

Posting in Office Hours?

When European Parties Post on Facebook and When Their Posts Do Best, 2010 to 2020

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Abstract

When do political parties post on social media, and does the timing of a post matter for the engagement it receives? I convert the timestamps of 856,696 Facebook posts by 112 party pages and 74 party leaders' pages in 20 European countries, collected through CrowdTangle between 2010 and 2020, to local time. Parties posted mostly during working hours: two thirds of posts appeared between 09:00 and 18:00, fewer than one in ten after 21:00 and fewer than one in five at weekends. Posts made at other times drew more engagement. Comparing posts by the same page in the same month, posts made between 21:00 and midnight drew about 10% more interactions than posts made at midday, and evening posts from 18:00 to 21:00 about 4% more, while morning posts drew slightly less. Sunday posts drew about 9% more than Monday posts. The evening premium held when comparing posts made on the same day in the same country, so it is not simply a feature of big news days; a premium for posts made after midnight disappeared on that comparison, suggesting it reflects the days on which such posts were made. Posts made in an hour when other parties in the country were also posting drew more, not less. The differences are modest, and they say nothing about what posts said, but they point to a gap between when parties posted and when their posts drew most engagement.

Keywords: posting time; timing; Facebook; social media engagement; political parties; party leaders; Europe; CrowdTangle

1 Introduction

Social media audiences are not online in the same way at every hour. Expressed mood and activity on Twitter follow the rhythms of work and sleep ([Golder and Macy 2011](#)), and Facebook's ranking favoured recent posts, at least under its early EdgeRank formula ([Bucher 2012](#)). For a party, the hour at which it posts may therefore affect who sees a post and how they respond. Parties, by contrast, are organisations with staff who work office hours, and their communication may follow the working day rather than the audience.

Research on parties' Facebook pages has studied what parties post and how often ([Larsson 2016](#); [Bene et al. 2022](#)). Research on brand pages has examined the timing of posts ([de Vries et al. 2012](#); [Cvijikj and](#)

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Michahelles 2013), but for political parties timing has received less attention. This paper describes when European parties and their leaders posted between 2010 and 2020 and asks whether the time of posting was associated with the engagement posts received. It asks three questions. **RQ1.** At what hours and on which days do parties post? **RQ2.** Do posts made at different times receive different engagement, comparing posts by the same page in the same month? **RQ3.** Do posts made when other parties are also posting receive less engagement?

The answers are as follows. Parties posted mostly during working hours on weekdays. Posts made in the evening and on Sundays drew somewhat more engagement than those made at midday and during the week. Posts made at the same time as other parties' posts drew more, not less.

2 Data and method

Posts. The posts come from CrowdTangle lists of official party and party leader pages that I built for my doctoral research and exported in October 2020 (CrowdTangle Team 2020; Hotham 2021). They cover January 2010 to September 2020 and 20 European countries: 856,696 posts from 112 party pages and 74 leaders' pages. CrowdTangle recorded posting times in UK time (GMT or BST); I convert them to each country's local time, allowing for daylight saving, using Canary Islands time for the Canarian party. Three posts in the repeated hour when clocks go back are dropped. The conversion is consistent with the data: around daylight-saving changes the average posting hour shifts by much less than an hour, and the converted times give similar working days across countries. For each post, CrowdTangle records likes, comments, shares and emoji reactions as of October 2020, at least several days and usually years after posting. Because comparisons are within page-months, differences in exposure between hours are small; excluding September 2020 leaves the estimates unchanged.

Method. I regress the log of one plus a post's interactions on indicators for the local hour (in three-hour bands, or single hours) and the day of the week, with fixed effects for the page and month (each page in each month) and for the type of post. The comparison is therefore between posts by the same page in the same month, of the same type. A second model replaces the page-month effects with page effects and country-day effects, comparing posts made on the same day in the same country; this removes news days and campaign days, and with it the day of the week. A third model adds, to the second, the log of one plus the number of posts made by other party and leader pages in the country (including the page's own party or leader) in the same clock hour. Standard errors are clustered by page.

3 Results

3.1 Office hours

Parties posted mostly during working hours (Figure 1, top). Between 09:00 and 18:00 local time they made 68% of their posts, with the busiest hours late in the morning. They made 17% of posts between 18:00 and 21:00, 8% between 21:00 and midnight and 6% between 06:00 and 09:00. Weekends accounted for 19% of posts, against 29% of the days of the week, and weekday posting peaked midweek (Figure 2).

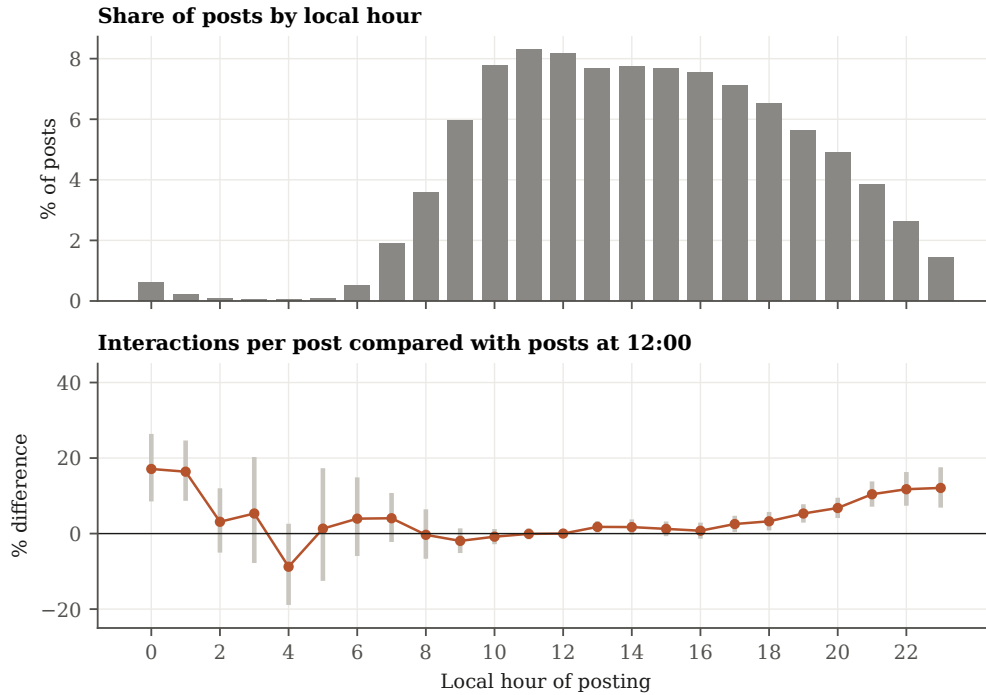


Figure 1. Top: share of posts by local hour of posting. Bottom: interactions per post by hour compared with posts made between 12:00 and 13:00, within page-months and post types, with day-of-week effects; 95% confidence intervals clustered by page. 856,696 posts by 186 pages (856,357 in the model after singleton cells are dropped).

3.2 Evenings and Sundays

Engagement followed a different rhythm. Comparing posts by the same page in the same month, posts made between 21:00 and midnight drew about 10% more interactions than posts made between 12:00 and 15:00 (0.094 log points, SE 0.015), and posts made between 18:00 and 21:00 about 4% more (0.037, SE 0.010). Morning posts, between 09:00 and 12:00, drew about 2% less. By single hour, the premium rose from 17:00 onwards, from about 3% at 18:00 to about 12% at 22:00 and 23:00 (Figure 1, bottom).

Posts made on Sundays drew about 9% more than posts made on Mondays (SE 0.012), and Saturday posts about 2% (not distinguishable from zero), while Tuesday to Friday posts drew 1% to 2.5% less than Monday's (Figure 2). Apart from the early morning, the hours and days on which parties posted least were those on which their posts did best.

The evening premium was not simply a feature of big news days. Comparing posts made on the same day in the same country, posts between 21:00 and midnight drew 9% more than those at midday (SE 0.018) and posts between 18:00 and 21:00 4% more. Posts made between midnight and 06:00, which drew about 11% more in the main model, drew no more on this comparison. They are rare (about 1% of posts) and over-represented on busy days, so the premium in the main model reflects the days on which they were made.

The late-evening and Sunday premiums were similar for party and leader pages (21:00 to midnight: parties 11%, leaders 8%), but leaders showed no clear premium between 18:00 and 21:00, and their early-morning posts did better than parties'. It was present in both halves of the decade. The evening premium was larger in 2010 to 2014 (about 13% after 21:00) than in 2015 to 2020 (about 9%), as was the weekend premium (Sunday about 13% against 8%).

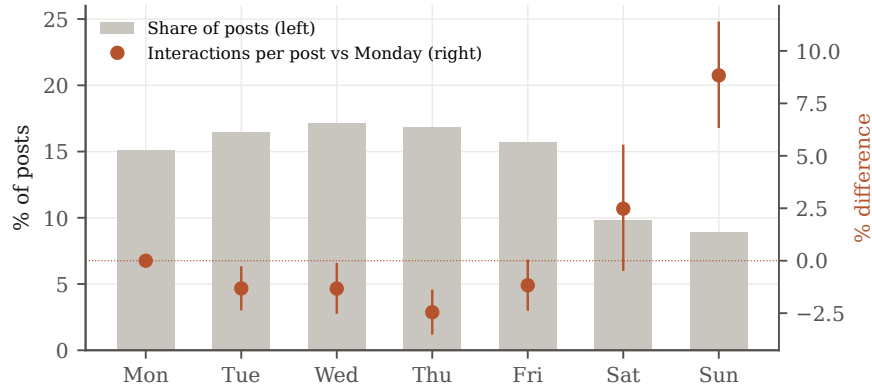


Figure 2. Share of posts by day of the week (bars) and interactions per post compared with Monday (points, 95% confidence intervals), within page-months and post types, with hour-of-day effects.

3.3 No penalty for posting with the crowd

If parties competed for a fixed amount of attention in each hour, a post made when many other parties were posting should draw less. Such posts drew more. Comparing posts on the same day in the same country, a doubling of one plus the number of other pages' posts in the same hour was associated with about 4% more interactions (0.061 log points per log unit, SE 0.008). The estimate is similar excluding the page's own party or leader. This is consistent with parties posting together around events within the day, which the country-day effects do not absorb; the design cannot separate competition from such shared moments.

4 Discussion

European parties posted on Facebook mostly during working hours, while their posts did best in the evening and on Sundays. The differences are modest, about 4% to 10%. But they are found for parties and leaders after 21:00, in both halves of the decade, and when comparing posts made on the same day in the same country. They suggest that the timing of party communication on Facebook matched the working day more than the hours at which posts drew most engagement.

Posting together with other parties was not associated with less engagement, though the data cannot separate competition between pages from shared moments of news.

The design has clear limits. The time of posting is chosen, and evening and weekend posts may differ in content from those made at midday, for example by featuring speeches, debates or personal messages; the estimates describe associations, not the effect of moving a post to another hour. The data do not show whether posts were scheduled in advance or who posted them, and Facebook's ranking changed during the decade. The data record engagement, not reach, and how Facebook's ranking treated posts at different hours is unknown. The pages are those on my CrowdTangle lists, and interaction counts were recorded in October 2020.

5 Conclusion

Across 186 party and leader pages in 20 European countries, parties posted mostly during working hours on weekdays, while their posts drew somewhat more engagement in the evenings and on Sundays. The rhythm of party posting on Facebook matched the working day more than the hours at which posts did best.

Data and code

The posts were exported from CrowdTangle in October 2020. CrowdTangle's terms do not permit sharing the raw posts. The analysis code, the list of pages and aggregate data by page, hour and day are available from the author.

Provenance and AI use

The data were exported from CrowdTangle in October 2020 for my doctoral research. This paper builds on my doctoral thesis ([Hotham 2021](#)). The analysis and writing were completed in 2026.

I designed the study and am responsible for the analysis and conclusions. I wrote the text, with drafting and editing assistance from Claude (Anthropic), which also helped prepare the analysis code. I reviewed and checked all text and results.

Ethics

Not applicable: the study involves no human participants. The data are public posts by the official Facebook pages of political parties and party leaders, analysed only as counts of interactions and posting times. No post content is quoted or reproduced, and no data on individual users are used.

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