multistep-flow processes, in which campaign communications are distributed via a multitude of channels (Iyengar, 1994; Burt, 1999; Park, 2013). The parties appreciate the importance of engagement, as throughout the data, parties have clearly shown they want to maximise engagement whilst balancing accessibility. This speaks to studies that find the sociological dimensions of Facebook, is as key to effectiveness as the content. As Bond et al. found “the effect of social transmission on real-world voting was greater than the direct effect of the messages themselves” (2012, p.295). Parties are using virtual members as their own semi-autonomous mouthpieces, with the platform offering new implications for party campaigns because Facebook recreates users’ real sociological connections within an online environment.

Facebook offers parties a powerful avenue for socially located message spread. Facebook users’ looser but still genuine social network’s (Dunbar, 2016), allow for ‘‘socially-located opinion leaders (to) spread information to many kinds of people, including citizens with little interest’’ (Thorson & Wells, 2012, p.13). This is a large upgrade over the abilities of any other campaign tool, as Facebook

is allowing for information rich, leaflet style content, to be delivered not by unwelcome doorknockers but through friends and family. Other social networks do not offer this ability. They may be too open in network formation for impactful information dissemination (e.g. Twitter), have ineffective architecture (e.g. Snapchat) or heterogenous users (e.g. TikTok & Twitter), thus making pluralistic campaigning unworkable. Facebook is the only location that offers such an effective system. It is also why parties should ignore organic campaigning at their peril, for these sociological pressures are something that targeted advertising just cannot recreate.

Overall, Facebook has presented clear new implications for party campaigns. The platform recreates the effectiveness of previously existing campaign tools but in an online environment, while equally offering parties other novel avenues for smaller scale radical approaches. Facebook is currently centrally used by the parties as a broadcast tool; however, this could change as the new methods campaign expands. Although we are not seeing utopian ideas of the breakdown between official and virtual membership, cyber party manifestations or radical content approaches that break the campaign norm. Facebook nevertheless offers parties evolved online resources that enhance their campaigns. Through abilities to utilise superior communications forms, generate virtual members, develop user engagement and social message transmission; parties can develop online and offline impacts. The platform is powerful not because it necessarily strikes new ground, but because it changes what was so central before, through amplifying and altering traditional social networks. Indeed, the lack of revolution in approach is symptomatic of Facebook's importance, as the platform can reach normal voters. The universality of the platform means novel approaches are instead seen only around the edges. Thus, when compared to other social networks, Facebook is clearly of superior importance and is offering parties powerful new abilities. However, the platform is still only useful as part of a wider toolkit. Although so many are on the platform, many predominately older voters are still not internet users, while others such as younger people are specifically avoiding the platform. Given this fact, Table 41 expands upon the current campaign landscape we see from political parties. The current stage of party campaigns in the UK is a nuanced affair, defined by the implementation of

novel digital tools in practical ways. Effective modern campaigns appreciate where the audience is and how to effectively communicate with them. This has been a never-ending battle for political campaigners; however, it is one that has got more complicated given how our online lives now exist alongside our offline lives.

Table 41. Janus-faced campaigning outlined within Margetts' table of trajectory of political party development (2001)

	Caucus party	Mass party	Catch-all party	Cartel party	Cyber party (concept)	Janus Faced Campaigning
Emergence	19th century	1880-1960	1945-	1970-	Late 1990s-	Late 2010's
Origins	Caucus of elite inside assembly	Outside the assembly	Existing elite or mass parties	Growth of state funding of parties; falling membership; rise of electronic media in campaigning	Changing patterns of political participation; mixed electoral systems; Internet	Ever more internet mediated environment, including changing patterns in where voters are
Claim to support	Traditional status of leaders	Represents a social group	Skill at governing	Diminishing party competition between established parties	Direct link to voters; lively party competition for voters' multiple preferences	Parties follow traditional structures for voter preference but also speak to identity and representation whether ideological or demographic
Membership	Small, elitist	Large card carrying membership	Membership open to all and encouraged; rights but not obligations	Neither rights nor obligations important; distinction between members & non-members blurred	No membership - loose definition of supporters, potentially all voters	Importance of traditional membership but increasing use of 'virtual members' and voters as amplifying mouthpieces
Party communication channel	Interpersonal networks	Party provides its own channels of communication	Party competes for access to non-party channels	Party gains privileged access to state-regulated channels	Web-based channels of communication; intranets, extranets	Social media channels, both open and closed (Facebook groups, pages) via satellite, leader and party pages (difference), interpersonal + top down
Position of parties between civil society and state	Unclear boundary between state and civil society	Party belongs to civil society	Parties as competing brokers between civil society and state	Party becomes part of state	Parties as organizations (not institutions) operating on boundary between state and society	Parties as both arbiters of the people and as professional institutions. Parties as movements.
Examples	19th century liberal parties	Socialist parties	US parties	German, Austrian, Scandinavian parties	British parties	British parties, Labour Party 2017

8.4: Hypothesis validation

Table 42. Hypothesis validation

Hypothesis	Outcome and explanation
Facebook will offer political parties the ability to generate and campaign through virtual members.	*Validated.* Parties are making full use of speaking to the wider Facebook population through utilising virtual members and their engagement. Engagement is prioritised but not forced, with content designed to maximise interaction and effect.
Parties will make use of Facebook's capacities for a high frequency of content, improved content forms and content engagement, but their information dissemination will focus on maximising reach and impact through keeping content simple and focused.	*Validated.* Parties are campaigning permanently and across election campaigns in hight frequency, they are maximising content frequency through using many different types of pages, however they are careful not to over communicate. Content forms used have clearly evolved, especially given the rise of video. Some clear tactical approaches are seen such as a focus on leaders and celebrities, with the central focus being on speaking to the broader public not party members. Momentum in contrast used more novel approaches to content because the group was not trying to communicate to as broad an audience.
Parties will focus their participation content on prompting traditional voting efforts such as registering potential voters, rather than on trying to activate and utilise virtual members as they would official party members, such as organising "just-turn-up" doorstep campaigning sessions.	*Validated.* Participation is seen centrally from the Labour Party with efforts focused on registering to vote and voting. The focus is on the activation of these traditional core forms of participation through online means. This bridges traditional campaigning with social media, but centrally shows that interest in treating online virtual members like party campaigners is only seen from Momentum.
Parties will use the ability to operate multiple different pages on Facebook to organise their campaigns in novel ways, for example through the development of 'satellite' campaign pages that operate in distinct ways from core party pages.	*Validated.* The parties are using different presences on the platform. The fact that these pages are used differently is very important because of their ability to gather and speak to different audiences in different ways. Momentum clearly had a different audience, style and purpose to the other Labour pages, while even comparing the leader and party pages of political parties show clear tactical differences in how the pages are used.

8.5: What do the results mean for political parties and other campaigns?

Facebook is clearly here to stay, with this thesis illuminating how parties are connecting to users through political content. The insights within this thesis have a wide use for campaigners and political campaigners. The content analysis undertaken offers important insights for both the studied parties, but also other parties and campaigns worldwide. The detail undertaken for this thesis has not been seen in any other study ever, meaning that this thesis offers unique insights into complex aspects of how parties are using Facebook to campaign. The data generated offers a route map of where Facebook campaigns are heading, allowing those who read the data closely to either catch up quickly with the approaches of the mainstream major parties, or potentially jump ahead.

The theoretical and conceptual developments generated within this thesis offer interested actors, parties, and other types of digital campaigns new understandings to help them use Facebook more effectively. The main theoretical finding of this thesis is that campaigners must value a nuanced approach to the platform that matches message to audience. Through Janus-faced campaigning, parties can speak more effectively to audiences that matter, allowing parties to benefit from both a broadcast traditional Facebook campaign approach, as well as more novel methods through the new method campaign. This nuanced ability to present different faces to different audiences across social media is also something that more general campaign groups should pay attention to. A greater appreciation that different audiences want different things could help many different types of campaign organisations have impact. For example, the ability for a charity or union to develop a more nuanced campaign presence on social media through using different pages would maximise the impact they can make. Parties must therefore be dutiful in their use of Facebook, appreciating that the Facebook audience is ageing and becoming more fragmented, while maximising their presence through the development of different types of Facebook pages.

The thesis finds the generation and maintenance of followers is vital as they are the gateway to engagement and influence. While, within their audiences, the ability of parties to develop and utilise followers as virtual members that can

campaign on a party's behalf is a real opportunity for all those who use the platform to campaign. Momentum shows that in breaking down of barriers between official and virtual memberships, you can maximise impact despite being a small organisation. Through deciding to trust their audience the group benefitted from having an enthusiastic active support base. If mainstream political parties have the will and determination to apply elements of this model, they could benefit. Parties could merge the participation benefits of the new methods campaign with the information capacities of the traditional Facebook campaign. Given followership is the gateway to virtual membership parties should work tirelessly to generate and socialise followers. Parties should also be maximising the longevity of their pages through creating leader pages that can be transferred on. Theresa May for example was severely hampered through her low audience numbers despite the fact that David Cameron had accumulated 1.3 million Facebook followers by 2017. If parties applied this focus, we could see huge new reservoirs of activism being used for campaigns, with parties able to further harness the sociological power of Facebook.

Overall, this thesis offers insights into how campaign groups and parties should develop their campaign communications on Facebook. If parties worked harder to adopt more complex uses of Facebook, utilising these aspects coherently on top of their traditional campaigns, many of the issues plaguing political parties such as reduced membership or political disillusion would be diminished. Facebook used in the right way would allow for parties to be more connected to the public, national discussion and help make politics more representative and responsive.

8.6: Limitations, future work, and final thoughts

This thesis' has limitations; firstly, this work has suffered from a lack of data access or ability to match social media data with other sources. Secondly, given the vast scale of social media campaigning in the modern era, as exemplified by Janus-faced campaigning and the use of satellite pages, this thesis only covers the most important part of the visible Facebook iceberg. In future more joined up research is needed, allowing us to crowdsource analysis of the thousands of

pages that now make up the political Facebook eco-system. Finally, the third limitation this thesis has suffered from is in how to effectively capture Facebook content. Facebook campaigning must be understood with an appreciation of the wide way that parties can now campaign. So much has changed over the last decade, with analysis of Facebook as a two-dimensional entity a limited and incorrect approach. Future analysis must implement coding schemes that appreciate Facebook content as multifaceted and diverse, an approach that is vital for appreciating the impact Facebook is having on party campaigns.

The first major challenge this thesis has encountered has been the availability of data, with data access having shifted enormously over the last few years. This thesis used Netvizz, an open resource that has now been shut down. Originally replaced with no alternative, recently academic researchers with full positions in universities, can use Crowdtangle to access political page public data (like what Netvizz offered). However, although an improvement, access to the public, students or even salaried university researchers interested in non-political subjects, is not possible. Facebook content for researchers is vital given the influence and importance of the social network, but now Facebook's API is a closed system, threatening our knowledge of the world. How can people examine or question posts that are fake news, or appreciate whether a party has fulfilled the promises they made in the past; if they are hidden from view? Why are fields such as psychology and gender studies excluded from Crowdtangle? I studied Facebook data for my master's dissertation, without which I would not be writing these words. Now that avenue is closed for everyone. A new balance needs to be struck; we must open Facebook's data so we can better comprehend the platform. Facebook's mission statement is to "give people the power to build community and bring the world closer together"[103]. Currently the platform is failing its task. Through not helping to build a research community that can help fight the harms of social media and promote the good, Facebook themselves are helping those who wish to drive communities and our world apart. Facebook must take the challenge to become more transparent and not less so, helping to develop

[103]https://investor.fb.com/resources/default.aspx#:~:text=Founded%20in%202004%2C%20Facebook's%20mission,express%20what%20matters%20to%20them accessed 20/8/2020

core values at the heart of democracy, including information access and democratic accountability, rather than hinder them.

The second issue this research has had to deal with, has been in deciding what to analyse. Facebook is vast; the party pages studied within this thesis (albeit the most important) only make up the tip of a much larger iceberg. The changing nature of the platform and the massive complexity visible, is exemplified by my study of the targeted advertising campaign during the 2019 General Election. From the 1st to the 12th December 2019, I categorised 2481 political Facebook pages that sent adverts (excluding non-party-political pages such as those that promote voting) (Hotham, 2020)[104]. This huge number of advertisers signals the growing problem we have in understanding Facebook political campaigns. In 2010 we had party pages, by 2015 we had party, leader, local and MP pages, by 2017 this list included satellite campaigns, while by 2019 we saw the rise of 3rd party satellite actors. As discussed in Chapter 7, there is now a vast hidden iceberg of political pages on Facebook. Some satellite pages, such as fan pages or third-party advertising pages, are used in a clandestine manner, having closer relationships to parties than they allude too. This has become a large legalistic grey area for both organic campaigns and targeted advertising, it is vital that groups such as the Electoral Commission investigate. Figure 4 highlights how little of the political landscape this thesis has touched upon, although clearly the most important to analyse, there is still so much to be done to understand modern Facebook campaigns.

[104] Facebook is the centre of activity for this huge number of actors, in contrast Snapchat and Google saw more limited numbers, over the same period, only 9 political pages were advertising on Snapchat and only 12 political pages on Google/YouTube.

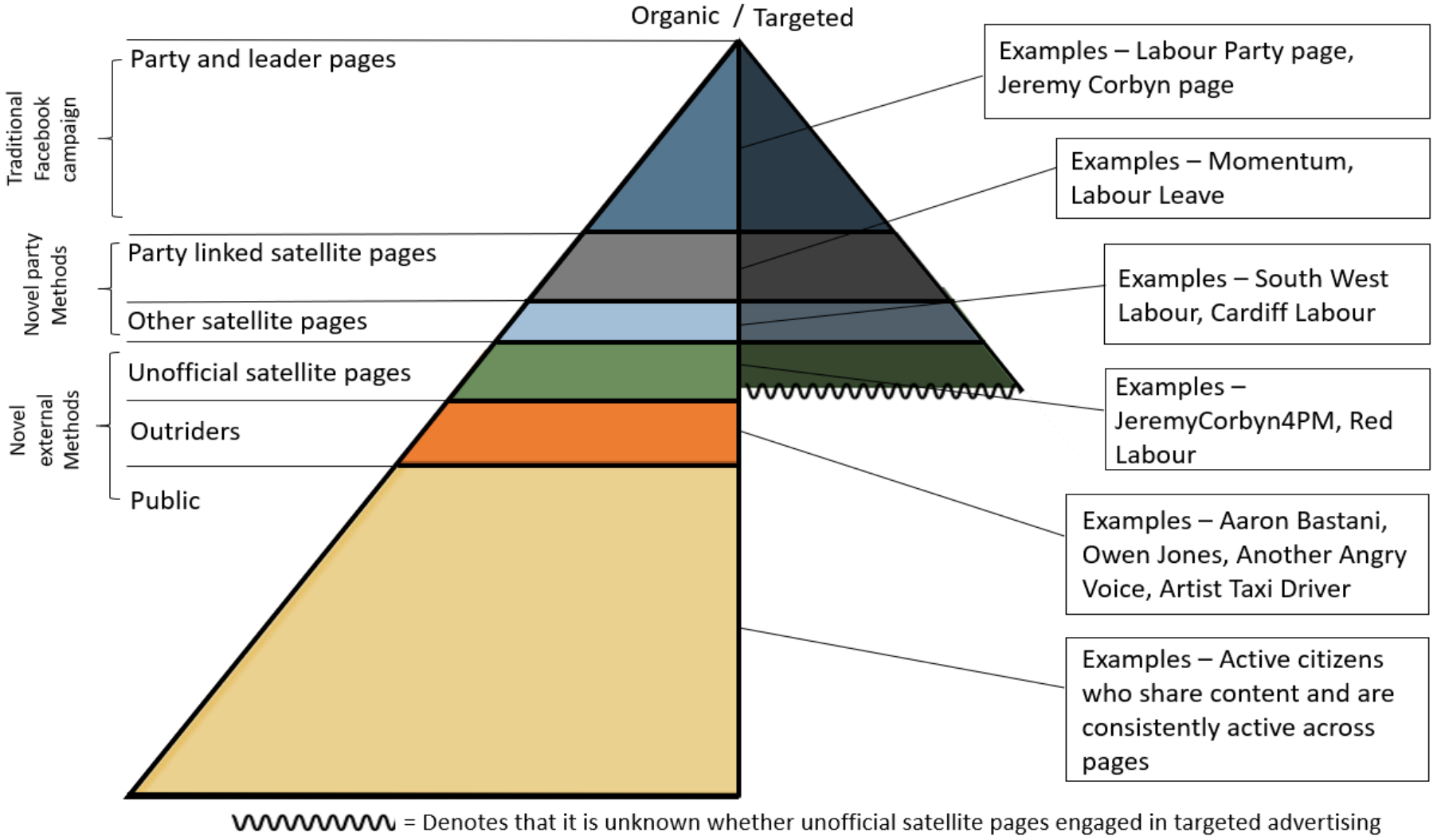


Figure 4. The tip of the iceberg, how parties use pages to campaign on Facebook, 2017 Labour Example

The third limitation this thesis has worked within, has been in how to capture Facebook content effectively. This thesis has used content analysis to capture how parties are now campaigning using social media, with a central focus on making sure codes are not mutually exclusive because Facebook content is not one-dimensional. This has led to some codes potentially double counting, a flaw that is counterweighted by the benefits of more accurately reflecting the complexity of modern campaign content. This new approach to content analysis is largely due to the rise of video content. Coding schemes and styles designed for the analysis of one- or two-dimensional content, such as posters, no longer pass muster for appreciating modern communications approaches. Future analysis must follow this thesis in implementing coding schemes that allow for the coding of multiple values. Hopefully future analysis will improve on this thesis' approach, as in developing a whole new coding approach, this thesis' scheme has missed some areas of pertinent analysis, as well as failed to effectively capture some complex aspects such as the use of valence issues.

Finally, is the issue of the data-science-ification of political research. Today it seems that political expertise is second order to data science abilities, with the study of social media a clear example. Already we can see many groups line up to utilise novel applications of machine learning and AI on social media data. However, due to content complexity and data access, we are already seeing a focus on text analysis, a system that will misrepresent or fail to accurately measure the content voters are sent. We are years away from effective automated approaches for the analysis of video content, thus we are in an important period where researchers must not get ahead of themselves. Although computer scientists have important and valuable skills, this thesis has always tried to bridge data with qualitative insights, because campaigning is as much of an art form as it is a science. As we move forwards towards the analysis of ever more complex forms of data, especially video, we must remember the importance of accurately capturing the media we consume. This is a vital key prior step to any complex statistical analysis.

In terms of future work, the research field could benefit from applying this analysis to the UK 2019 General Election. Further, a study of a wider band of satellite campaigns would help illuminate the scale of their role within a party campaign. The data gathered from this thesis could also be used to engage in a full comparison between targeted advertising content, alongside organic content. Through comparing information and participation elements, it would allow us to understand what targeted advertising is for within the wider campaign toolkit. Further, comparison of Facebook content with content sent via other campaign tools such as Twitter, is another avenue of worth. An analysis of this would allow us to appreciate audience and tactics across platforms. A longer frame analysis of UKIP and the Brexit campaign on Facebook is also warranted. It appears no accident that voters in the Red Wall broke away in such large numbers in 2019, the Conservatives in gaining this group found that the work was already done. For the last half decade, a huge cohort of voters have been primed through UKIP, the Brexit Party, Leave.eu and other Brexit pages. Through virtual members and large amounts of engagement, a small number of enthused activists primed a large cohort of voters, centrally through Facebook. A study of UKIP's engagement, audience and geography over the last decade may offer a glimpse into how smaller radical campaigns can have big influences through social media.

There are also ideas thrown up from the organic campaign and engagement. I am interested in the intersection of real-world networks and geography alongside online networks and digital geography; questioning how relations interpose with political campaigns. The nature of politics means that insular cores of supporters can form in enclaves with an inability to expand their influence networks. This can happen offline and online. Labour's national campaigning decline may show the party suffering from elements of this networked imprisonment. Labour's enclaved nature from their official and virtual members socio-demographic, geographical and cultural clustering, may be harming their communications abilities. Labour needs to work harder on diversifying where they campaign, as the 2017 General Election proves that when messages do break out, they can be extremely effective. There is even the theoretical possibility that certain socio-economic groups have wider access to

externalised networks. Social power offline may now be enhanced online by social media. For example, it is possible that those in the middle class have more powerful influences, thus we may be generating a new digital class system for political campaigns. Finally, the wider question of the impact of Facebook on vote choice, is a massively important question that needs analysing. It will take a long time to answer, given the complexity of study needed. However, I hope this thesis provides aid in understanding the delivery side of that great question.

Future work is also needed on where we draw the line in regulating targeted advertising. The nature of how campaigns operate is changing, with microtargeting allowing for new capacities for hyper local campaigning to small groups or even individuals. Although we are not there yet (as groups such as Cambridge Analytica overemphasise their abilities), campaigners clearly have greater abilities to target than ever before. Campaigns today no longer focus on Mondeo man or Worcester woman but on more refined groups of people. Although evidence of hyper-precise targeting is limited, a new zeitgeist of campaigning has dawned. Given technological change, abilities will soon be hyper-charged through AI and machine learning. For example, the ability to use GPT-3 to refine messages and research individual voters backgrounds instantly, will provide new abilities to match message and audience. Social media is thus entering a new era where research will be pivotal for reducing harms. However, it is often forgotten that targeted advertising can do clear good as well as harm, such as in getting people to vote or engage with politics. Thus, luddite calls for banning advertising is wrong, instead goals for regulation must be towards greater transparency, alongside proportionate regulations that limit harm.

As to Facebook and social media's broader impact on our politics. Social media networks are certainly creating new considerations for the operation and health of democracy. New worries are seen in the digital realisation of old threats, such as dis- and mis-information, engagement powered by divisiveness, astroturfers and fake news. While new threats such as bots and micro-personalised targeting, present questions for how we can protect key democratic processes. Given we are so early in the social media era and data access has been so limited, impacts are yet to be clearly seen. However, in the wake of the Cambridge Analytica scandal, a huge focus has been on the negative effects of

social media. Unfortunately, in the same way divisive content often gains more attention upon social media; in the news media stories of good are ignored for sensationalised stories of ill. This has created an incorrect vision of social media because platforms like Facebook act as mediators of democratic goods as well as ills. However, this incorrect framing goes further as the major core of social media's impact is being ignored. Edge cases are being focused upon, despite the reality being that much of what is occurring on- or via- social media is replicating what occurred before. This means that when it comes to studying platforms like Facebook, it is vital we develop a representative research agenda that appreciates the radical edges (fake news, misinformation, clandestine third parties) as well as the central core (parties traditional Facebook campaigns, peer-to-peer conversation). Social media networks encompass billions of human interactions, to ignore this reality and focus solely on nefarious activities not only distorts public understanding but also means we will struggle to demystify the true political impact of social media.

This thesis' title is; "How do political parties use Facebook and what does it offer to their campaigns?". Through this study it has been made apparent that Facebook offers fundamental change. Facebook has had a strong impact on party campaigns, because of the platforms' abilities for both novel as well as traditional approaches. Parties can utilise the appropriate avenues for the right audiences, with this flexibility central to Facebook's impact. Parties are thus engaged in multidimensional thinking as to how best use the opportunities the platform offers; with the studied period this thesis examines a decade of cautious experimentation. How the platform is used will clearly evolve further in future, as Facebook's ageing userbase, as well as new technology, adjusts best practice. There are challenges ahead for the platform, Facebook's UK userbase is now saturated and regulators are finally growing teeth. However, Facebook is clearly here to stay, with the platform likely to continue to dominate elections for decades. Nevertheless, like networks before it such as Myspace or Bebo, a time may well come where Facebook is overshadowed. Although Facebook may be replaced, the nature of the platform will live on. Facebook will never truly die, as its nature will live on through the network/s that replace it, because recreating users' real offline networks online will forever remain a powerful system.

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PEOPLE'S 'VAR' for BREXIT
OWN GOAL
BREXIT IS BORDERLINE INSANITY
WE ARE THE 52% NOW
SOURCE: YOUGOV
BREXIT SUCKS

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Appendix

10: Appendix

Appendix 1: Studying British politics and parties

2010 saw the use of Facebook as a background tool not a serious campaign tool. Cleggmania was the main theme of the 2010 General Election, with the parties having small presences on the platform. Social media use was similarly limited during the 2011 AV Referendum. However, by the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum, we had witnessed the first large-scale UK use of targeted advertising and organic campaigning on Facebook (Shephard & Quinlan, 2015). However, given the specific focus, it took the 2015 General Election to clearly identify this new system of Facebook campaigning in Britain. Over the 12 months before the election the parties spent £1.3m on social media, with the Electoral Commission estimating that 99% of this spending was on Facebook (Sabbagh, 2018). The Conservative Party used targeted Facebook adverts to reach marginal seats, reaching 80.6% of all Facebook users in key constituencies[105], while also being popular organically. In contrast, Labour almost entirely pursued organic Facebook popularity in conjunction with a '4 million doorstep conversations' campaign, an approach which failed to impact where it mattered. Neither Ed Miliband nor Labour's policy ideas generated large amounts of organic engagement, while given a lack of targeted advertising, the party failed to make an impact. As Andrew Cooper a Conservative peer tweeted after the election, 'big data, micro-targeting and social media campaigns just thrashed; "5 million conversations" and "community organizing"[106]. This election set the scene as Facebook was now unquestionably of central importance to modern British election campaigns.

The 2016 Brexit Referendum changed the narrative further. As an event, it was heavily defined by the huge role Facebook had both in organic and targeted campaigning. The Leave campaign finished what UKIP had started, as the campaign built upon a large group of voters who had become primed via

[105] Facebook Business page deleted https://www.facebook.com/business/success/conservative-party accessed 19/01/2015
[106] http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2015/07/does-canvassing-matter accessed 01/02/2018

Facebook. The Leave campaign managed to engage in powerful targeted advertising alongside generating huge organic popularity, while also smartly splitting itself into a more respectable Vote Leave campaign and a more virulent Leave.eu campaign. This approach allowed the campaign to use different narratives and adjust messaging online to different audiences. In contrast, the Remain campaign was behind consistently on Facebook, with tactics failing to break outside of certain pro-EU groups. Finally, post-referendum the Cambridge Analytica scandal broke. This shifted public opinion upon targeted advertising, however its most powerful ramification was in making many forget that the true power of social media is in organic campaigning.

By the 2017 General Election, the Conservatives were spending more on targeted advertising but were somewhat ignoring their organic campaign. In contrast, Corbyn a politician propelled to leadership via his radical viral social media presence and a new wave of anti-centrist members; successfully used organic popularity and new satellite organisations such as Momentum to reach out to new, old, and young voter groups. As well as spending more on adverts (£600,000), Labour benefitted from a viral organic campaign. Their posts generated huge amounts of reach in a manner unseen since UKIP or the Brexit Referendum. Momentum claim almost a quarter of all UK Facebook users (12.7 million people) viewed a Momentum video on Facebook in the last week of the campaign[107]. Labour pushed ideas, innovated and was not afraid to try new things. In contrast, the Conservatives stagnated, repeating their 2015 campaign but with a personalised over emphasis on a robotic Theresa May, targeted advertising, and single-message Brexit policy.

Inevitably things were set to change again by the 2019 General Election. The Conservatives had learnt their lesson and considerably innovated, the party paid much greater attention to organic engagement and on developing core policy ideas. The party through Boris Johnson now had a leader who attracted attention, although the party had learnt the limits of personalised campaigning (see Hotham, 2019). Brexit was talked about but so were other key issues such as policing and healthcare, while the party concentrated not only on targeted advertising but also organic engagement. In contrast, Labour suffered from

[107] https://www.ft.com/content/d1c854f0 accessed 14/01/2018

hubris failing to transform approach. Corbyn's popularity had stalled and the Brexit issue had caught up with the party. Labour's organic engagement was static from 2017 and their targeted advertising was lacklustre. An illustrative sign of their campaign's failure was that the party even reused content from 2017. Labour stagnated while the Conservative Party adapted, with the Conservatives reaching out successfully to Brexit voting Labour voters, as well as benefitting from Nigel Farage's Brexit Party. Overall, this last decade clearly shows the parties learning from mistakes and evolving best practice, but also failing to adapt to changing circumstances. Facebook is a volatile environment where approach does matter; engagement is not a given, campaign skill is rewarded, and complacency is punished.

Appendix 2: Literature review

Twitter

Andreas Jungherr undertook a thorough literature review of Twitter in 2016, within which he outlines that the literature centres on studies of usage, content analyses and participation. Evidence of usage shows that major opposition parties and candidates are more likely to use Twitter (Hemphill, Otterbacher, & Shapiro, 2013; Jaidka & Ahmed, 2015; Plotkowiak & Stanoevska-Slabeva, 2013). With it used to a larger extent by candidates of well-established major parties (Amirullah, Komp, & Nurhadryani, 2013; Evans, Cordova, & Sipole, 2014), incumbents (Evans et al., 2014) and those with high budgets (Peterson, 2009; Gilmore, 2012). Thus, whilst also utilised by non-mainstream parties and those in power, it has been found that Twitter is used significantly as an attacking tool to challenge existing government. Further to this, young urban politicians appear to be more likely to use the platform (Jackson & Lilleker, 2011; Vergeer & Hermans, 2013; Straus et al., 2013), with Twitter use found to correspond highly to electoral competition intensity (Vergeer & Hermans, 2013; Evans et al., 2014).

Interactivity on Twitter is found to be under used, with candidates from opposition parties tending to use Twitter in a more interactive way (Ahmed & Skoric, 2014; Bruns & Highfield, 2013; Jackson & Lilleker, 2011; Larsson &

Kalsnes, 2014). The ability to generate public interaction with candidates on Twitter is one of the unique and powerful elements of social media but is found to be relatively non-existent. This highlights the use of Twitter as a broadcast device (Golbeck et al., 2010; Evans et al., 2014; Kruikemeier, 2014), with interactions that do occur, found to be focused towards fellow politicians or journalists (Ahmed & Skoric, 2014; D'heer & Verdegem, 2014). This supports the idea of Twitter being a platform for the elite, with its propensity to be a news device and informational echo chamber (Adams & McCorkindale, 2013; Ahmed & Skoric, 2014; İkiz et al., 2014; Jaidka & Ahmed, 2015). It has been stated that some candidates do use Twitter to interact with normal users (Graham et al., 2013, 2016), however the literature provides little evidence of Twitter being used as campaign tool to generate dialogue between parties, candidate's and voters.

The other central focus of Twitter studies are content analyses, with evidence from many sources proposing the increased importance of personalisation (Evans et al., 2014; Kruikemeier, 2014). Concurrent to this importance of personalisation, it has been found that personalized messages have robust effects on voters "recognition, recall, feelings of social presence, and imagined intimacy" (Lee & Oh, 2012, p.3). Interestingly, given its propensity to send political information, GOTV or fund-raising posts have also been rarely seen in the literature (Ahmed & Skoric, 2014; Evans et al., 2014). However, the content forms of Twitter as a ~140-character medium is far reduced compared to Facebook, and posts are less enduring, with candidates valuing "Facebook over Twitter as a campaign tool given its larger audience reach" (Quinlan et al., 2018).

With regards to participation and voting, Dimitrova et al., evidenced that following candidates on Twitter is related to a slight upsurge in political learning, but gives no positive effects on political participation (Dimitrova, Shehata, Strömbäck, & Nord, 2014), whilst in Japan, evidence supporting this asserted that followers of a prominent candidate's Twitter feed showed an increased positive attitude toward that candidate, but exhibited no changes in their voting intentions (Kobayashi & Ichifuji, 2015). In contrast, Kruikemeier (2014), Spierings & Jacobs (2014) found a modest association between Twitter and the number of preference votes a candidate receives. Overall, the evidence of Twitters effect

on participation or voting is poor, with those examinations giving positive results suffering from a lack of causation evidence, whilst those with negative results may be highly correlated to external campaign factors. This constant issue of determining correlation or causation is highly problematic within all social media studies, given that use of social media by candidates is also highly correlated with other potentially effective campaigning methodologies[108].

Jungherr's review highlights the innate problem with the literature for any electoral connection between use of Twitter as a campaign tool and election results; "…no clear picture emerges regarding the connection between Twitter use, public attention on Twitter, and popularity or electoral chances. Some studies identify a link between Twitter use and electoral wins (LaMarre & Suzuki-Lambrecht, 2013) while others do not (Vergeer et al., 2011; Kobayashi & Ichifuji, 2015). In the same vein, some studies find links between the mentions political candidates or parties received on Twitter and their election results (DiGrazia et al., 2013; McKelvey, DiGrazia, & Rojas, 2014) while others do not (Jungherr, 2013; Murthy & Petto, 2014). Thus, if there is a relationship between Twitter use and electoral success, this seems to be an indirect one, highly dependent on the respective electoral context" (2014, p.4).

Twitter has use as an informational, news generation and communication tool, but has poor targeting and data capabilities, lacks real world representation of users, is less demographically representatively used, is more partisan, and is more nebulous in its network construction via its basis in interests not offline social networks. However, it is widely used by elites and news stations, is real time and interactive, making it useful to prime elites in the media or politics. Thus, as a campaign tool Twitter matters as it is useful in specific ways as a part of the social media toolkit, but its unique abilities are far outweighed by Facebook. However, the academic community has continually examined Twitter, whilst in contrast Facebook has seen far less academic interest, despite it being the largest and most powerful social media network within the UK.

[108] BES studies have shown that parties who campaign most intensively gain an electoral vote dividend (Denver et al., 2003; Fisher et al., 2011), with voters who are contacted by a party or a candidate showing a small but higher propensity to vote for that party than those who have not been contacted (Lilleker, 2005; Fisher et al., 2011).

Engagement forms

Engagement is the catch all term for users' total interactions with Facebook content delivered in the form of posts. Consisting of likes, shares and comments, Facebook users have been shown to engage with Facebook content for four main reasons. Due to subjective norms, where the behaviour of a user is influenced by the behaviour of others, engagement for social identity, engagement for entertainment and engagement for interpersonal connectivity (Oliveira et al., 2016; Goodwin et al., 2016).

Like

Liking is the act of a Facebook user clicking the 'like button' on a specific post sent by themselves or others. Added in February 2009, it is the simplest form of engagement on Facebook, it is therefore usually the most numerous. The action only requires one click and is a clear and quick act. However, Facebook in October 2015 added a new element to the like action, by allowing users to add character to their like interactions via a drop-down menu of 'reactions'. As an extension of the like button, the collection of reactions includes; Like, Love, Haha, Wow, Sad and Angry[109]. Thus, liking is not as pure an interaction form as it was before reactions were implemented, however the use of reactions in comparison to normal liking is minimal and thus is not problematic for this study, in fact the added detail from reactions allows for sentiment analysis of posts.

Understanding what a like means is highly problematic. Within a user's actions, it is unknown what a like means, however logically for the user it arguably displays some form of approval of the contents of a post, as it makes the liking of said content public. However, construing intent from someone hitting a button on Facebook is incalculable complex as one cannot know the influencing factors behind the action, including the time, age, gender, mood, personality, place, context, and people involved in the like (Bouchard et al., 2013;

[109] https://en.facebookbrand.com/assets/reactions accessed 1/2/2019

Krishnan & Atkin, 2014; Oliveira, Huertas, & Lin, 2016). However, despite complexity, the need to understand and quantifying what a 'like' means is becoming required, as the rise of fake news and the policing of social media has meant that ascribing likes tangible value is becoming important. Indeed, liking something can now have real world consequences; a Swiss court recently fined an individual 4,000 Swiss francs for liking a series of Facebook posts falsely accusing an animal rights activist of being a racist and fascist[110], viewing liking as an 'endorsement'. Contrastingly, in the United States there is a debate continuing, upon whether a 'like' is 'speech' and thus protected by the 1st Amendment, as seen in *Bland v. Roberts* in the United States[111] (see Sarapin & Morris, 2014). This new legal arena is one which requires further research as within the context of bots, fake news and anti-democratic trolls, a like is still arguably an unknown quantity.

Research has examined the factors behind liking, much of it rests within psychology. Psychological research has asserted that liking is used to express 'virtual empathy' or unity with a friend and their way of thinking (Mayshak et al., 2017), or to present a positive online image (Oliveira, Huertas, & Lin, 2016). Some studies have asserted personality factors as important to liking (Krishnan & Atkin, 2014), with one study (Kosinski, Stillwell & Graepel, 2013) asserting that liking is an action used to affirm something about ourselves. In their study of more than 58,000 US users who made their likes public, they found that likes could predict several identification traits that users had not disclosed. This included race with 95% accuracy, sexuality with 88% accuracy, and even identified participants as a Democrat or Republican with 85% accuracy. Thus, even subconsciously a user liking certain content will reveal themselves. It is therefore arguable that Facebook knows us very well just from our likes, and thus to content creators and those with access to the resultant data likes matter. Political parties if they have access to this data, have the capacity to hone content and target information to individuals that they do not even realise they will appreciate.

[110]http://money.cnn.com/2017/05/31/technology/facebook-like-defamation/switzerland.html
[111] In 2013, some employees at a Sheriff's department were fired after having liked the Facebook page of the sheriff's opponent before an election. The employees sued and first lost. They then won on appeal, with three-judges unanimously asserting that a like is speech and is therefore protected under the First Amendment.

The area requires further research, however for clarity this thesis asserts the innate complexity of a like, with likelihood being that a like is highly specific to an individual and their circumstances, and as such is incalculably difficult to determine intent. This thesis thus approaches its understanding of what a like is, and why it is actioned by users through its effects. As Facebook asserts; *"Clicking like below a post on Facebook is an easy way to let people know that you enjoy it… people will be able to see that you liked it… a story will be posted on your timeline that you liked it… and the person who posted the video will get a notification that you liked it"* (Facebook website, 2018[112]). What is thus clear, is that the act of liking a post, endorses the content, with the user happy for this act to be publicly visible within their ego network, or if on a public page post completely public. Similarly, Facebook's algorithm takes likes to mean that the post should be amplified, and shown to more people, meaning to Facebook a like is both an endorsement and a positive signal.

For users, liking is important as engagement is vital to the social media experience. As its *raison d'être,* engagement generally allows users to feel involved with the content parties send, campaign online, organise and debate with others. Whilst, through liking, a user (but to a lesser extent than sharing) becomes an opinion leader. For political parties liking is important as users liking a party's posts increases the posts reach to other users, especially those liking users' friends on Facebook. This allows some capacity for the post to reach out of its follower base, into ego-networks less associated with the page. Likes also increase Facebook reach without the user inputting their own contributions or changing the message (unlike with sharing), helping parties maintain positive interactions (unlike with comments) and develop a wider view of their content being worthy of users' time.

Share

The other foremost form of Facebook post engagement is *sharing*[113]. Through one click, a user will replicate the post on their own personal Facebook

[112] https://www.facebook.com/help/like accessed 1/2/2019

[113] Related to sharing is the capacity for *tagging*, this is where a user upon a post can 'tag' one or multiple friends or pages, this has the effect of alerting the tagged user to the content. This

page, this will then be placed (owing to the algorithm) within their own circle of friends via the news feed. The share function thus allows users to become arbitrators of other pages content, acting as what Bruns and Highfield (2012) call “produsers”, as gatekeepers for others (Sundar & Nass, 2001). Sharing consequently opens new interaction channels for the post in the user’s own ego-network, opening the capacity for the content to be further liked, shared and commented upon through a multi-step flow of communication. The shared post will be semi-detached from its original context meaning that the new audience may respond differently to the content, as the new post will only be seen within their own and the sharer’s ego-networks, and be associated with a user’s profile and opinion, not a political page. In questioning what a share means, a share (similar to a like) potentially shows approval given the user is replicating the content of a post, however the context that this share is placed within is important. People can share content they disagree with and include their own views. What is clear to this thesis, is that sharing a post shows that a user is happy for the content they have shared to be public within their ego-network, and for their action to be viewed publicly on the original post.

For users, sharing is a powerful tool allowing users to act as opinion leaders and disseminate information they agree or disagree with. Research highlights that the same reasons exist for sharing as liking, however given its function is different, research has emphasised the greater empowering effect of sharing (Stavrositu & Sundar, 2012). This is because, sharers can take information and recast it making it personally relevant to their ego network, this includes reframing the content in positive, negative or neutral lights. However, the shares key power lies in its capacity to open new interaction channels, making it as the most powerful type of interaction occurrent on Facebook.

For parties generating shares is critical as it is the most important device of virality, allowing content to be sent at different levels. Sharing is also a vital function within Facebook, but also without. Sharing has become important to the whole internet ecosystem, with Facebook shares one of the leading referrers to news sites, and other websites through links (Hopkins, 2010; as cited in Baresch,

process does not replicate the content on the user’s own page but can mean the content is placed upon the newsfeed for others to view.

Knight, Harp, & Yaschur, 2011). Sharing also improves organic reach, as the reach usually attained is via a page's followers and the number of likes posts receive. This is problematic as the content will often remain isolated to those individuals who are already interested agents. Instead, shares can open political content into new ego-networks as the posts can cascade through different networks. This is also important as it reduces the party-political element of the message, instead enhancing the personalised aspect of the sharers opinion and personality. This arguably enhances the message as it is socially mediated, with social mediation through friends a key tenet of Facebooks approach to targeted advertisements[114]. However, for parties, sharing is not a purely neutral tool of transmission, meaning the capacity for negative transmission is just as powerful. Overall, for parties, sharing is imperative as it; spreads their messages more widely, engages more users with political content, and delivers more widely the information and effects contained within their posts.

Comment

Commenting is an integral element of the social nature of Facebook. However, within the political arena, content that is controversial generally attracts the greatest number of comments. This is inherent given human nature, but the capacity for debate on Facebook is part of the user experience, although the recent rise in trolling and threats across social media, has led to new questions as to how people should act on social media.

It is difficult to define what commenting means given the subjective nature of comments and their variety. As they have no collective meaning, this thesis understands comments through an appreciation that they show a user's engagement with the content provided, whether positive or negative. The effect of a comment however is clearer, a post with large numbers of comments is promoted by Facebook's algorithm, meaning the post may be seen by the members of the commenting user's ego-network via their News Feeds. This

[114] 86.9% of all ads served by the Conservative Party Page during the 2015 General Election had a social context, that means that when advertised the post featured a user's friends in the title. This was via the form "*Joe Bloggs* likes the Conservatives", with the message contents then following. This means that 13.1% of those targeted-on Facebook by the Conservatives, had no Conservative party followers within their friend network.

makes the original post commented upon visible and ‘reactable’ to their Facebook friends. Nevertheless, a comment does not open a new interaction channel outside of the original post but rather does so within the post, within an internal network where comments can receive likes, reactions and replies. This leads to a situation when viewing posts that one can view the most ‘liked’ comments first, or by date. Thus, the internal commenting network is important to parties as negative comments with large numbers of likes will be visible directly beneath their content, this is something both major parties have suffered from enormously.

For users, commenting inherently enables the utmost self-presentation and interaction with the content, as under a post, users can express their personal opinions, offer support, link in friends via tagging, post links, spread memes and images, question the content or the author of the post, and interact with other users within a cascading comment network. Comments allow a fuller level of interaction in comparison to other engagement forms, as a user can post infinite numbers of posts and use their own words. For parties, every single comment raises the chance of visibility, so a heated debate between users under the post can be useful in terms of information dissemination, even if there is negativity. However, as it is not a neutral transmitter often negative or humorous comments are the most influential, frequently ending up as the most liked posts. However, parties can delete comments and ban users from their pages, but these actions claim additional resources and may entail harmful consequences, and as such is not actioned often. Similarly, Facebook removes comments that break the community guidelines, for actions such as racism and threats of violence. Overall, for parties commenting is useful as it; allows for two-way discourse with voters, games to algorithm to spread their messages more widely, and engages more users with political content via debate. However, in comparison to other engagement forms, it is the mode they would lose first.

Alashri et al. (2016), examined comments in relation to content. In examining 12,050,595 Facebook comments posted on candidates posts during the 2016 US Presidential Elections, “commentators on Republican candidate pages expressed negative sentiments toward current public policies…, whilst commentators on Democrat candidate pages were more likely to express

support for the continuation… of existing policies" (Alashri et al., 2016, p.795). Interestingly however "the significance (strong/weak) and nature (positive/negative) of sentiment varied between candidates within political parties based on perceived credibility of the candidate on a given issue" (Alashri et al., 2016, p.795), highlighting how the offline world influences online interaction. A similar study by Babac & Vedran (2017) of the 2015 Croatian General Election also found that "messages with positive emotions evocate positive comment responses from citizens, while neutral content is more likely to invoke negative comments and criticism" (Babac & Vedran, 2017, p.2). Recently Moody-Ramirez & Church (2019) examined Facebook meme groups during the 2016 Presidential election finding that meme pages popular content was negative content informed by political and gender differences.

Appendix 3: Typology coding scheme

Qualitative content analysis coding scheme for datasets 2 & 3

Main theme	Subcateg	Theme	Sub	Specific Code	Code count
Count = 5	Count = 13	Count = 51	Count = 4	Count = 882	Count = 882
Content	**Topic**	**Primary / Secondary / Third Topic**		CNT - EU CNT - Austerity CNT - Manifesto CNT - Immigration CNT - Young People CNT - Old People CNT - Healthcare CNT - Foreign Policy CNT - Leadership CNT - Defence CNT - Education CNT - Transport CNT - Social Care / benefits CNT - Housing CNT - Policing CNT - Energy CNT - Environment CNT - Security CNT - Economy + Taxation CNT - Social Justice CNT - Workers Rights CNT - Benefits CNT - Campaigner Praise CNT - Participation/GOTV CNT - Religion CNT - A - Political CNT - Disabled CNT - Football CNT - Human Rights CNT - Vote CNT - Join CNT - Farming CNT - Parliamentary change CNT - Patriotism CNT - Women CNT - Local candidate CNT - Homeless CNT - LGBT CNT – Anti-Right CNT – Insider Information CNT – Racism CNT – Party Reform	Total 42 variables across 3 levels = 126
		Agenda		CNT - AS Least utilised topic (total) CNT - AS Topic agenda specificity CNT - AS Agenda frequency CNT - AS Agenda introduced	4
		Key words		CNT – Key words average per post CNT – Individual words - See list in Appendix	158

		Agenda setting		FRAME - ASF Political Information FRAME - ASF Pledge FRAME - ASF Diagnosis FRAME - ASF Negative problem is defined FRAME - ASF Positive success is defined FRAME - ASF Prognosis (forecast) FRAME - ASF Positive How we will solve problem FRAME - ASF Negative How problem won't be solved FRAME - ASF Motivation FRAME - ASF Why we should solve this problem is defined (ideology) FRAME - ASF Why we solved this problem is defined (ideology)	11
	Personalisation	**Leadership**		MOB - PARTY Leadership positive TOTAL MOB - PARTY Praise of Leader MOB - PARTY Praise of former Leader	3
		Leadership		MOB - PARTY Leadership negative TOTAL MOB - PARTY Negative appraisal of opposition Leader MOB - PARTY Negative appraisal of former Leader PERS - PERSO Attack on leader	4
		Party positive		MOB - PARTY Positive TOTAL MOB - PARTY Praise of party members MOB - PARTY Praise of party campaigners MOB - PARTY Praise of party MP PERS - PERSO Use of party politician in text PERS - PERSO Use of party politician in video PERS - PERSO Use of party politician in imagery (non - video	7
		Party Negative		MOB - PARTY Negative TOTAL MOB - PARTY Negative appraisal of opposition party members MOB - PARTY Negative appraisal of opposition MP's MOB - PARTY Negative appraisal of opposition party campaigners MOB - PARTY Negative appraisal of opposition party PERS - PERSO Use of opposition party politician in text PERS - PERSO Use of opposition party politician in video PERS - PERSO Use of opposition party politician in imagery (non - video)	8
		Personal Language positive	Personalised language	PERS - PERSO - LANG Personalisation in text TOTAL PERS - PERSO - LANG Uses I PERS - PERSO - LANG Uses My PERS - PERSO - LANG Uses Me PERS - PERSO - LANG Uses Mine PERS - PERSO - LANG Uses Our PERS - PERSO - LANG Uses Ours PERS - PERSO - LANG Uses Us PERS - PERSO - LANG Uses We PERS - PERSO - LANG Uses You PERS - PERSO - LANG Uses Your PERS - PERSO - LANG Uses You're PERS - PERSO - LANG Uses They PERS - PERSO - LANG Uses Them PERS - PERSO - LANG Uses Their PERS - PERSO First person language	16
			Humour	PERS - HUM Persuasion Humour TOTAL PERS - HUM Use of humour PERS - HUM Use of meme humour PERS - HUM Use of general humour - a-political PERS - HUM Use of political humour	5

			Rhetoric	PERS - T Persuasion Tone TOTAL of (Formal language, Informal language, Mixed language, Use of colloquialisms, Content mainly rhetorical not factual). PERS - T Formal language PERS - T Informal language PERS - T Mixed language PERS - T Use of colloquialisms PERS - T Content mainly rhetorical not factual PERS - LANG - RHE Persuasion - Rhetoric - Language – TOTAL of (Use of rhetorical devices, Use of repetition, Use of us v them rhetoric, Use of metaphors, Use of three - part list, Use of Party catch phrase, Use of Labelling of group identity, Use of Patriotism/nationalism/patriotic imagery) PERS - LANG - RHE Use of rhetorical devices PERS - LANG - RHE Use of repetition PERS - LANG - RHE Use of us v them rhetoric PERS - LANG - RHE Use of metaphors PERS - LANG - RHE Use of three - part list PERS - LANG - RHE Use of Party catch phrase PERS - LANG - RHE Use of Labelling of group identity PERS - LANG - RHE Use of Patriotism/nationalism/patriotic imagery PERS - PERSO Use of patriotic imagery	16
			Personalised forms	PERS - Personal Language positive Personalised forms TOTAL PERS - HUM Cuteness usage puppies/babies/children PERS - PERSO Post is positively personalised PERS - PERSO Use of party leader in imagery (non - video) PERS - PERSO Use of party leader in video PERS - PERSO Personal message (thoughts etc - not a political issue) PERS - PERSO Use of party leader in text PERS - PERSO Use of politician family PERS - PERSO Non - political personal public story PERS - PERSO Non - political personal expert story PERS - PERSO Use of a - political personal information and interests	11
		Personal	Personalised	PERS - Personal Language negative Personalised forms Total PERS - PERSO Post is negatively personalised PERS - PERSO Use of opposition leader in imagery (non - video) PERS - PERSO Use of opposition leader in video PERS - PERSO Use of opposition leader in text	5
		Celebrity		PERS – Celebrity TOTAL of (Use of male and female celebrity) PERS - PERSO Use of male celebrity PERS - PERSO Use of female celebrity INF - TBE celeb endorsement	4
	Targeting	**Demographics**		PERS - TAR - All ages PERS - TAR - Message target Ages TOTAL (Young people, Middle aged People, Old People) PERS - TAR - Young people PERS - TAR - Middle aged people PERS - TAR - Old people PERS - TAR - Message target Groups TOTAL PERS - TAR - Minority voters PERS - TAR - Parents PERS - TAR - Women PERS - TAR - Men PERS - TAR - LGBTQ PERS - TAR - Disabled people PERS - TAR - Class lower PERS - TAR - Class middle PERS - TAR - Class upper PERS - TAR - Ethnicity Black PERS - TAR - Ethnicity Asian	17
		Party		PERS - TAR - Party Members	1

		Nationality		PERS - TAR - Sub nations (NI, SCO, WAL) PERS - TAR - Sub nations ENG PERS - TAR - Sub nations NI PERS - TAR - Sub nations SCO PERS - TAR - Sub nations WAL	5
		Regionality		PERS - TAR - Londoner's PERS - TAR - Northerner's PERS - TAR - Southerner's PERS - TAR - Midlander's PERS - TAR - Regions TOTAL (NE, NW, SE, SW, EM, WM, LON) PERS - TAR - Regions NE PERS - TAR - Regions NW PERS - TAR - Regions SE PERS - TAR - Regions SW PERS - TAR - Regions EM PERS - TAR - Regions WM PERS - TAR - Regions LON PERS - TAR - All locations PERS - TAR - Rural voters PERS - TAR - City voters PERS - TAR - Suburban voters	16
	Content form	Text only		PERS - CNT FRM Text TOTAL PERS - CNT FRM Is text only PERS - CNT FRM Is Text only image	3
		Video		PERS - CNT FRM Video TOTAL PERS - CNT FRM Is video Uses content from mainstream media PERS - CNT FRM Is video Uses content from alternative media PERS - CNT FRM Video is alternated opposition PEB PERS - CNT FRM Video is PEB PERS - CNT FRM Is Infographic video PERS - CNT FRM Is meme PERS - CNT FRM Is FB Live Video PERS - CNT FRM Is YouTube video	9
		Link and		PERS - CNT FRM Is link EX	1
		Image		PERS - CNT FRM Image TOTAL PERS - CNT FRM Is newspaper frontpage PERS - CNT FRM Is Image PERS - CNT FRM Is image collection PERS - CNT FRM Is poster PERS - CNT FRM Is Infographic PERS - CNT FRM Is meme	7
		Facebook		CNT - FORM type	1
		Other		PERS - CNT FRM Is Audio PERS - CNT FRM Image defunct	2

Framing	**Legitimacy**	**Positive**		INF - TBE Positive Expertise TOTAL INF - TBE positive use of non - political expert INF - TBE positive use of party - political expert INF - TBE polling	44
		Negative		INF - TBE Negative Expertise TOTAL INF - TBE negative use of non - political expert INF - TBE negative use of party - political expert	3
		Lateral		FRAME - LLL Legitimacy Lateral linkage TOTAL FRAME - LLL Link to Facebook page party FRAME - LLL Link to Facebook page other FRAME - LLL Link to Facebook page opposition FRAME - LLL Link to Facebook webpage news – mainstream FRAME - LLL Link to Facebook webpage news - alternative	6
		Positive		FRAME - LLL Positive Legitimacy Lateral linkage FRAME - LLL Link to Facebook page party FRAME - LLL Link to Facebook page other FRAME - LLL Link to Facebook page opposition FRAME - LLL Link to Facebook webpage news – mainstream FRAME - LLL Link to Facebook webpage news - alternative	6
		Negative		FRAME - LLL Negative Legitimacy Lateral linkage TOTAL FRAME - LLL Link to Facebook page party FRAME - LLL Link to Facebook page other FRAME - LLL Link to Facebook page opposition FRAME - LLL Link to Facebook webpage news – mainstream FRAME - LLL Link to Facebook webpage news - alternative	6
		Positive External		INF - TBE positive use of external newspaper source INF - TBE positive use of external newspaper source via link INF - TBE positive use of magazine INF - TBE positive use of mainstream media INF - TBE positive use of alternative media INF - TBE media endorsement INF - TBE business endorsement INF - TBE celeb endorsement	9
		Negative		INF - TBE Negative External Legitimacy TOTAL INF - TBE negative use of external newspaper source INF - TBE negative use of external newspaper source via link INF - TBE negative use of magazine INF - TBE negative use of mainstream media INF - TBE negative use of alternative media	6
		Reissue		FRAME - R Use of external content within altered context – e.g. Tv interviews cut and edited – reframed to political party TOTAL FRAME - R Positive use of external content within altered context FRAME - R Negative use of external content within altered context	3
		External		PERS - PERSO Use of general public's voice PERS – PERSO Attack media	2
		External		FRAME - LEL Legitimacy External Social TOTAL FRAME - LEL Link to social media Twitter FRAME - LEL Link to social media Instagram FRAME - LEL Link to social media YouTube FRAME - LEL Use of hashtag	5
		External		FRAME - LEL Link to external webpage party	1

		External		FRAME - LEL Link to external webpage other FRAME - LEL Link to external webpage news – mainstream FRAME - ASF Link to external webpage news - alternative	3
	Agenda Setting	Orientation - Issue		INF - PI Political Information Issues TOTAL of (positive valance issue, negative valance issue, position issue, position issue) INF - PI positive valance issue INF - PI negative valance issue INF - PI positive position issue INF - PI negative position issue INF - PI Political Information TOTAL of (features political information, positive political information, negative political information) INF - PI features political information INF - PI positive political information INF - PI negative political information INF - PI features policy detail	10
		Orientation		FRAME - O Orientation National TOTAL FRAME - O National orientation (UK) FRAME - O Sub national orientation (England, wales, NI, Scotland FRAME - O Local orientation (sub national regional, town, city, region, county	4
		Orientation -		FRAME - O Positive orientation (praise, pride, success reporting, transfer to something) (only for political content FRAME - O Negative orientation (criticism, attack, regret) (only for political content FRAME - O Neutral Political orientation FRAME - O More negative than positive (primary focus)	4
		Orientation - scale		FRAME - MS - Message Scale FRAME - MS Post word count short - under 25 FRAME - MS Post word count medium - 25 - 100 FRAME - MS Post word count long - over 100 FRAME - MS Post word count long - over 200 FRAME - MS Post word count long - over 400 CNT - No. Words NUM - Video length FRAME - MS Video length - short - under 1 min FRAME - MS Video length - medium - 1 min - 3 mins FRAME - MS Video length - long over 3 mins	11
		Orientation - timing		FRAME - TQ post_published_sql FRAME - TQ Is Day or Night FRAME - TQ Is morning FRAME - TQ Is Afternoon FRAME - TQ Is Evening FRAME - TQ Post 6am - 9am FRAME - TQ 9am - 12pm FRAME - TQ 12pm - 3pm FRAME - TQ 3pm - 6pm FRAME - TQ 6pm - 9pm FRAME - TQ 9am - 12am FRAME - TQ 12 - 6am DATE - post_published DATE - pos DATE - Day DATE - Year DATE - Month DATE - Days to GE day DATE - post_published_unix	19

Trust Building	**Trust Building in non - text**	**Positive Trust Building in non - text element**		INF - TBR Trust Building Representation (Non - text) TOTAL INF - TBR Use of relevant public worker to issue raised e.g. nurse INF - TBR Use of non - political ordinary public INF - TBR Use of minority non - political ordinary public INF - TBR Use of ordinary party members INF - TBR Use of minority ordinary party members INF - TBR Use of male politician of same party INF - TBR Use of Female politician of same party INF - TBR Use of female issue INF - TBR Use of minority politician of same party INF - TBR Use of minority issue INF - TBR Use of religion - Christianity INF - TBR Use of religion - Islam INF - TBR Use of religion - Hinduism INF - TBR Use of religion - Sikhism INF - TBR Use of religion - Judaism INF - TBR Use of LGBT politician INF - TBR Use of LGBT people INF - TBR Use of LGBT issue INF - TBR Use of Disabled politician INF - TBR Use of Disabled people INF - TBR Use of Disabled issue INF - TBR Use of old people INF - TBR Use of old people issue INF - TBR Use of young people INF - TBR Use of young people issue INF - TBR Use of middle - aged people INF - TBR Use of middle - aged people issue INF - TBR Use of children INF - TBR Use of child issue	30
		Negative Tru		As above	30
		Neutral Trust		As above	30

	Trust Building in text	Positive Trust Building in text		INF - TBR Representation in text TOTAL INF - TBR Use of relevant public worker to issue raised e.g. nurse INF - TBR Use of non - political ordinary public INF - TBR Use of minority non - political ordinary public INF - TBR Use of ordinary party members INF - TBR Use of minority ordinary party members INF - TBR Use of male politician of same party INF - TBR Use of Female politician of same party INF - TBR Use of female issue INF - TBR Use of minority politician of same party INF - TBR Use of minority issue INF - TBR Use of religion - Christianity INF - TBR Use of religion - Islam INF - TBR Use of religion - Hinduism INF - TBR Use of religion - Sikhism INF - TBR Use of religion - Judaism INF - TBR Use of LGBT politician INF - TBR Use of LGBT people INF - TBR Use of LGBT issue INF - TBR Use of Disabled politician INF - TBR Use of Disabled people INF - TBR Use of Disabled issue INF - TBR Use of old people INF - TBR Use of old people issue INF - TBR Use of young people INF - TBR Use of young people issue INF - TBR Use of middle - aged people INF - TBR Use of middle - aged people issue INF - TBR Use of children INF - TBR Use of child issue	30
		Negative		As above	30
		Neutral Trust		As above	30
Mobilisation	Mobilisation	General		MOB - Mobilisation Organisation TOTAL MOB - ORG Organisation TOTAL of Organisation Internal and External MOB - ORG Community building internal core – TOTAL of Organisation Internal Online Organisation – Partisanship, participation online, participation offline and Interactivity. MOB - ORG Community building external core - TOTAL of Organisation Internal Online Organisation – Participation online, participation offline, data gathering and Interactivity.	**4**
	Organisation internal	Partisanship		MOB - PARTY Partisanship TOTAL MOB - PARTY Praise of party members MOB - PARTY Praise of party campaigners MOB - PARTY Praise of party MP MOB - PARTY Praise of Leader MOB - PARTY Praise of former Leader MOB - PARTY Negative appraisal of former Leader MOB - PARTY Negative appraisal of opposition party members MOB - PARTY Negative appraisal of opposition MP's MOB - PARTY Negative appraisal of opposition party campaigners MOB - PARTY Negative appraisal of opposition Leader MOB - PARTY Negative appraisal of opposition party MOB - PARTY Internal partisanship – negative appraisal of internal opposition	**12**

		Participation Online		MOB - PAR - INT ONLINE Core support Participation internal ONLINE TOTAL MOB - PAR - INT ONLINE Register to vote MOB - PAR - INT ONLINE Sign up to campaign MOB - PAR - INT ONLINE Visit party website MOB - PAR - INT ONLINE Poll MOB - PAR - INT ONLINE Visit another website MOB - PAR - INT ONLINE Visit other social media MOB - PAR - INT ONLINE Sign petition MOB - PAR - INT ONLINE Share content to network MOB - PAR - INT ONLINE Visit campaign page MOB - PAR - INT ONLINE Funding MOB - PAR - INT ONLINE Shop MOB - PAR - INT ONLINE Talk to friends' family MOB - PAR - INT ONLINE Profile pic change	**14**
		Participation		MOB - ORG - INT - OFFLINE Core support Participation internal OFFLINE TOTAL MOB - ORG - INT - OFFLINE Visit hustings MOB - ORG - INT - OFFLINE Visit event MOB - ORG - INT - OFFLINE Help doorstep campaign MOB - ORG - INT - OFFLINE Attend rally MOB - ORG - INT - OFFLINE Attend demonstration/protest MOB - ORG - INT - OFFLINE Volunteer MOB - ORG - INT - OFFLINE Talk to friends' family	**8**
		Interactivity		MOB - ACTIVE Interactivity TOTAL MOB - ACTIVE Call to Like MOB - ACTIVE Call to Share MOB - ACTIVE Call to Comment MOB - ACTIVE Call to tag friends MOB - ACTIVE Call to visit party website MOB - ACTIVE Call to visit another website MOB - ACTIVE Call to join/visit other medium MOB - ACTIVE Call to join/visit Other social media MOB - ACTIVE Use of question to the audience? MOB - ACTIVE GOTV MOB - ACTIVE Call for vote MOB - ACTIVE Call to share I'm voting message	**13**
	Organisation external	**Participation Online**		MOB - ORG - EXT Non - core support Organisation External Participation ONLINE TOTAL MOB - ORG - EXT - ONLINE Join party MOB - ORG - EXT - ONLINE Register to vote MOB - ORG - EXT - ONLINE Sign up to campaign MOB - ORG - EXT - ONLINE Visit party website MOB - ORG - EXT - ONLINE Poll MOB - ORG - EXT - ONLINE Visit another website MOB - ORG - EXT - ONLINE Visit other social media MOB - ORG - EXT - ONLINE Sign petition MOB - ORG - EXT - ONLINE Share content to network MOB - ORG - EXT - ONLINE Engage with content, like comment MOB - ORG - EXT - ONLINE Visit campaign page MOB - ORG - EXT - ONLINE Funding MOB - ORG - EXT - ONLINE Shop MOB - ORG - EXT - ONLINE - Talk to friends' family	**15**
		Participation Offline		MOB - ORG - EXT Non - core support Organisation External Participation OFFLINE TOTAL MOB - ORG - EXT - OFFLINE Call for vote MOB - ORG - EXT - OFFLINE Join party MOB - ORG - EXT - OFFLINE Register to vote MOB - ORG - EXT - OFFLINE Visit hustings MOB - ORG - EXT - OFFLINE Visit event MOB - ORG - EXT - OFFLINE Help doorstep campaign MOB - ORG - EXT - OFFLINE Attend rally MOB - ORG - EXT - OFFLINE Attend demonstration/protest MOB - ORG - EXT - OFFLINE Volunteer MOB - ORG - EXT - OFFLINE Talk to friends' family	**11**

		Participation – data		MOB - ORG - EXT - ONLINE DATA - Data gathering TOTAL MOB - ORG - EXT - ONLINE DATA - Give data to party website MOB - ORG - EXT - ONLINE DATA - Give email address MOB - ORG - EXT - ONLINE DATA - Give name MOB - ORG - EXT - ONLINE DATA - Give location MOB - ORG - EXT - ONLINE DATA - Give phone MOB - ORG - EXT - ONLINE DATA - Facebook data CNT - Explicit data gatherer	**8**
		Interactivity		MOB - ACTIVE Interactivity TOTAL MOB - ACTIVE Call to Like MOB - ACTIVE Call to Share MOB - ACTIVE Call to Comment MOB - ACTIVE Call to tag friends MOB - ACTIVE Call to visit party website MOB - ACTIVE Call to visit another website MOB - ACTIVE Call to join/visit other medium MOB - ACTIVE Call to join/visit Other social media MOB - ACTIVE Use of question to the audience? MOB - ACTIVE GOTV MOB - ACTIVE Call for vote MOB - ACTIVE Call to share I'm voting message	**13**
Numbers	**Post related**	**Engagement**		NUM - Total engagement - engagement_fb TOTAL NUM - Likes - likes_count_fb NUM - Comments - comments_count_fb NUM - Shares - shares_count_fb NUM - Reactions – TOTAL (love, haha, wow, sad, angry, thankful) NUM - Love - rea_LOVE NUM - Haha - rea_HAHA NUM - Wow - rea_WOW NUM - Sad - rea_SAD NUM - Angry - rea_ANGRY NUM - Thankful - rea_THANKFUL NUM - Video views NUM - Video length NUM - Video views from specific post NUM - Video views of video total NUM - No. of times video posted	**16**
	Control			CNTRL - Weighted activity score DATE - Days to GE day CNTRL - Terrorism response CNTRL - Deaths in Med CNTRL - Is reshare from another FB page CNTRL - Post no.	**6**

Reformed topic coding scheme for simplified analysis

Given the original coding scheme includes many topics of content, to engage in a more concise analysis the codes have been grouped into thematic areas. The original 37 variables were merged into 12.

New code	Code formulated from
Economy	Economy / Taxation
	Workers' Rights
	Transport
	Farming
	Austerity
	Housing
Protection	Foreign Policy
	Security
	Defence
	Policing
	Human Rights
Social care	Healthcare
	Social Care
	Social Justice
	Benefits
	Homeless
Young people	Young People
Government practise	Parliamentary Change
Environment and energy	Energy
	Environment
Party action and identity	Campaigner Praise
	Join
	Local Candidate
	Football
	Manifesto
	Participation
	Vote
	Patriotism
	Religion
Leadership	Leadership
Social identity	Women
	Old People
	Disabled
Education	Education
Apolitical	Apolitical
Immigration	Immigration
European Union	EU

Appendix 4: Krippendorf testing

Krippendorf's Alpha intra-coder data for 205 variables.

	Percent Agreement	Cohen's Kappa	Krippendorf's Alpha
INF - PI positive position issue	80	0.55	0.55
INF - PI negative position issue	82	0.64	0.64
INF - PI features political information	84	0.66	0.66
INF - PI positive political information	57	0.10	-0.03
INF - PI negative political information	77	0.47	0.47
INF - PI features policy detail	87	0.73	0.73
INF - TBE positive use of non-political expert	99	0.90	0.90
INF - TBE negative use of non-political expert	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBE positive use of party political expert	99	0.88	0.88
INF - TBE negative use of party political expert	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBE positive use of external newspaper source	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBE negative use of external newspaper source	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBE positive use of external newspaper source via link	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBE negative use of external newspaper source via link	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBE positive use of magazine	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBE negative use of magazine	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBE positive use of mainstream media	99	0.92	0.92
INF - TBE negative use of mainstream media	95	0.68	0.68
INF - TBE positive use of alternative media	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBE negative use of alternative media	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBE media endorsement	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBE celeb endorsement	98	0.85	0.85
INF - TBE business endorsement	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of relevant public worker to issue raised e.g nurse	95	0.79	0.79
INF - TBR Use of non-political ordinary public	95	0.89	0.89
INF - TBR Use of minority non-political ordinary public	95	0.81	0.81
INF - TBR Use of ordinary party members	98	0.89	0.89

INF - TBR Use of minority ordinary party members	99	0.93	0.93
INF - TBR Use of male politician of same party	98	0.86	0.86
INF - TBR Use of Female politician of same party	98	0.79	0.79
INF - TBR Use of female issue	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of minority politician of same party	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of minority issue	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of religion - Christianity	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of religion - Islam	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of religion - Hinduism	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of religion - Sikhism	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of religion - Judaism	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of LGBT politician	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of LGBT people	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of LGBT issue	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of Disabled politician	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of Disabled people	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of Disabled issue	99	0.00	0.00
INF - TBR Use of old people	96	0.82	0.82
INF - TBR Use of old people issue	97	0.83	0.83
INF - TBR Use of young people	94	0.76	0.77
INF - TBR Use of young people issue	94	0.72	0.72
INF - TBR Use of middle aged people	92	0.70	0.70
INF - TBR Use of middle aged people issue	92	0.51	0.51
INF - TBR Use of children	96	0.80	0.80
INF - TBR Use of child issue	99	0.90	0.90
INF - TBR Use of relevant public worker to issue raised e.g. nurse	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of relevant public worker to issue raised e.g. nurse	94	0.75	0.75
INF - TBR Use of non-political ordinary public	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of ordinary party members	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of minority ordinary party members	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of male politician of same party	98	0.79	0.79
INF - TBR Use of Female politician of same party	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of female issue	99	0.66	0.66
INF - TBR Use of minority politician of same party	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of minority issue	99	0.00	0.00

INF - TBR Use of religion - Christianity	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of religion - Islam	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of religion - Hinduism	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of religion - Sikhism	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of religion - Judaism	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of LGBT politician	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of LGBT people	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of LGBT issue	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of Disabled politician	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of Disabled people	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of Disabled issue	99	0.66	0.66
INF - TBR Use of old people	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of old people issue	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of young people	97	0.65	0.65
INF - TBR Use of young people issue	98	0.86	0.86
INF - TBR Use of middle aged people	98	0.66	0.66
INF - TBR Use of middle aged people issue	97	0.75	0.75
INF - TBR Use of children	100	1.00	1.00
INF - TBR Use of child issue	99	0.88	0.88
FRAME - ASF Pledge	91	0.82	0.82
FRAME - ASF Negative problem is defined	89	0.78	0.78
FRAME - ASF Positive success is defined	89	0.74	0.74
FRAME - ASF Prognosis (forecast)	85	0.64	0.64
FRAME - ASF Positive How we will solve problem	88	0.70	0.70
FRAME - ASF Negative How problem won’t be solved	88	0.57	0.58
FRAME - ASF Why we should solve this problem is defined (ideology)	83	0.65	0.65
FRAME - ASF Why we solved this problem is defined (ideology	98	0.86	0.86
FRAME - LEL Link to other social media Twitter	100	1.00	1.00
FRAME - LEL Link to other social media Instagram	100	1.00	1.00
FRAME - LEL Link to other social media YouTube	100	1.00	1.00
FRAME - LEL Link to external webpage party	98	0.93	0.93
FRAME - LEL Link to external webpage other	97	0.75	0.75
FRAME - LEL Link to external webpage news – mainstream	99	0.88	0.88
FRAME - ASF Link to external webpage news - alternative	100	undefined*	undefined*
FRAME - LEL Use of hashtag	100	1.00	1.00

FRAME - LLL Link to Facebook page of party leader or party page	98	0.92	0.92
FRAME - LLL Link to Facebook page other	96	0.65	0.65
FRAME - LLL Link to Facebook page opposition leader or party page	100	1.00	1.00
FRAME - LLL Link to Facebook webpage news – mainstream	100	1.00	1.00
FRAME - LLL Link to Facebook webpage news - alternative	99	0.00	0.00
FRAME - R Use of external content within altered context – e.g. Tv interviews cut and edited – reframed to political party	98	0.93	0.93
FRAME - R Positive use of external content within altered context – e.g. Tv interviews cut and edited. – reframed to political party	96	0.58	0.58
FRAME - R Negative use of external content within altered context – e.g. Tv interviews cut and edited. – reframed to political party	98	0.90	0.90
FRAME - O National orientation (UK)	96	0.00	-0.02
FRAME - O Sub national orientation (England, Wales, NI, Scotland	98	0.49	0.49
FRAME - O Local orientation (sub national regional, town, city, region, county	100	1.00	1.00
FRAME - O Positive orientation (praise, pride, success reporting, transfer to something) (only for political content	87	0.67	0.67
FRAME - O Negative orientation (criticism, attack, regret) (only for political content	94	0.86	0.86
FRAME - O Neutral Political orientation	99	0.00	0.00
FRAME - O More negative than positive (primary focus)	91	0.76	0.76
MOB - PARTY Praise of party members	98	0.82	0.82
MOB - PARTY Praise of party campaigners	98	0.82	0.82
MOB - PARTY Praise of party MP	99	0.90	0.90
MOB - PARTY Praise of Leader	98	0.92	0.92
MOB - PARTY Praise of former Leader	100	1.00	1.00
MOB - PARTY Negative appraisal of former Leader	100	1.00	1.00
MOB - PARTY Negative appraisal of opposition party members	99	0.00	0.00

MOB - PARTY Negative appraisal of opposition MP	98	0.74	0.74
MOB - PARTY Negative appraisal of opposition party campaigners	100	1.00	1.00
MOB - PARTY Negative appraisal of opposition Leader	99	0.97	0.97
MOB - PARTY Negative appraisal of opposition party	89	0.61	0.60
MOB - PAR - INT Register to vote	100	1.00	1.00
MOB - PAR - INT Sign up to campaign	99	0.85	0.85
MOB - PAR - INT Visit party website	99	0.96	0.96
MOB - PAR - INT Poll	100	1.00	1.00
MOB - PAR - INT Visit other website	99	0.94	0.94
MOB - PAR - INT Visit other social media	99	0.85	0.85
MOB - PAR - INT Sign petition	100	1.00	1.00
MOB - PAR - INT Share content to network	96	0.91	0.91
MOB - PAR - INT Visit campaign page	98	0.74	0.74
MOB - PAR - INT Funding	99	0.66	0.66
MOB - PAR - INT Shop	100	1.00	1.00
MOB - PAR - INT Talk to friends family	99	0.88	0.88
MOB - PAR - INT Profile pic change	100	1.00	1.00
MOB - ORG - EXT -ONLINE Join party	100	1.00	1.00
MOB - ORG - INT - OFFLINE Visit hustings	100	1.00	1.00
MOB - ORG - INT - OFFLINE Visit event	100	1.00	1.00
MOB - ORG - INT - OFFLINE Help doorstep campaign	100	1.00	1.00
MOB - ORG - INT - OFFLINE Attend rally	100	1.00	1.00
MOB - ORG - INT - OFFLINE Attend demonstration/protest	100	1.00	1.00
MOB - ORG - INT - OFFLINE Volunteer	100	1.00	1.00
MOB - ORG - EX - OFFLINE Call for vote	91	0.82	0.82
MOB -ACTIVE Call to Like	98	0.49	0.49
MOB -ACTIVE Call to Share	93	0.85	0.85
MOB -ACTIVE Call to Comment	99	0.00	0.00
MOB -ACTIVE Call to tag friends	100	1.00	1.00
MOB -ACTIVE Call to visit party website	95	0.75	0.76
MOB -ACTIVE Call to visit other website	99	0.93	0.93
MOB -ACTIVE Call to join/visit other medium	99	0.00	0.00

MOB -ACTIVE Call to join/visit Other social media	99	0.85	0.85
MOB -ACTIVE Use of question to the audience?	98	0.91	0.91
MOB -ACTIVE GOTV	99	0.80	0.80
MOB -ACTIVE Call to share I'm voting message	100	1.00	1.00
Is reshare from other FB page	100	1.00	1.00
PERS - CNT FRM Is newspaper FrontPage	98	0.00	-0.01
PERS - CNT FRM Is video Uses content from mainstream media	98	0.86	0.86
PERS - CNT FRM Is video Uses content from alternative media	97	0.00	-0.01
PERS - CNT FRM Is text only	95	0.68	0.68
PERS - CNT FRM Is Image	92	0.74	0.74
PERS - CNT FRM Is image collection	99	0.88	0.88
PERS - CNT FRM Is Text only image	96	0.76	0.76
PERS - CNT FRM Is poster	98	0.94	0.94
PERS - CNT FRM Is Infographic	99	0.00	0.00
PERS - CNT FRM Is Infographic video	97	0.88	0.88
PERS - CNT FRM Is Audio	100	1.00	1.00
PERS - CNT FRM Is link EX	97	0.91	0.91
PERS - CNT FRM Image defunct	100	1.00	1.00
PERS - HUM Use of humour	99	0.94	0.94
PERS - HUM Use of general humour - apolitical	99	0.93	0.93
PERS - HUM Use of political humour	98	0.66	0.66
PERS - HUM Cuteness usage puppies/babies/children	96	0.73	0.73
PERS - T Content mainly rhetorical not factual	66	0.32	0.31
PERS - PERSO Use of general public's voice	98	0.88	0.88
PERS - PERSO Attack on leader	98	0.94	0.94
PERS - PERSO Post is positively personalised	83	0.65	0.65
PERS - PERSO Post is negatively personalised	97	0.91	0.91
PERS - PERSO Use of party leader in imagery (non-video)	99	0.96	0.96
PERS - PERSO Use of opposition leader in imagery (non-video)	100	1.00	1.00
PERS - PERSO Use of party politician in imagery (non-video	99	0.90	0.90
PERS - PERSO Use of opposition party politician in imagery (non-video)	100	1.00	1.00
PERS - PERSO Use of party leader in video	99	0.97	0.97

PERS - PERSO Use of opposition leader in video	100	1.00	1.00
PERS - PERSO Use of party politician in video	100	1.00	1.00
PERS - PERSO Use of opposition party politician in video	100	1.00	1.00
PERS - PERSO Personal message (thoughts etc. - not a political issue	87	0.41	0.41
PERS - PERSO First person language	83	0.64	0.64
PERS - PERSO Use of party leader in text	98	0.93	0.93
PERS - PERSO Use of opposition leader in text	100	1.00	1.00
PERS - PERSO Use of party politician in text	98	0.82	0.82
PERS - PERSO Use of opposition party politician in text	99	0.00	0.00
PERS - PERSO Use of male celebrity	99	0.92	0.92
PERS - PERSO Use of female celebrity	100	1.00	1.00
PERS - PERSO Non-political personal public story	91	0.26	0.26
PERS - PERSO Non-political personal expert story	95	0.26	0.26
PERS - PERSO Use of politician family	98	0.74	0.74
PERS - PERSO Use of a-political personal information and interests	95	0.64	0.64
PERS - PERSO Use of patriotic imagery	94	0.63	0.64
PERS -LANG - RHE Use of repetition	83	0.63	0.63
PERS -LANG - RHE Use of us v them rhetoric	88	0.72	0.73
PERS -LANG - RHE Use of metaphors	98	0.66	0.66
PERS -LANG - RHE Use of three-part list +	70	0.41	0.39
PERS -LANG - RHE Use of Party catch phrase	86	0.70	0.70
PERS -LANG - RHE Use of Labelling of group identity	96	0.48	0.48
	96.67317	**0.81**	**0.81**

Krippendorf's Alpha test by coding scheme area

	Percent Agreement	Scott's Pi	Cohen's Kappa	Krippendorf's Alpha
Information	97.19	0.86	0.86	0.86
Framing	95.32	0.73	0.74	0.74
Mobilisation	98.55	0.84	0.84	0.84
Personalisation	95.00	0.72	0.72	0.72

Appendix 5: Counts of users

2018 and 2019 Party and leader page followers and interested users

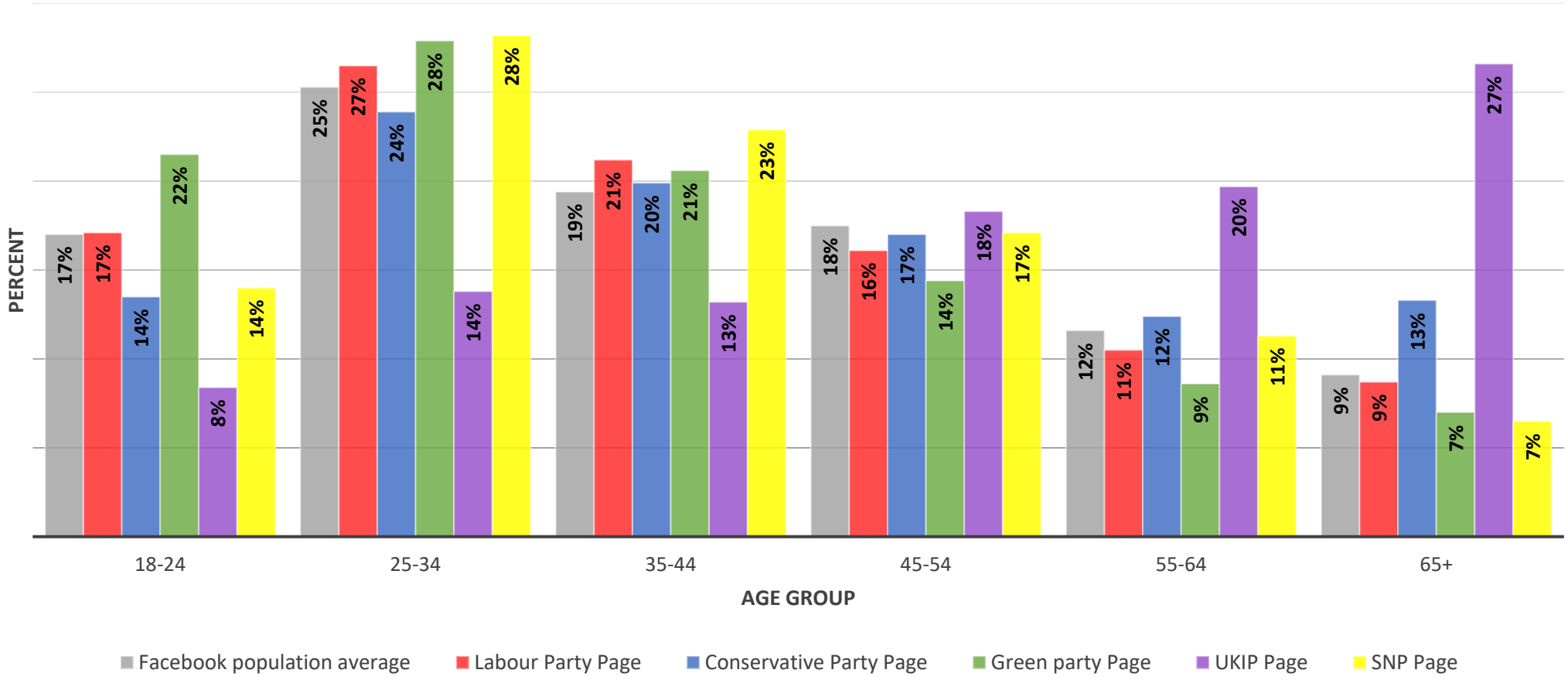
Page	Early 2019 followers	Late 2018 interested users
Labour	1,034,070	2,500,000
Conservatives	652,556	1,500,000
Liberal Democrats	188,469	Data not available
UKIP	580,848	900,000
Green Party	302,066	400,000
SNP	290,955	500,000
Theresa May	515,501	700,000
David Cameron	1,192,922	350,000
Jeremy Corbyn	1,425,142	1,500,000
Ed Miliband	145,451	150,000
Nigel Farage	822,454	600,000
Caroline Lucas	95,190	100,000
Natalie Bennett	52,648	45,000
Nicola Sturgeon	301,410	250,000
Alex Salmond	169,098	150,000
Nick Clegg	Page private (working for FB)	50,000
Vince Cable	13,839	Data not available
Tim Farron	30,410	Data not available
Momentum	237,191	300,000
Total	7,812,729	9,695,000

2015 Webb et al.'s members vs. supporters using BES data

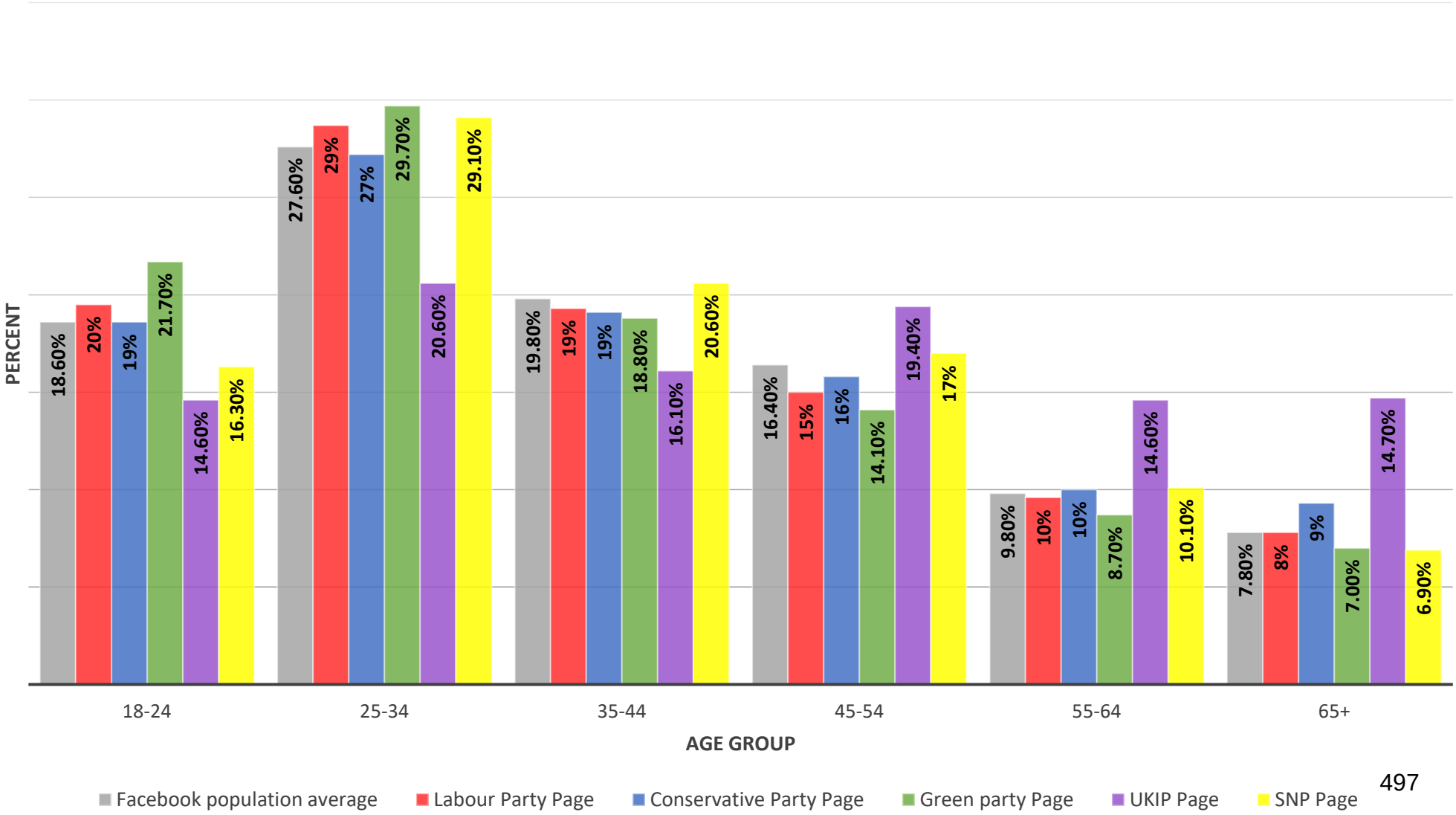
Estimates of national totals, 2015	Con	Lab	LD	UKIP	Green	SNP	Total
Members	150,000	188,000	51,000	42,000	61,000	110,000	**602,000**
Supporters	3,061,993	3,883,464	446,623	636,577	165,192	659,054	**8,852,903**

Appendix 6: Demographics

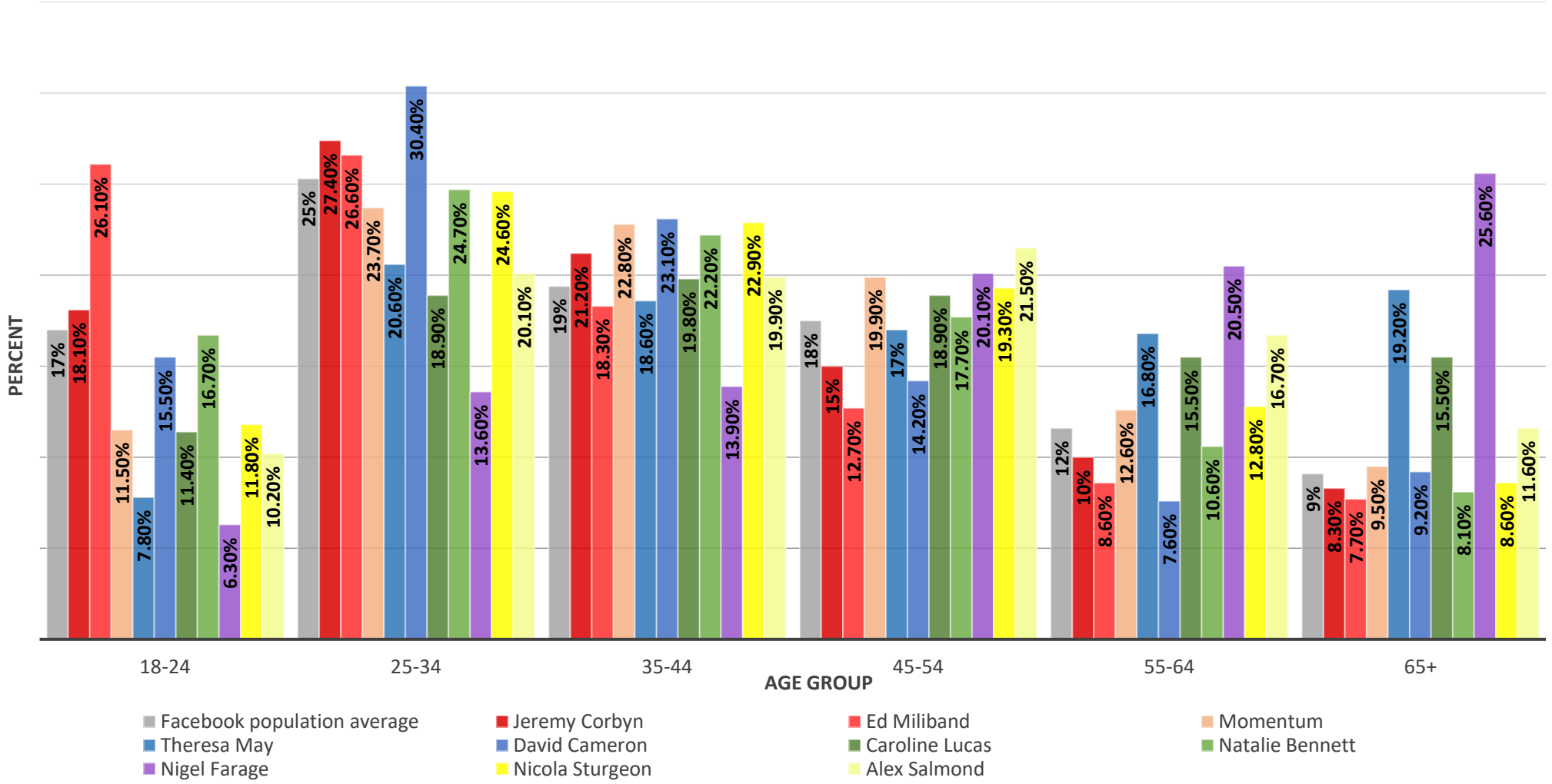
2017 Party pages female demographics



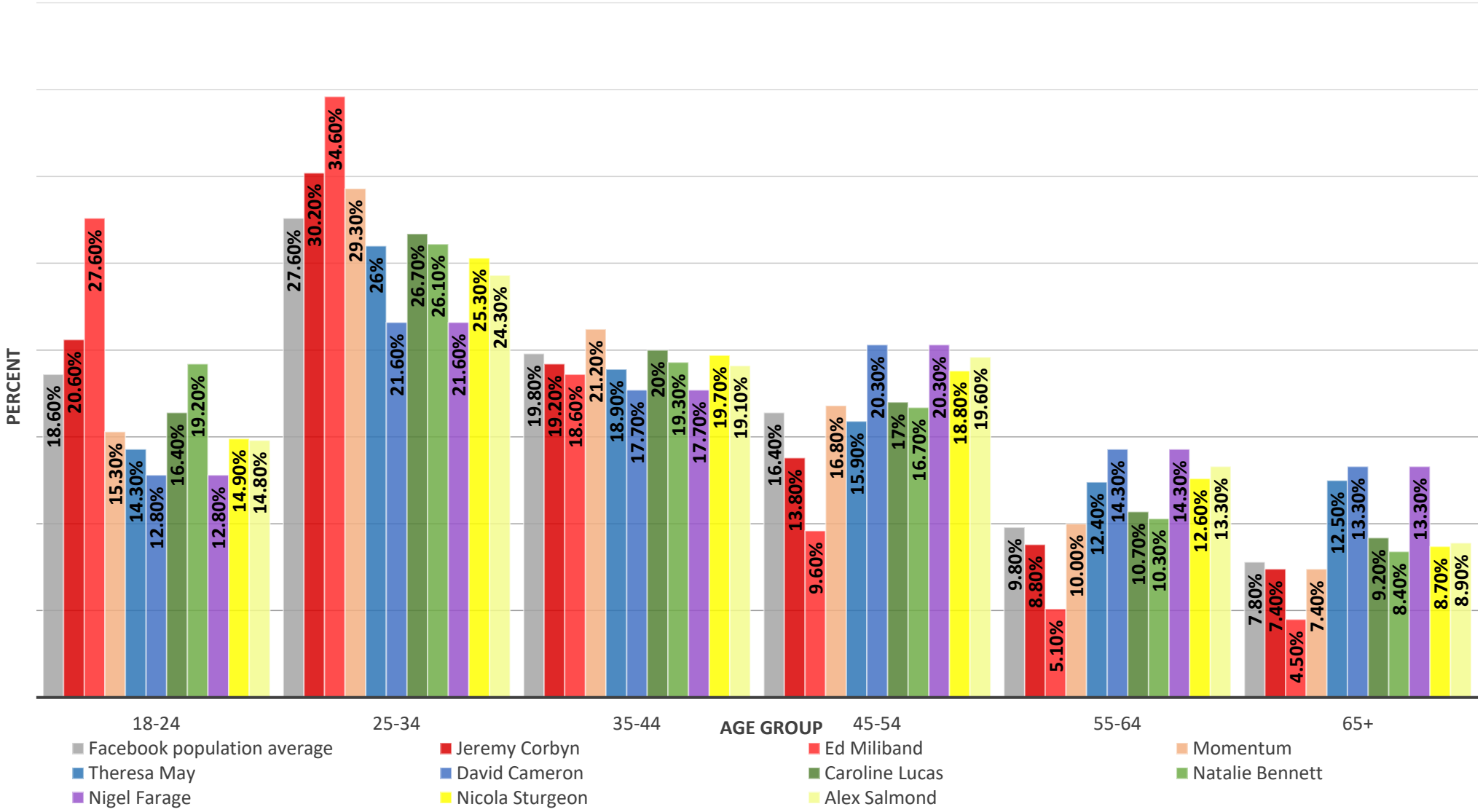
2017 Party page male demographics



2017 Party leader (+Momentum) female Facebook audience demographics

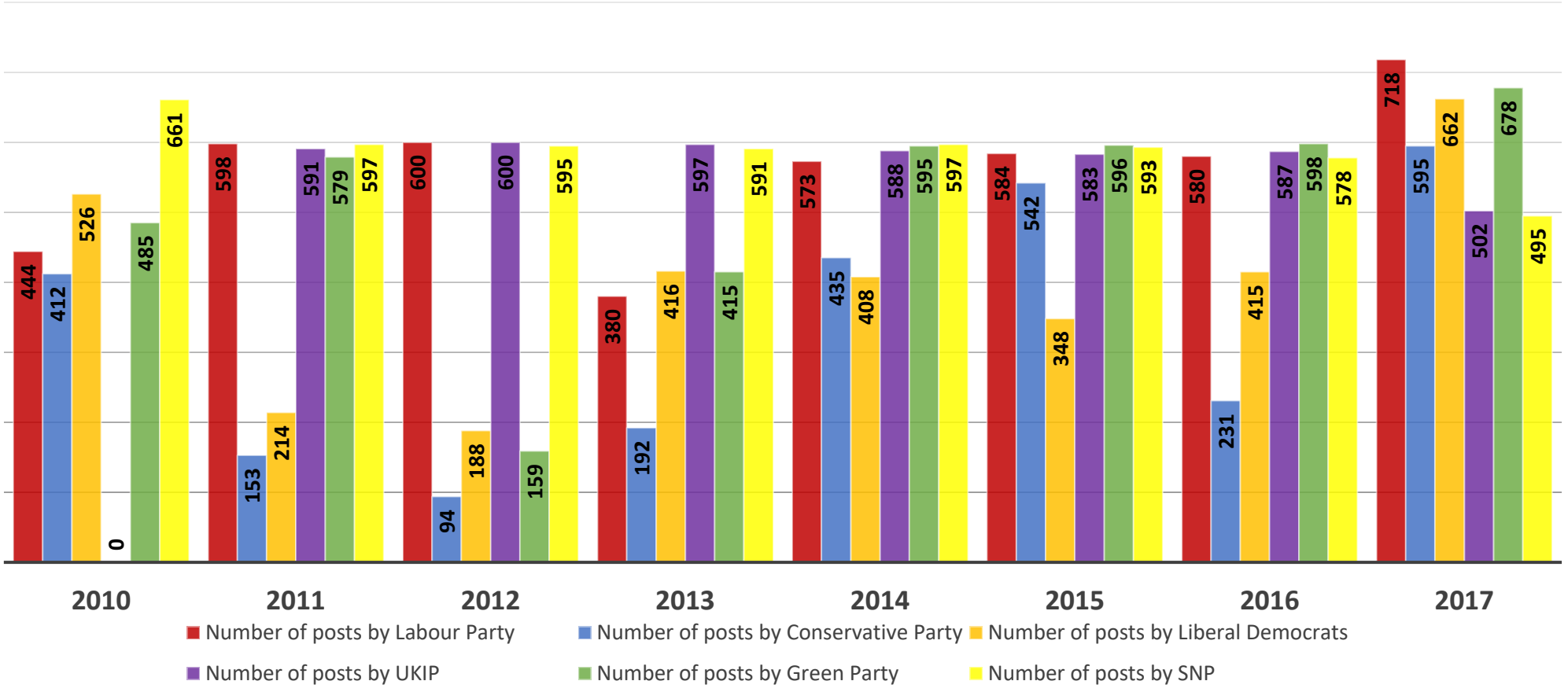


2017 Party leader (+Momentum) male Facebook Audience demographics

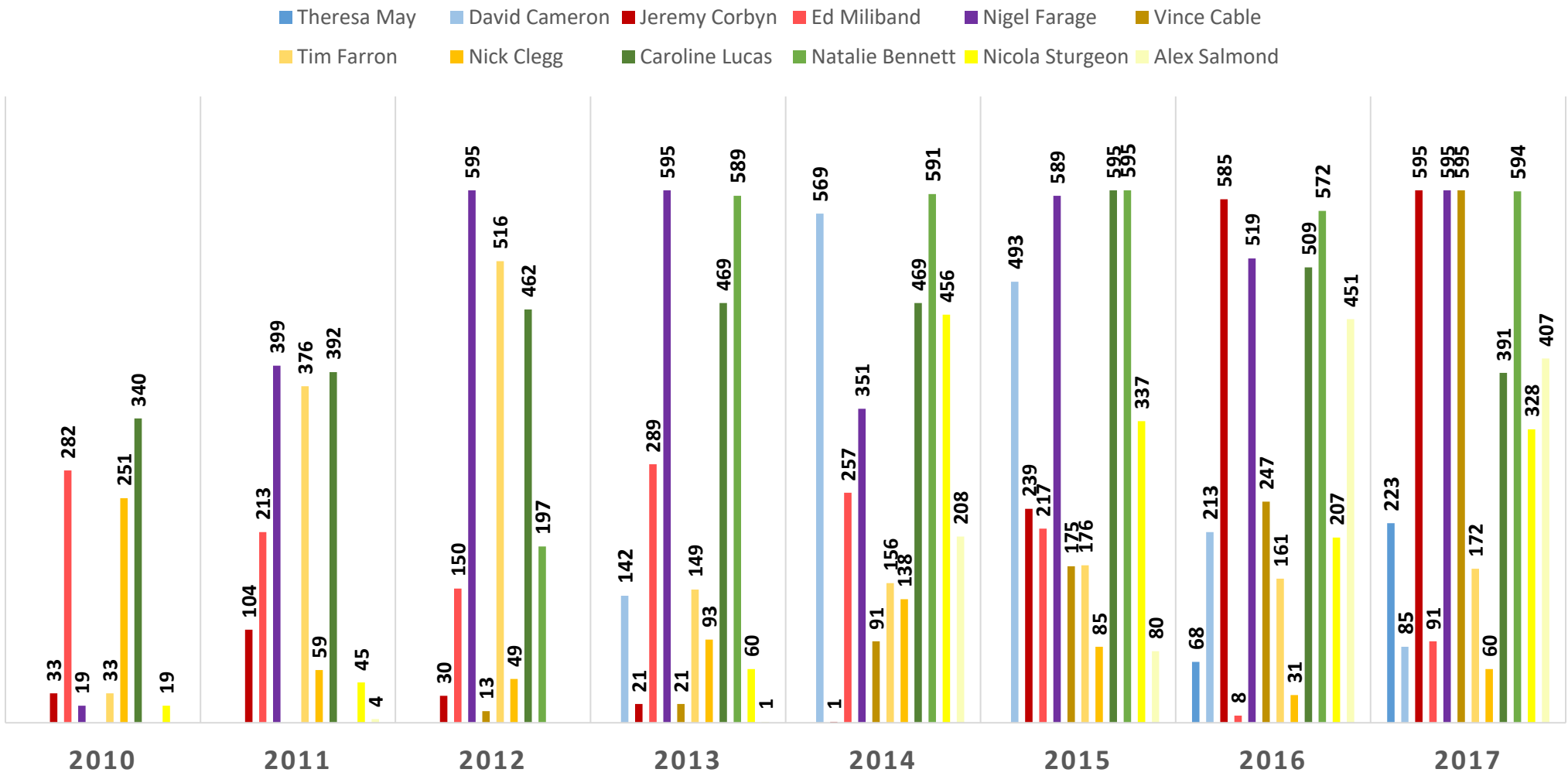


Appendix 7: Number of posts

2010-2017 Number of posts by party page

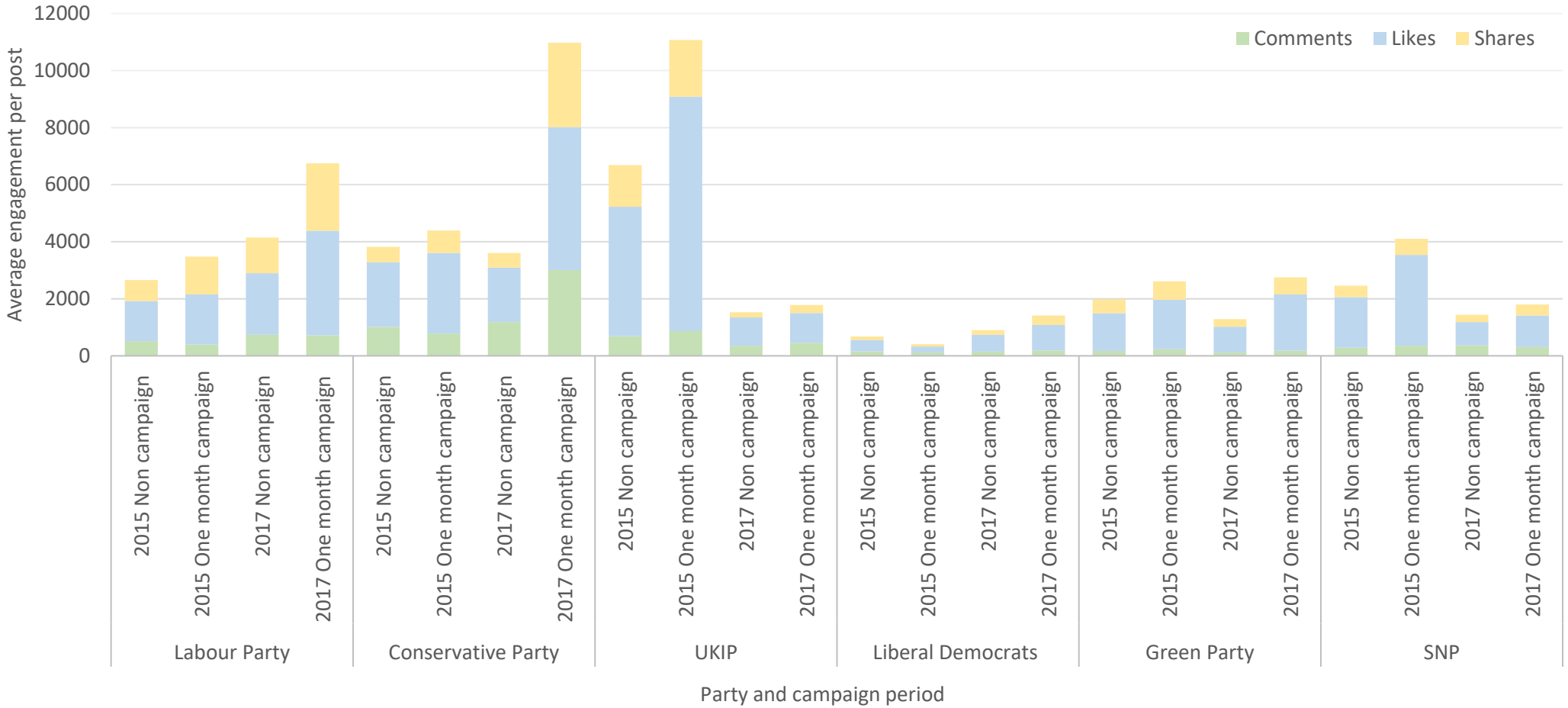


2010-2017 Number of posts by leader page



Appendix 8: Campaign vs. permanent campaign engagement

2017 Party page average campaign vs. permanent campaign engagement

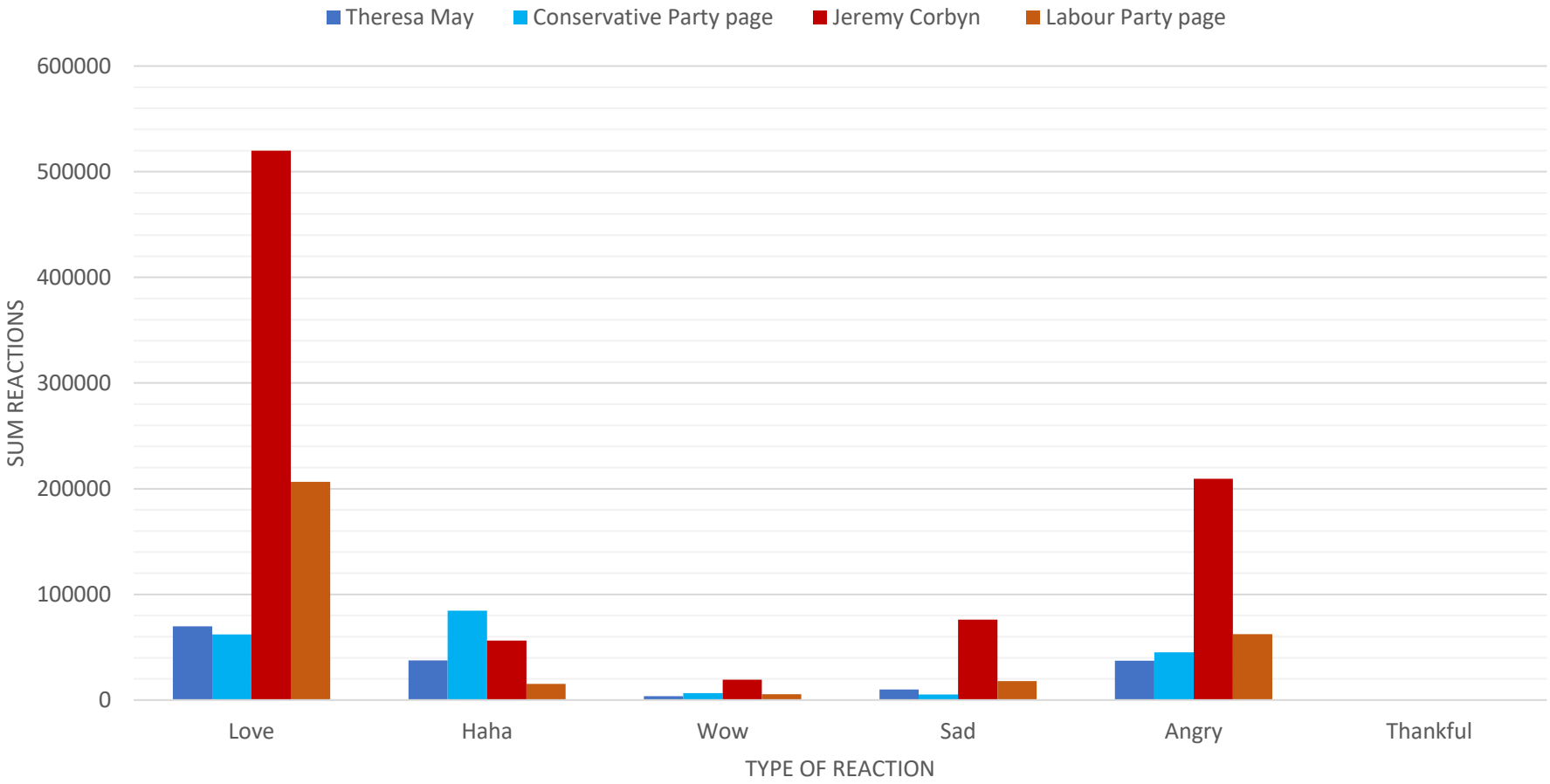


2015 and 2017 Percentage of average engagement, campaign period against non-campaign period (n = 4,059)

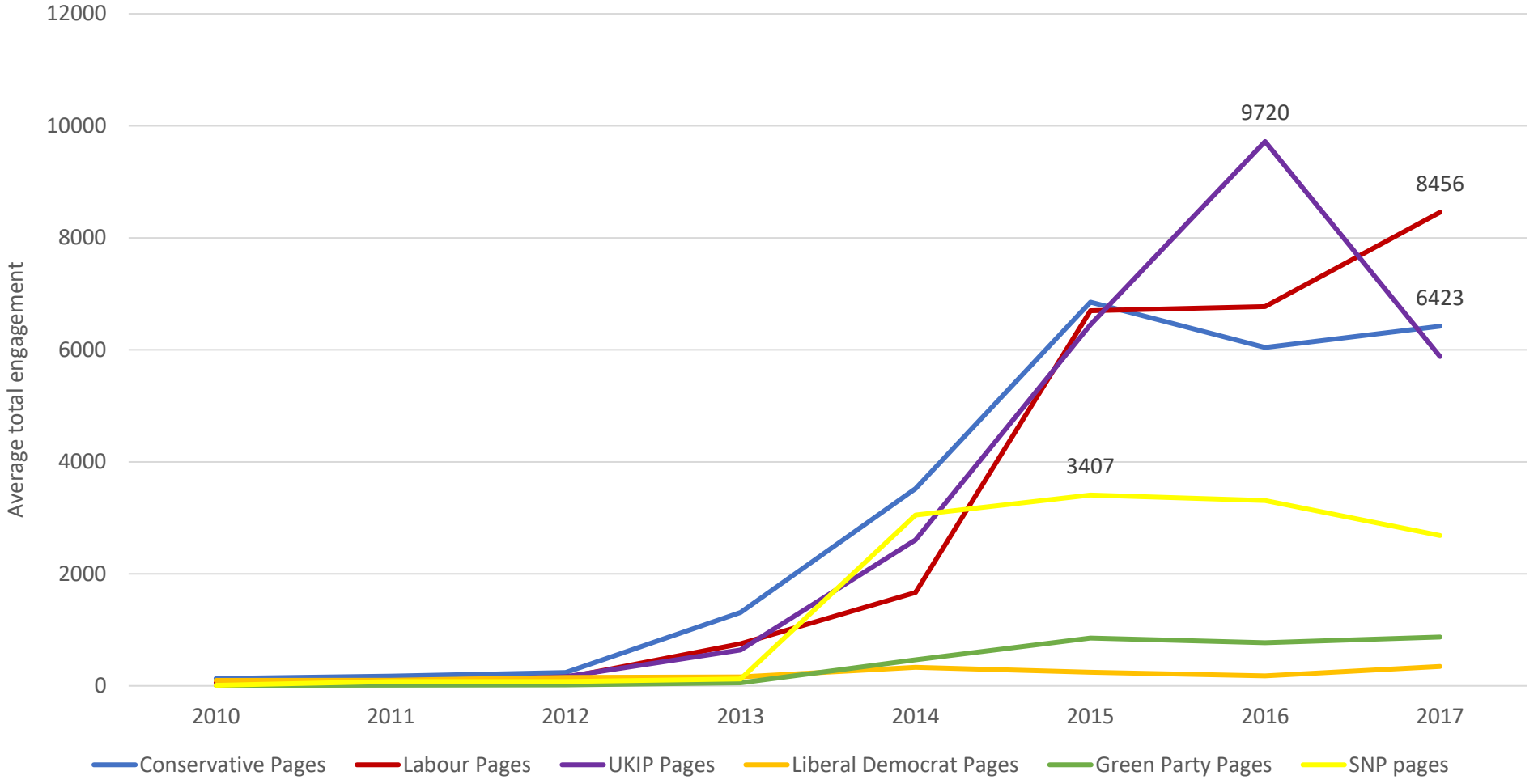
	2015	*2017*
Conservative Party campaign period	115%	329%
Conservative Leader campaign period	59%	186%
Conservative Average	**87%**	**258%**
Labour Party campaign period	131%	178%
Labour Leader campaign period	125%	231%
Labour Average	**128%**	**205%**
Total Average	**107%**	**231%**

Appendix 9: Engagement

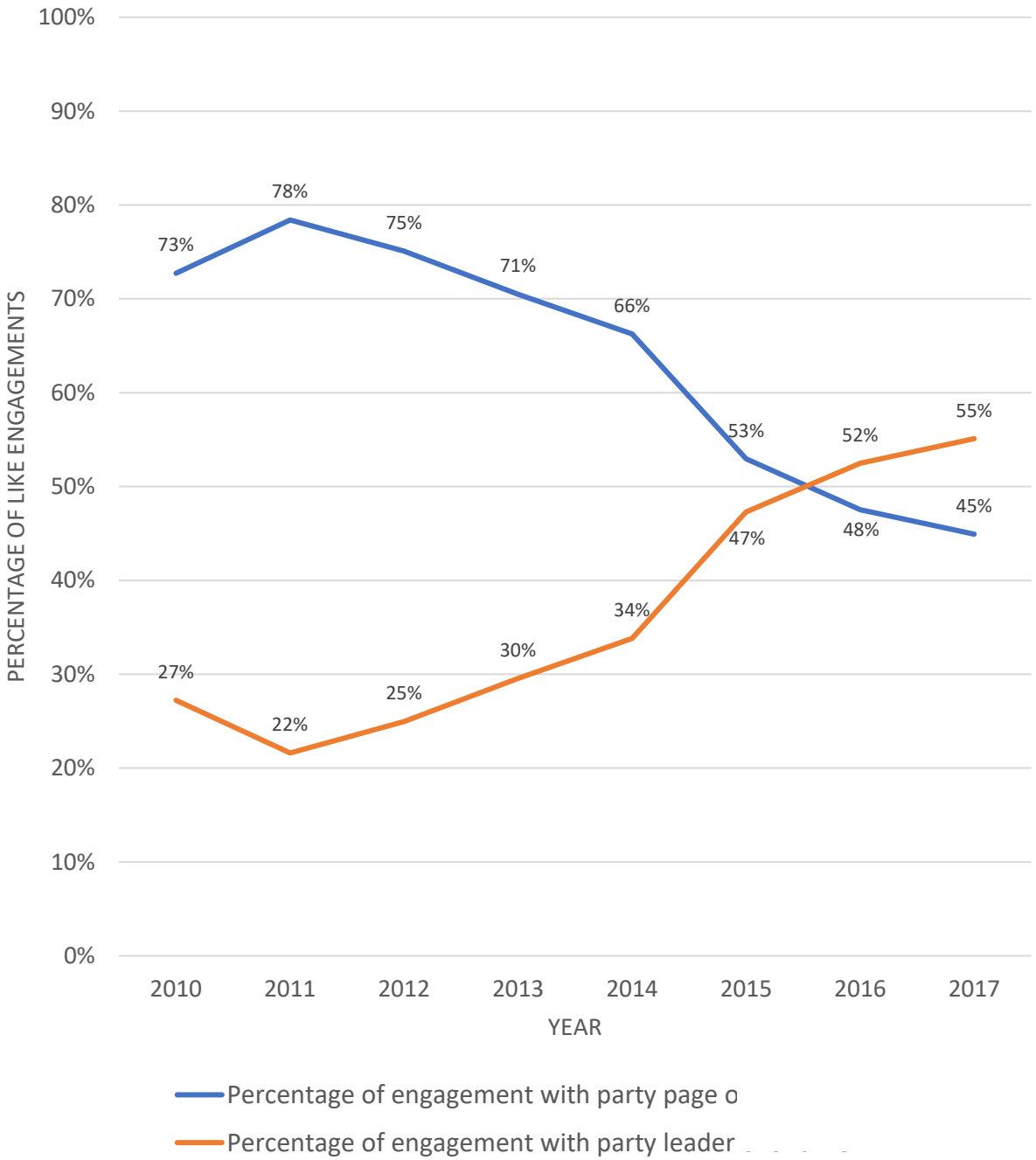
2017 Labour and Conservative party and leader pages total reactions (n = 1,208)



2010-2017 Average total engagement for relevant leader and party pages by year (n = 40,659)



2010-2017 Percentage of total like engagement with party page vs. percentage engagement with relevant party leader of the time; as a percentage of total like engagement (n = 1,208)

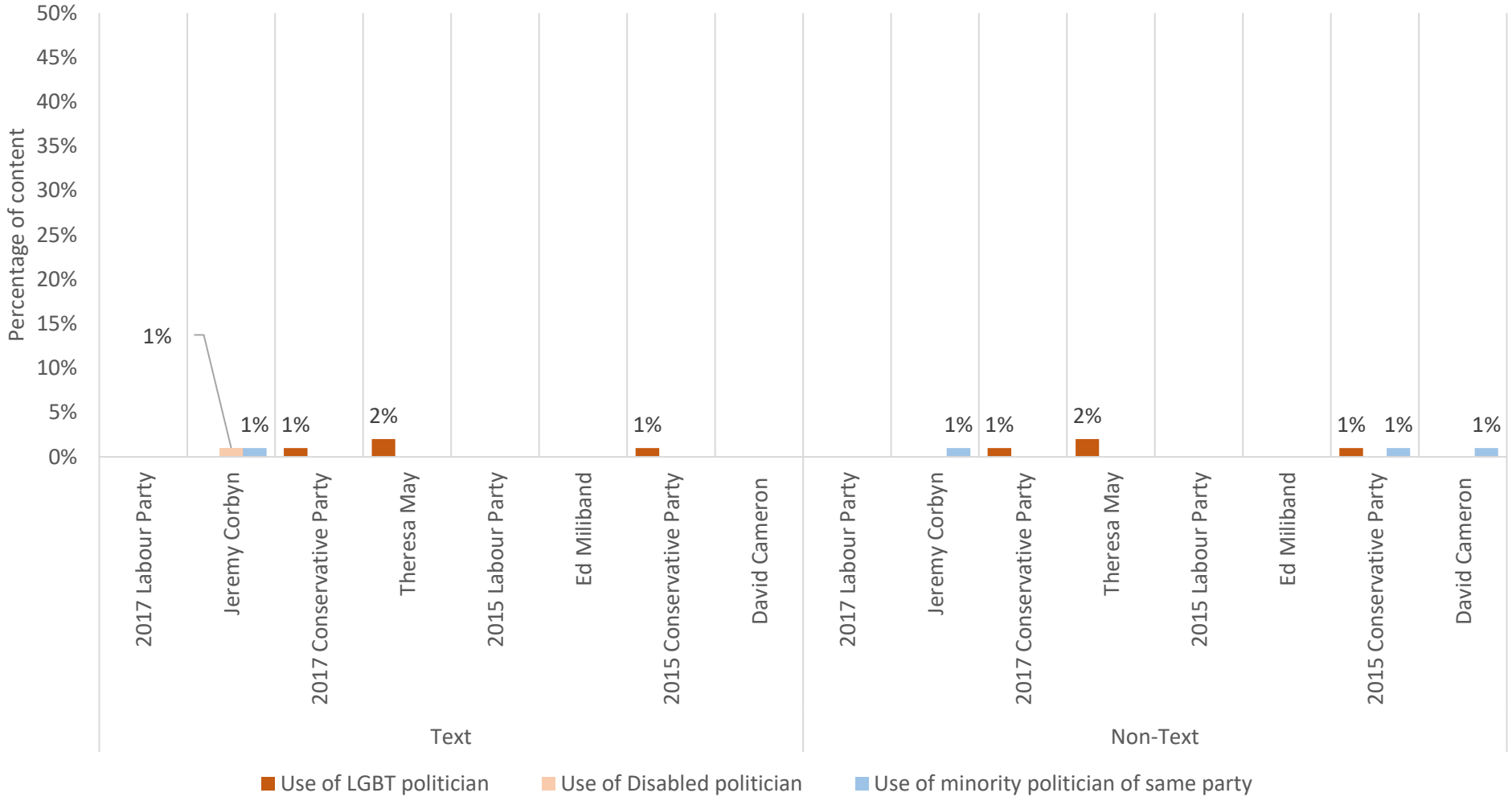


Appendix 10: Content codes

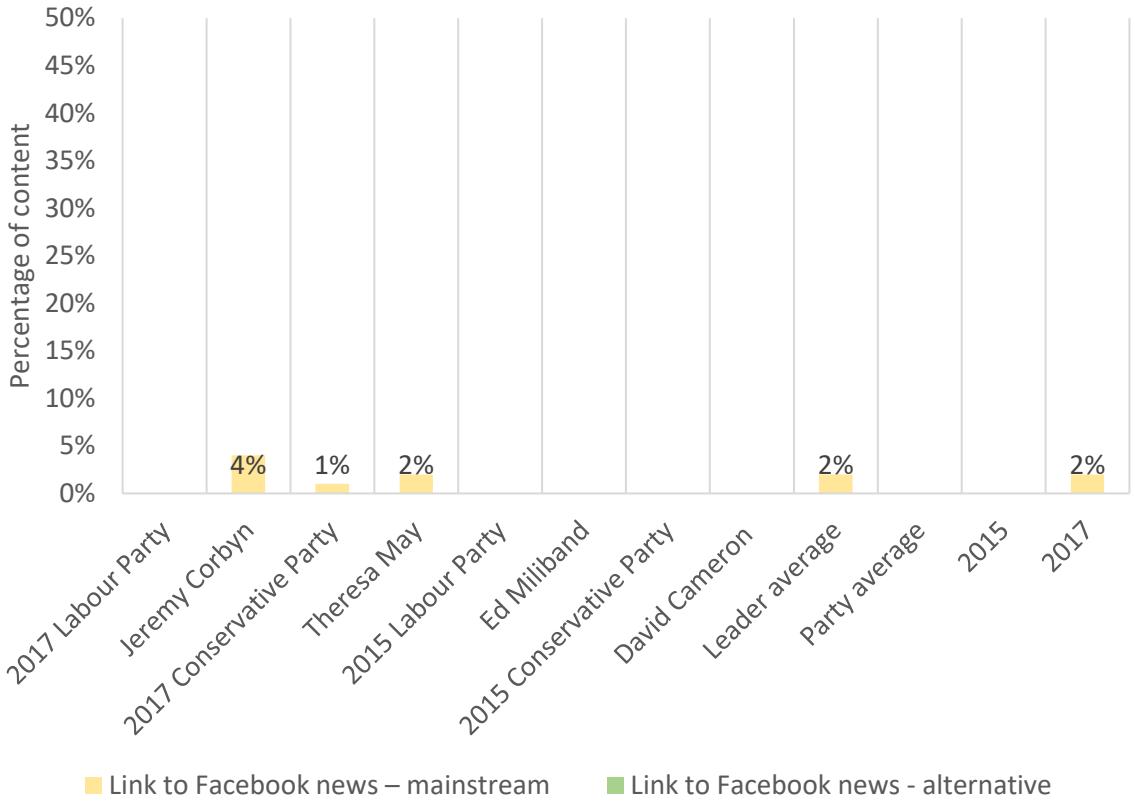
2015 and 2017 Labour and Conservative use of other content forms (n = 1208)

	n	*Video uses Alternative Media*	*Video is alternated opposition PEB*	*Photo - Is newspaper front-page*	*Positive Use of Magazine*	*Negative Use of Magazine*
2017 Labour Party	*278*	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Jeremy Corbyn	*144*	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2017 Conservative Party	*95*	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Theresa May	*50*	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2015 Labour Party	*237*	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Ed Miliband	*78*	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%
2015 Conservative Party	*188*	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
David Cameron	*138*	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Leader average	*410*	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Party average	*798*	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2015	*641*	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2017	*567*	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Average of pages		**0%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**

2015 and 2017 Depiction of politician members (n = 2,416)



2015 and 2017 Internal links news (n = 1,208)



2015 and 2017 Sentiment by content form (n = 1,025)

	n_{video}	n_{photo}	*Video*		*Photo*	
			Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
2017 Labour Party	277	1	88%	29%	100%	0%
Jeremy Corbyn	98	37	62%	44%	59%	43%
2017 Conservative Party	38	45	53%	61%	78%	36%
Theresa May	23	19	78%	43%	100%	5%
2015 Labour Party	105	131	54%	50%	80%	20%
Ed Miliband	4	24	100%	25%	79%	33%
2015 Conservative Party	49	81	71%	53%	74%	43%
David Cameron	27	66	81%	37%	95%	18%
Leader average	152	146	80%	37%	84%	25%
Party average	469	258	67%	48%	83%	25%
2015	185	302	77%	41%	82%	29%
2017	436	102	70%	44%	84%	21%
Average of posts			**74%**	**39%**	**80%**	**28%**
Average of pages			**73%**	**43%**	**83%**	**25%**

facebook