

**Party Branding in the 2015 General Election: A Case Study of
Online Political Posters**

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Introduction:

Despite claims that the ‘brand is the key communicative tool of contemporary politics’ (Cosgrove 2012: 121), and ‘constant adjustment of image is why branding *is* now the permanent campaign’ (Scammell 2014: 82), the application of branding to politics remains a rather contentious exercise (Lloyd 2005). In the context of debates about the nature and strategic function of political brands, this chapter explores how UK political parties presented their brands in the months leading up to the 2015 General Election, concentrating on *Online Political Posters* (OPPs) as expressions of the core brand campaign messages. OPPs are still images posted openly to parties’ Facebook pages, rather than distributed as targeted online advertising like Youtube videos for instance, OPPs are similar to national billboard posters (used in British elections for well over a century, but currently in decline) and the window and lawn signs put up by party supporters at constituency level. Traditional political posters have been argued to have several functions including: persuasion (Seidman 2008a: 7, Baines et al. 2011); familiarisation and engagement (Lewis & Masshardt 2002: 401); and establishing a campaign’s presence in particular locations, signifying the strength of the campaign with possible mobilisation consequences (Seidman 2008b; Dumitrescu 2011). Like those traditional formats, OPPs provide opportunities for political parties to extend their voter reach, particularly amongst those low engagement and participation voters for whom branding is especially helpful in their typically peripheral processing of political messages (Cacioppo et al. 1986) through the potential for OPPs to be shared by users within their Facebook networks. Moreover, that capacity for users to share content provides parties

with opportunities to use existing party supporters online to disseminate party messages for them, a kind of supporter-initiated two-step flow of persuasion and influence (Norris and Curtice 2008). This makes OPPs a potentially a good illustration of the gradual transition from traditional transactional marketing and short term party campaign communication techniques in offline media to more interactive, long term relationship marketing in online environments.

The Problem of the Political Brand

In Britain, there is evidence of the application of principles of marketing and branding by British political parties at least as far back as the 1930s (Wring 2004) and some key political figures have had their electoral (and governmental) successes attributed to their adoption of principles and practices of political marketing in general, and branding in particular (such as Tony Blair for instance, see Scammell 2014). Yet:

Branding has been seen to produce unwanted effects such as narrowing the political agenda, increasing confrontation, demanding conformity of behaviour/message and even increasing political disengagement at the local level. (French and Smith 2010: 461)

Even prominent British political campaigners have questioned the applicability of branding to politics, such as Maurice Saatchi's comment that 'politics is not a market and a political party is not a brand' (in Lees-Marshment 2009: 24). Aside from normative debates about the legitimacy of the use of marketing and branding in politics, the central question rests on the nature of what political brands actually *are* and the appropriate strategies for successful branding. Brands are often associated with and have their roots in information symbols like logos, slogans and even colours used for party/candidate recognition (Lloyd 2006: 59; Scammell 2014: 69). The marketing model attributed to traditional politics has been to view

politics as a set of *products* being sold to electorates within what is known as *transactional marketing* (Lilleker and Jackson 2015, Baron, Conway and Warnaby 2010). A key normative criticism of the product-oriented, transactional ideas of political marketing is that, essentially, it is treating politics like selling cornflakes or soap powder (e.g. Franklin 2004). Pich and Dean argue that this ‘misjudges the nature of the political brand which comprises complex inter-related components that are both institutional and ideological but embodied in the personal character of the elected members and leadership’ (2015: 1353-4). In practice branding involves more a complex array of ‘intangible’ components over and above personnel and packaging, such as aspects of reputation and image that emerge through combinations of aspects of presentation and performance (Scammell 2014: 69). Lees-Marshment offers a useful summary:

Branding is about how a political organisation or individual is perceived overall. It is broader than the product; whereas a product has a functional purpose, a brand offers something additional, which is more psychological and less tangible. It is concerned with impressions, images, attitudes and recognition. (Lees-Marshment 2009: 111-112)

Intangible elements like image, reputation, performance and perception, contribute to the perceived “added value” of a brand (Lloyd 2006: 61). These elements also indicate that politics is arguably more like a *service* than a product, not least in how promises to govern are wrapped up in issues of reputation and performance of figures within political parties (leaders and candidates) (Lloyd 2005: 31-2), and to elements like party ethos that signal how parties might act in future unknown situations. Rather than seeing the emergence of political brands as making politics superficial, all style over substance, therefore, research data indicates that for many voters branding aides the voting decision-making process. As Schneider asserts:

As established, differentiated perceptual images of parties and candidates, political brands facilitate easier information processing for voters, lower the risk of making the wrong decisions and, finally, create sentimental utility through generating feelings of group belonging and identity. (Schneider 2004: 59)

This last potential role of brands is important because it relates to the idea that the marketing of services is not transactional but *relationship* marketing (Lilleker and Jackson 2015; Baron, Conway and Warnaby 2010). As Baron, Conway and Warnaby state, the ‘desired outcomes of relationship marketing efforts of organizations with their customers’ are that ‘customers should be *loyal to*, and have a close affinity with the organization, and even love the organization and what it represents’ (2010: 7, emphasis added). The idea of branding for relationship marketing is particularly significant in an era of the emerging ‘cyber party’ (Margetts 2001), a result of a series of changing circumstances for parties including: declining memberships, the growth of single issue political activity, a growing reliance on symbolic actions rather than mass mobilisation and more generalised expectations amongst the public that political support, as with other activities, should be possible online. Evidence increasingly suggests parties ‘are taking on the characteristics of cyber-parties... mobilised and organized around online rather than offline activities, and building a participatory architecture for supporters’ (Lilleker 2015: 123).

Online environments offer political parties comparative freedom and flexibility in communication and campaigning opportunities when compared to traditional media. With paid-for political advertising on broadcast media still banned in Britain, and print media advertising seeing significant decline – to the extent that commentators in the 2015 campaign openly discussed the death of the campaign poster (Wheeler 2015) – online channels offer new opportunities for campaign communication, and for relationship marketing for loyalty building. They offer the promise of:

[...] direct, free and easy involvement (or disengagement); regular updates and information; and active participation from members. This can help generate a sense of ‘*virtual belonging*’ towards the specific online group enhanced also by the possibility of interacting directly with likeminded people from all over the world. (Bartlett, et al, 2013: 11-12, emphasis added)

Whilst the participation of the public might be “free”, producing and maintaining online spaces is not free for the parties, and, as Lilleker notes ‘UK parties have been very tentative in the adoption of web tools’ (2015: 118), leaving the “digital campaign” slow to emerge in the UK. Initially the problem was of the “pull” nature of Web 1.0 outlets such as party websites needing voters to be already interested and engaged with to seek out information online, leading to such material tending to preach to the converted (Norris 2003). Of course, part of campaigning involves ‘galvanising the internal market so they can convey the political brand to voters is a crucial component of electoral strategy’ (Pich et al 2014: 4) but the value of online materials for less engaged voters – the kinds of voters branding serves particularly well – has been rather minimal, especially when compared to the more traditional avenues such as Party Election Broadcasts and billboards, which at least offered the potential for accidental exposure to political messages. The rise of social media networks like Facebook in the Web 2.0 era, however, has seen opportunities for serendipity online increase significantly (Chadwick 2009, Kim et al. 2013, Tang and Lee 2013), providing the potential for party communication to address existing, prospective and even unwitting supporters – who may support a viewpoint that they might not have been aware was shared by a party. As Lilleker and Jackson recognise:

[...] from a branding perspective, if the political organization can build relationships with prospective supporters, and convert them into activists, there are two potential new routes to increasing partisan attachments: a direct route through interaction with

the organization as well as an indirect route with activists recruiting further supporters through their social networks. (2014: 167)

Applied effectively, parties can use online channels to move people up the so-called “political loyalty ladder” from a prospective supporter at the bottom all the way up to party activist at the top (ibid.: 170). Numbers of followers of parties’ Facebook pages in the UK were exceeding numbers of party members and reaching into the hundreds of thousands for some parties by the time of the 2015 general election (Wilkinson 2015), so the potential reach of OPP branding amongst supporters was significant, even if the relative weight and utility of numbers of Facebook followers is not a particularly strong measure of wider party support.

To illustrate these issues this chapter concentrates on OPPS as one specific form of party political campaign content disseminated via social media where issues of branding are at the forefront. Amongst the plethora of online content parties produce, online political posters have quietly become a routine part of party communication online, attracting only occasional mainstream media attention [1] but combining the functions of traditional posters in enabling accidental exposure for low engagement voters with the potential capabilities of social media dissemination by party supporters enabling potential two-step flow persuasion and influence.

The data utilised here comes from a longitudinal content analysis of the use of OPPs on the party Facebook pages of seven British political parties covering the period between September 2013 and May 2015. Whilst the data presented here is only that from the official campaign period of the General Election it is important to note that, aside from a few days across the Christmas holiday periods of 2013 and 2014, the parties produced a continual background trickle of OPPs long before the start of the official campaign, supporting the

notion of the permanent campaign (Scammell 2014: 82). A total of 1285 OPPs were produced from the start of the long campaign (December 19th 2014) to May 8th 2015, with 837 of these produced from the start of the short campaign (March 30th to May 8th, showing how that trickle became a flood by the time of the General Election campaign [2]. Whilst the handful of PEBs and billboard posters might reach bigger audiences on a per PEB/poster basis, the routine production of such large numbers of OPPs suggests these are potentially an ever more important tool in party branding strategies. The results presented here concentrate on the significance of OPPs as a tool for disseminating brand messages to citizens with low interest in politics.

Findings

The first table presents the number and distribution of OPPs produced by the political parties during the election campaign (see Table 2.1). Initially the distribution suggests a more transactional than relational approach, with increasing OPPs as polling day approached.

Table 2.1 here

By far the biggest producer of OPPs was the Labour party, multiple times the number produced by either of the Coalition partners, particularly the Liberal Democrats who had the smallest number of OPPs of any party. The smallest party in terms of party membership, Plaid Cymru, was the second highest producer of OPPs (albeit concentrated into a few days of releases of multiple batches of OPPs), and the other “minor” parties all produced significant numbers, well ahead of the Liberal Democrats, and not far behind the Conservatives in total numbers, and able to produce OPPs at least daily during the peak weeks just before polling.

OPPs took a variety of forms across the campaign. At one end of the spectrum were reproductions of party billboard posters, such as a Conservative poster depicting Ed Miliband

in Alex Salmond's pocket (March 9th). Variations on historical billboards were used by many parties, including the image of a queue of people from the 1979 "Labour isn't working" Conservative campaign being appropriated by Labour to reference waiting lists with the slogan "The Doctor can't see you now" (April 7th) and by the Greens under the slogan "Austerity isn't working" (April 22nd). Another old Conservative image, "Labour's tax bombshell" slogan from the 1992 campaign, was reworked as an "establishment tax bombshell" relating to spending on Trident by the Greens (April 9th), and by UKIP to comment on "Cameron's immigration bombshell" (April 11th).

At the other end of the spectrum were OPPs that consisted of a purely textual message. Text-only OPPs were particularly used by Labour (accounting for 40.4% of all their OPPs, compared to 26.1% across all OPPs), and some of these followed a pattern stretching back well before the campaign started, featuring quotations from party supporters explaining "Why I'm Labour" (e.g. May 6th) – an apparent instance of attempts to integrate the more typical transactional nature of political posters with the relationship-building potential of social media by making OPPs out of party supporters' statements.

Just under three-quarters (73.9%) of all OPPs featured a combination of text and images, however, with just under half (48.0%) featuring a photograph alongside some text. Quite a variation of styles and formats were used but a particularly common approach was to include an image of a prominent party figure (often the party leader, see section below), alongside a simple statement or quotation. Just over two-thirds of OPPs (69.2%) were factual statements relating to policy positions, although these varied a lot in terms of their specificity. Statements such as "Building a Britain where everyone who works hard can own a home of their own" (Conservative March 3rd), "Help young people with eating disorders" (Lib Dem May 5th) and "We offer a real alternative to the drab Tory-Labour cuts consensus in Westminster" (SNP April 2nd) illustrate how OPPs tended to have messages broadly focused

on policy themes. Sometimes OPPs presented lists of multiple policy areas (e.g. UKIP May 3rd), however, or used infographic-style charts and tables, such as economic performance indicators (e.g. Conservative March 6th). Just under a quarter (23.8%) focused more on wider party values like the “Why I’m Labour” OPPs, and the remainder (6.9%) focused on specific events like party conferences, rallies and media appearances. Overall though, the predominant designs and focus of OPPs are suggestive of a more transactional role, providing simple heuristic guides for potential voters.

The OPPs were coded for the explicit presence or absence of party brand identifiers, identified in simple terms as the presence of the party logo, party name, or recognisable party figure (like the party leader). In combination with coding for the orientation of OPP messages the data on branding is shown in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 here

Overall, over four in five OPPs contained party branding identifiers. The emphasis on producing clearly branded images, combined with a predominance of positively-oriented messages in over two-thirds of OPPs, is evidence that party messages tend to be more positive the more control a party has over them (Vliegthart, 2012), and perhaps relating to efforts at awareness raising for less engaged voters. The table reveals a particularly interesting finding where the negative orientation of OPPs increased in five of the seven parties when their OPPs were unbranded, and in four cases negatively-oriented unbranded OPPs were in the majority. Attacking opponents through unbranded OPPs might have been thought to have potentially enhanced the chances of them to be more widely liked and shared by low engagement voters less aware of the original source of the attack. The two main parties, Labour and the Conservatives, in particular, used a noticeable proportion of unbranded and negatively oriented ads, and when they did this not only were brand identifiers

often left off, but the colour schemes of their OPPs shifted to match their targets, so Conservative OPPs attacking Labour were often coloured red (e.g. March 25th) and Labour OPPs attacking the Conservatives were coloured blue (e.g. March 28th). Unbranded attacks might also allow something of a separation between the typically more aggressive and confrontational transactional appeals from the more positive, and relationship-oriented, branded OPPs that dominated overall.

More generally, all parties offered at least some negatively-oriented OPPs, sometimes focused on opposition to policies, sometimes parties, sometimes specific rival politicians. The Green Party's PEB presented the major parties (and UKIP) as a kind of boyband, literally singing "the same old tune", which had generated some commentary and 775,000 online views by the end of April (Wilkinson 2015). The related #changethetune hashtag featured in their OPPs as well, so an apparent absence of unbranded negative OPPs from the Greens wasn't an indication of a lack of negative attacks on their part, it's just that they were, like UKIP similarly, more willing to make openly branded attacks than the other parties.

A final feature to mention in relation to aspects of branding and orientation is the frequency of appearances by prominent party figures in OPPs. The value of focusing on particular political figures, especially the party leaders, within the top-level "house" brand (Cosgrove 2012: 108) of the party was evident in their prominence in party OPPs despite many candidates and party leaders having their own social media pages. Just over one in three of all OPPs featured a prominent political figure of some kind (34.5%). For UKIP (54.4%) and the SNP (53.9%), using political personalities was a dominant strategy, and made sense given the recognition factor for their leaders (Nigel Farage and Nicola Sturgeon respectively). By comparison, Plaid Cymru featured political figures less frequently, in exactly a third of their OPPs (33.3%), however, given the significant number of OPPs produced by the party, the presence of party leader Leanne Wood was pretty much a routine,

daily occurrence, trying to build on a level of exposure Wood and Plaid had not experienced before by being included in the main televised debates, even producing OPP illustrations of Wood akin to the famous Obama “Hope” poster (e.g. April 30th). The Greens, on the other hand, featured political figures comparatively infrequently in 24.1% of their OPPs split mainly between leader Natalie Bennett and the party’s only incumbent MP Caroline Lucas. Of the big three parties, the recognition factor of leaders and senior party figures was something of a double-edged sword – none of the leaders having gone into the election with positive public opinion ratings. Nick Clegg, leader of the Liberal Democrats in particular, having been such a key figure in the party’s success in the 2010 election campaign, was perhaps much more a liability this time around after broken election pledges made as part of the Coalition government, and Clegg as well as other senior party figures were predominantly absent, featuring in only around one seventh (14.1%) of their OPPs. Like Plaid Cymru, although Labour politicians featured in under a third of their OPPs (29.8%), the sheer volume of OPPs produced ensured that large numbers featuring politicians did appear. Mostly they focused on leader Ed Miliband, though of all the parties there was a bit more of a presence of some of the other senior figures (like Ed Balls). Similarly, though proportionately more so in just under half of their OPPs (46.4%), the Conservatives also featured a few senior figures on occasion alongside leader David Cameron, such as Chancellor George Osborne. Both Labour and the Conservatives were predominantly focused on opposition personalities when their OPPs went on the attack, such that figures like Cameron, Osborne, Miliband and Balls were often regularly depicted in opposition party OPPs.

A distinctive feature of OPPs was the range of appeals they made. Unlike traditional posters, limited to explicit or implicit transactional appeals to vote for the party, OPPs contained an intriguing variety of appeals, as revealed by the data in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3 here

The principle transactional appeal – to vote for the party – featured in just over a quarter of all OPPs, though this ranged between the parties from barely a tenth of Plaid Cymru OPPs to almost two-thirds of SNP OPPs, and was not the most prominent type of appeal. Appeals ranged across a variety of relationship activities, varying from relatively low engagement activities such as sharing OPPs, visiting other online resources (like party websites) and being directed to watch/listen to party media appearances (such as the televised debates or radio interviews). Higher engagement activities such as attending public events (such as rallies), donating to and joining (and/or volunteering for) a party, featured but only marginally. In terms of the idea of the “political loyalty ladder” it seems that many OPPs for those parties where sharing was the most prominent type of appeal (Labour, the SNP, Plaid Cymru, the Greens) were arguably aimed at quite a range of audiences, from low engagement unwitting/accidental supporters through to more aware party “evangelists”. UKIP focused more clearly on “information seekers” in routinely directing users to their website in almost half of their OPPs, perhaps appropriate as a relatively new party. Only the Greens offered a notable proportion of appeals to join the party, reflective of their recruitment success that became a news event during the campaign itself (linked to their initial exclusion from the televised debates). In general though, the appeals in OPPs during the election campaign were predominantly focused on low engagement, low mobilisation activities that would seem to support ideas of some forms of political branding in social media being used for longer-term relationship marketing strategies, to try to enhance the loyalty of latent supporters found in online environments.

Tracking the success or otherwise of this range of appeals is beyond the scope of this study but some indicators of the success or failure of the low mobilisation online engagement activities are available through tracking the “likes” and “shares” OPPs received. When a user “shared” an OPP, it would appear on the pages of the people the user selected to share the

image with, whilst “liking” an OPP would signal interest to a user’s friends (depending on their profile settings and Facebook’s internal algorithms). In both senses these acts mobilise users to act as online evangelists, sharing information with their friend networks, hopefully reaching beyond party supporters with serendipitous reach to the wider electorate, and potentially then having images repeatedly shared and passed on from one group to another. Our data indicates, however, that OPPs in the vast majority of cases failed to achieve much evangelism, as shown in Table 2.4 [3]. Across the campaign as a whole OPPs were liked a total of 2,924,362 times, and shared 1,108,791 times suggesting that they were *collectively* seen by significant numbers of people. However, our data suggests that in terms of *individual* OPPs’ reach, this was far more modest.

Table 2.4 here

Of only 16 OPPs achieving more than 20000 likes, eleven were from UKIP, 3 from the Greens and two Conservative. Nine were produced on either polling day or May 8th including the most liked OPP of all, produced on polling day featuring an image of the Union flag with the Conservative logo and the slogan “thanks for voting Conservative” on it. In terms of shares, only 6 OPPs received more than 10000 shares, three from UKIP, two from the Greens, and the most shared image being from Labour, again on polling day, featuring a simple ballot box image with the slogan “Today’s the day I’m voting Labour”. Seven of the top 10 most liked OPPs and four of the top 10 most shared OPPs were also distributed on either May 7th or 8th. Although the two main parties achieved the most liked and most shared individual OPPs, smaller parties appeared to compete far more effectively in these regards, particularly UKIP with significantly higher means for both likes and shares than the other parties. Apart from two Conservative OPPs that weren’t shared at all, only Plaid Cymru had OPPs that weren’t liked (67 without likes) or shared (130 without shares) even once. Even for the parties achieving likes and shares, the comparative lack of larger scale dissemination of

OPPs suggest that relational efforts to get Facebook followers to evangelise and spread the brand was not particularly successful, occurring mostly as a statement to show that they had voted for their preferred party, or expressed a response to the result. Likes and shares remained consistent regardless of variations in aspects such as focus, orientation, design, personality and branding, showing no clear patterns of OPP content impacting on like-ability or share-ability (although the handful of OPPs liked more than 20000 times or shared more than 10000 times were all branded). The presence of appeals to share also seemed unrelated to the proportions of likes or shares as well, with no pattern of greater shares or likes occurring where such appeals were present (and no apparent evidence of any outlier like/share figures that might signal effective party efforts at boosting these through marketing spend).

Conclusion

Our preliminary analysis of OPP production in the 2015 British General Election reveals some interesting issues for questions of political brand management online. Parties clearly have significantly occupied social media spaces with content like OPPs but in terms of their role in party campaign communication the consequences of that virtual presence is difficult to evaluate. The saturation strategies of Labour and Plaid Cymru – producing lots of OPPs almost every day of the campaign, and sometimes one every few hours – may have compromised the potential for individual OPPs to be distributed widely, as the screen life of each OPP was relatively short, though it might have maximised the potential for accidental exposure to OPPs overall through ensuring a continual presence towards the top of users’ newsfeeds (as Facebook’s newsfeed algorithms preference newer content). UKIP and the Greens with an approach of rarely more than a couple of images per campaign day on average seemed to be more successful in gaining traction with their OPPs. This may suggest that there is a fine balance between attempting to occupy a social media space to signal party

strength through virtual presence of the party brand online (akin to the presence evident through local community posters) and not maximising the potential reach and visibility of images so that they become like the memorable billboards of old. On the other hand, the extent to which OPPs are geared towards internal brand management, being directed at party supporters as well as to a wider audience of potential supporters, might suggest that the extent of liking and sharing of OPPs is not the only measure of relative success as, in the acts of liking and sharing themselves, party supporters arguably position themselves a little closer to the party, and move a little further up the loyalty ladder. Even when only a few hundred or few thousand people liked or shared OPPs these low engagement acts may signal to a party people with potential to become more fully active in future (as well as providing parties with useful data on those users). After the 8th May, several parties experienced significant membership increases; within a week, for instance, the Liberal Democrats had gained around 10,000 new members, and Labour almost 30,000 (Perraudin 2015). The handful of OPPs produced in the week after the election tended to make appeals to join the party, and whilst there's unlikely to be any clear causal relationship between such OPPs and people joining parties, the increasing familiarity with political messages and political appeals within social media, as well as means of engaging in party political activities via social media as well, may be indicative of a genuine shift in the relationship between British political parties and the electorate. OPPs are clearly now both an alternative channel for the kinds of transactional marketing directed at low engagement voters like their print-based antecedents and also a channel for a more relational form of party branding through supporter-initiated two-step flow persuasion and influence, warranting further study.

Footnotes:

[1] In March 2014 Conservative Chairman Grant Shapps placed an OPP on Twitter attempting to trumpet the impact of the recent Budget on the price of beer and bingo. Described variously as an advert or infographic, it generated a ‘Twitter Storm’ as users saw it as revealing Conservative party’s stereotypical views of working class interests (*Guardian*, 2014).

[2] The campaign periods were defined by the Electoral Commission:

http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/173074/UKPGE-Part-3-Spending-and-donations.pdf

[3] Likes and Shares were measured after 3 days per OPP, following research which suggests that social media posts typically have a “half-life” around three days with likes and shares rarely exceeding numbers achieved in the first three days:

<http://blog.bitly.com/post/9887686919/you-just-shared-a-link-how-long-will-people-pay>.

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Tables

Table 2.1: Parties' Online Political Poster Production Over Time (no. and row %)

	Dec (1)		Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr		May (2)		Total
Conservative	0	0.0%	5	3.6%	10	7.2%	27	19.6%	61	44.2%	35	25.4%	138
Labour	9	1.7%	40	7.6%	53	10.1%	105	20.1%	251	48.0%	65	12.4%	523
Liberal Democrat	1	1.6%	7	10.9%	11	17.2%	8	12.5%	9	14.1%	28	43.8%	64
UKIP	0	0.0%	5	5.6%	11	12.2%	20	22.2%	30	33.3%	24	26.7%	90
Green	0	0.0%	7	6.5%	11	10.2%	28	25.9%	46	42.6%	16	14.8%	108
SNP	0	0.0%	16	18.0%	17	19.1%	15	16.9%	35	39.3%	6	6.7%	89
Plaid Cymru	1	0.4%	38	13.9%	16	5.9%	16	5.9%	172	63.0%	30	11.0%	273
Total	11	0.9%	118	9.2%	129	10.0%	219	17.0%	604	47.0%	204	15.9%	1285

((1) December 19th 2014- December 31st 2014; (2) May 1st – May 8th 2015)

Table 2.2: Branding and Orientation of Online Political Posters by Party (row %)

Party	Branding		Orientation*					
	% of OPPs		% of Branded OPPs		% of Unbranded OPPs		% of All OPPs	
	Branded	Unbranded	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Conservative	77.5	22.5	75.7	11.2	9.7	83.9	60.9	27.5
Labour	73.6	26.4	75.5	15.9	35.5	55.1	64.9	26.2
Liberal Democrat	93.8	6.3	81.7	11.7	25.0	75.0	78.1	15.6
UKIP	92.2	7.8	69.9	18.1	57.1	28.6	68.9	18.9
Green	88.9	11.1	68.8	16.7	50.0	0.0	66.7	14.8
SNP	92.1	7.9	80.5	12.2	28.6	57.1	76.4	15.7
Plaid Cymru	97.0	3.0	74.1	11.4	100.0	0.0	74.9	11.1
Total	83.9	16.1	74.9	14.0	35.3	53.6	68.5	20.4

(* excluding OPPs coded as not having either positive or negative orientation = 11.1% of all OPPs)

Table 2.3: Mobilising Appeals in Online Political Posters by Party (no. and column %)

	Con		Lab		LD		UKIP		Green		SNP		PC		Total	
Share	22	12.2%	307	58.7%	19	29.7%	24	26.7%	50	46.3%	67	75.3%	191	70.0%	680	52.9%
Vote	51	37.0%	130	24.9%	24	37.5%	20	22.2%	42	38.9%	57	64.0%	33	12.1%	357	27.8%
Online	0	11.2%	66	12.6%	1	1.6%	44	48.9%	17	15.7%	3	3.4%	4	1.5%	135	10.5%
Join	0	0.0%	18	3.4%	1	1.6%	0	0.0%	11	10.2%	3	3.4%	3	1.1%	36	2.8%
Media	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.8%	9	10.0%	1	0.9%	6	6.7%	9	3.3%	25	1.9%
Event	0	0.0%	3	0.6%	0	0.0%	1	1.1%	8	7.4%	1	1.1%	11	4.0%	24	1.9%
Donate	0	0.0%	3	0.6%	0	0.5%	0	0.0%	9	8.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	12	0.9%

Table 2.4 OPP Likes and Shares by Party

Party		Range (row %)					Maximum	Mean
		0-100	101-1000	1001-5000	5001-10000	10001+		
Conservative	Likes	7.2	5.8	66.7	15.9	4.3	57491	3925
	Shares	11.6	40.6	44.2	3.6	0.0	8853	1267
Labour	Likes	1.5	42.1	53.1	2.5	0.8	14292	1574
	Shares	6.3	67.2	23.9	2.3	0.2	18503	916
Liberal	Likes	17.2	78.1	4.7	0.0	0.0	2200	338
Democrat	Shares	54.7	45.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	908	124
UKIP	Likes	0.0	5.6	26.7	32.2	35.6	46880	9696
	Shares	3.3	25.6	58.9	8.9	3.3	14479	2451
Green	Likes	0.0	20.4	63.0	10.2	6.5	36169	3700
	Shares	7.4	49.1	38.0	3.7	1.9	14771	1425
SNP	Likes	5.6	5.6	74.2	14.6	0.0	9117	2832
	Shares	6.7	62.9	30.3	0.0	0.0	2695	780
Plaid Cymru	Likes	83.9	15.8	0.4	0.0	0.0	692	55
	Shares	97.4	2.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	384	14
All	Likes	20.5	27.5	41.4	6.9	3.8	57491	2278
	Shares	28.6	44.8	23.9	2.3	0.5	18503	864