



WHICH PARTY WINS ON FACEBOOK, TWITTER AND YOUTUBE

by **~ sotrender**

- □ FACEBOOK SUPPORT MIRRORS THE REAL WORLD EBB AND FLOW OF SUPPORT
- THE CONSERVATIVES AND UKIP ARE DOMINANT ON FACEBOOK WITH AROUND 400,000 FOLLOWERS EACH
- LABOUR ARE THE WINNERS ON TWITTER, ALTHOUGH THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS ARE THE MOST FREQUENT TWEETERS

UKIP HAS THE MOST SUBSCRIBERS ON YOUTUBE

GREENS HAVE THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF THEIR SUPPORTERS WHO ENGAGE (54%) ON FACEBOOK

THE CONSERVATIVES SHARE VISITORS WITH UKIP AND TO A LESSER EXTENT LABOUR

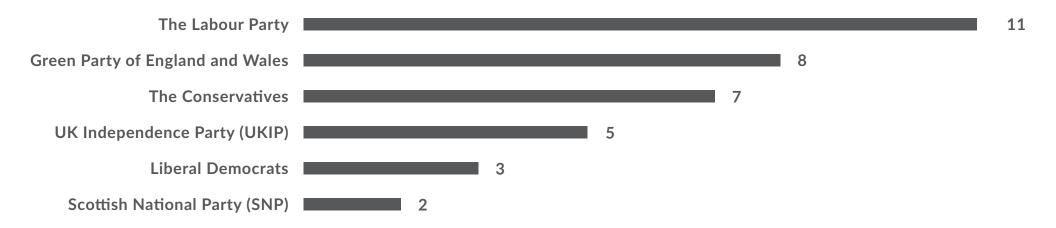
LABOUR HAVE THE MOST SUCCESSFUL STRATEGY AND THE GREEN PARTY STRUCK GOLD WITH ONE VIDEO





JOINT RANKING OF COMMUNICATION INTENSITY

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The UK General Election is coming and it's coming quick. Parties are doing their best to gain support of their electorate and as many floating voters as possible. Their campaigns take place among other places also on social media. However, it's not much friendly a space for politics and politicians. Social media is often compared to a big party and politics is not the best topic to talk while having fun. So how are political parties performing on social media at the crucial time of the pre-election campaign?

Sotrender, the social media analytics company, analyzed the online activities of the biggest parties on the most important social media channels. Which party runs the most intensive electoral campaign and which one is the most efficient on each of the platforms? Read the report and check how the parties engage users on social media and what language they use to influence their electorate and get more votes. In general, the most intense campaign is conducted by the Labour Party, the main opposition party in the Parliament. They lead in our special joint ranking of communication intensity with 11 points. The ranking is a sum of parties' activities and user engagement on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. For the first position a profile gained 3 points, for second 2 points and for the third - 1.

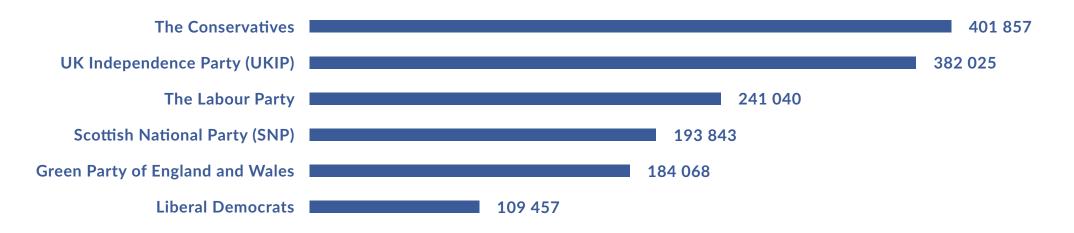


UK GENERAL ELECTION ON FACEBOOK





FANS OF PARTIES' FACEBOOK PAGES



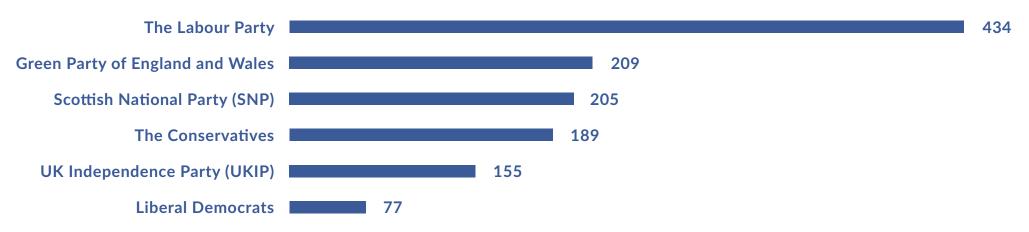
Every party running in May election has a Facebook Page. We measured their communication using three metrics: number of fans, number of posts and number of engaged users.

The governing coalition - The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats - also has majority on Facebook, their fanpages are followed by over 500 thousand fans combined. The Conservatives have over 400 thousand fans and their Facebook site is the biggest among all United Kingdom political parties. Liberal Democrats with 109 thousand fans place 6th and have the smallest Facebook Page in our ranking. Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition - Labour Party - ranks 3rd in biggest Facebook Pages with 241 thousand fans, being surpassed by right wing United Kingdom Independence Party, which is liked by 382 thousand Facebook users. Scottish National Party, a probable deciding factor in case of a hung Parliament, has 192 thousand fans and ranks 4th, while Greens rank 5th with 178 thousand fans.





POSTS OF PARTIES FACEBOOK PAGES



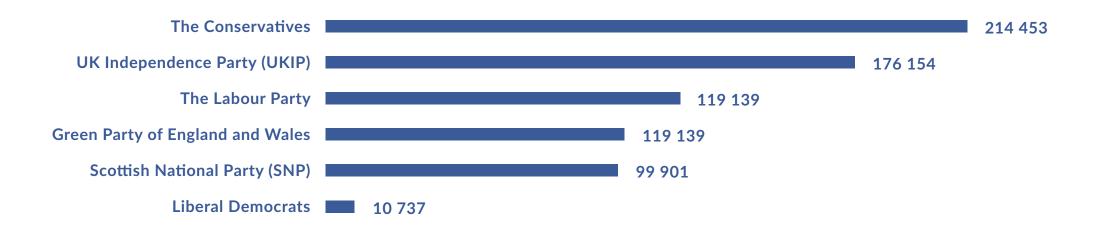
Labour is also the most active party on Facebook. Within the analysed period (March 1 - April 20) they posted over 434 times (over twice more than The Conservatives), while Libdems only 77 times.







ENGAGED USERS ON PARTIES



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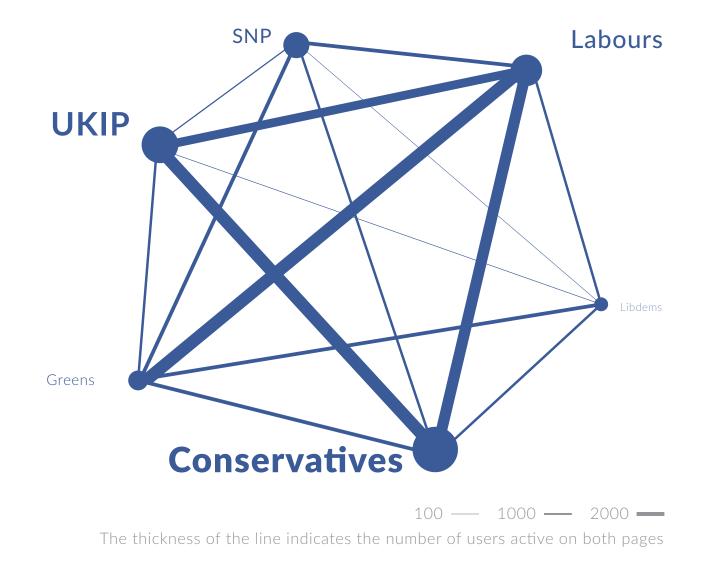
Social media are changing the way politicians communicate with their electorate. Their monologue turned into a dialogue with potential voters. Each social media platform enables a different way of engaging the audience, which is one of the primary goals of all social media activities. To sum up, the level of users' engagement shows whether a politician successes in provoking a reaction from the part of the audience which may constitute a carrier of viral content.





INTEREST GRAPH - FACEBOOK MARCH 1, 2015 - APRIL 20, 2015

The interest graph shows how many users are engaged on two different Facebook Pages which reflect their interests. The thicker the line, the more engaged users these Pages share. As you can see, SNP has strong ties to Greens and the Labour Party other left wing parties. The most users engage themselves both on Greens' and Labour's Pages, but it is not obvious if it's a matter of a potential swinging vote or the fact that voters of both parties have similar views. We can see a similar situation on the right - the same users are active both on the UKIP's and the The Conservatives' Pages. Surprisingly, there is a quite strong tie between the Labour and UKIP Pages, but probably in this case users are active rather by commenting and discussing the other page's content than liking it.







WORDCLOUD LANGUAGE OF GENERAL COMMUNICATION

The wordcloud is made up from words that were used most frequently in posts published on parties' Facebook Pages. The bigger the word appears, the more often it was used during the analysed period. In general, the most often used word by all parties is will followed by can which emphasizes the promises parties make to their potential voters. We also observe how in their communication particular parties focus on emphasising their particular values, i.e. people, labour, work, help or plan.

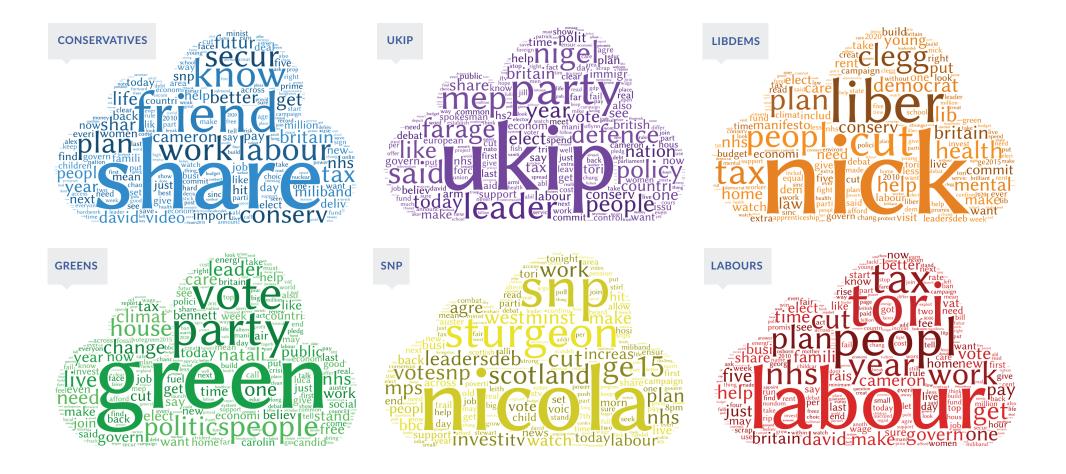
We can see that SNP and Libdems are basing their social media communication primarily on their leaders (Nicola Sturgeon and Nick Clegg respectively). Nigel Farage, UKIP's leader appears in many of their posts, but the name of the party itself is used most often, just as in the case of the Greens and the Labour. Labour Party, the biggest opposition party, is fiercely attacking the governing coalition, tori (stemmed from tories) is among the most frequent words in their communication. Also, David Cameron appears in their posts more often than the labour leader, Ed Milliband. The Conservatives, wanting to secure their second consecutive victory, focus on encouraging Facebook users to share their content. Labour appears in the Conservatives's communication quite often, but not Ed Milliband in person.







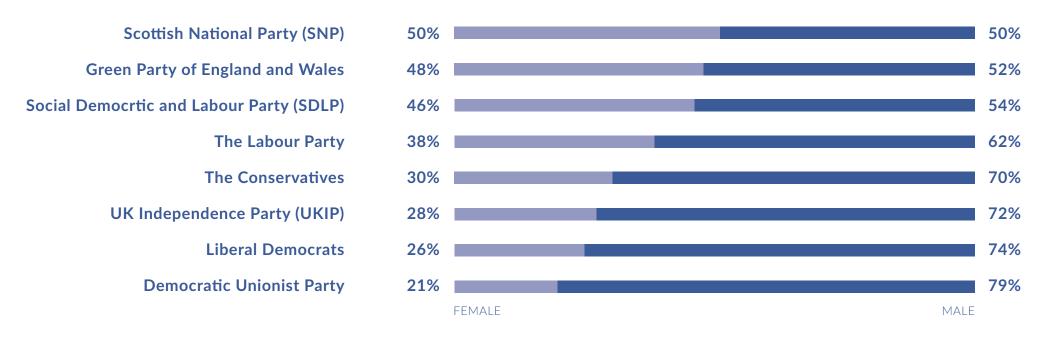
PARTIES WORDCLOUDS





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DEMOGRAPHICS - PARTIES' PROFILES GENDER STRUCTURE



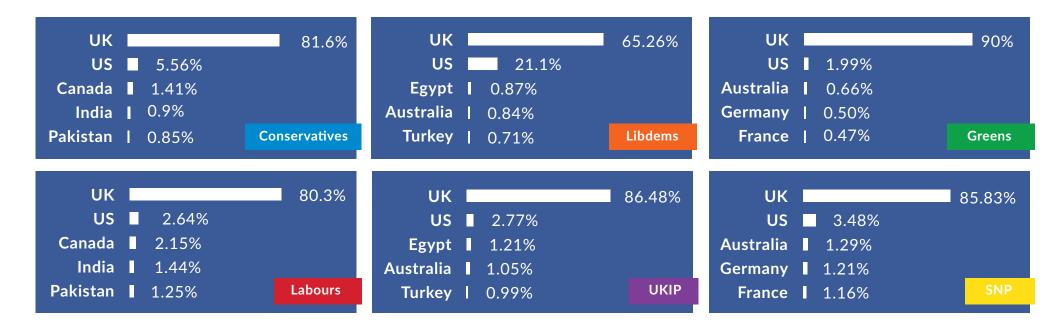
The above chart presents gender structure of political party Fanpages.

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We can see that on Facebook, in general, men are more interested in politics than women and more likely to engage on political party pages. Three parties have almost the same number of male and female fans. They are Scottish National Party, Green Party of England and Wales and Social Democratic and Labour Party. It is noteworthy that all three of them are left wing parties and none of them is present countrywide. Two of them are supporting partial or full independence of the constituent countries they are active in. The party least followed by women is is Northern Irish Democratic Unionist Party, followed by Liberal Democrats and UKIP.



DEMOGRAPHICS DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE OF POLITIAL PARTY FANPAGES



The above charts present the percentage of fans by (declared) country of residence.

There are some intresting demographic features to see among supporters of the parties running in the upcoming election. Only 60% of Libdems' fans are based in the UK. This is the smallest share of all parties. 20% of Liberal Democrats' fans are Americans and it's the biggest share of foreign users on any of the parties sites. The Conservatives also have quite a siginificant share of American fans - 5%. Another interesting fact is that the fftth biggest naoonality on UKIP's fanpage (an openly an--immigrant party) are Poles. This is probably due to anti-EU UKIP's rhetoric shared with Polish KORWiN party, whose fans and well-wishers are extremely active on social media.



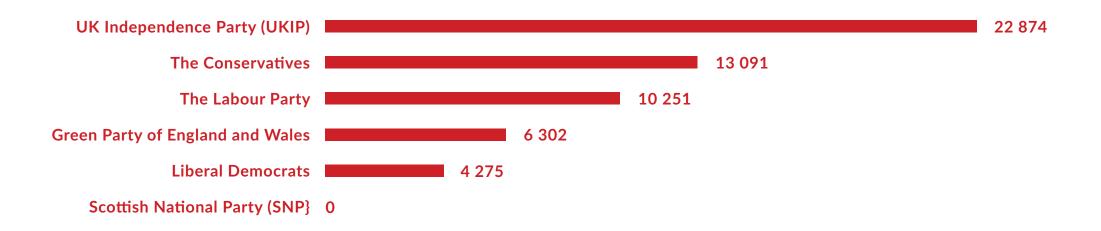


UK GENERAL ELECTION ON YOUTUBE



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SUBSCRIBERS OF PARTIES' YOUTUBE CHANNELS



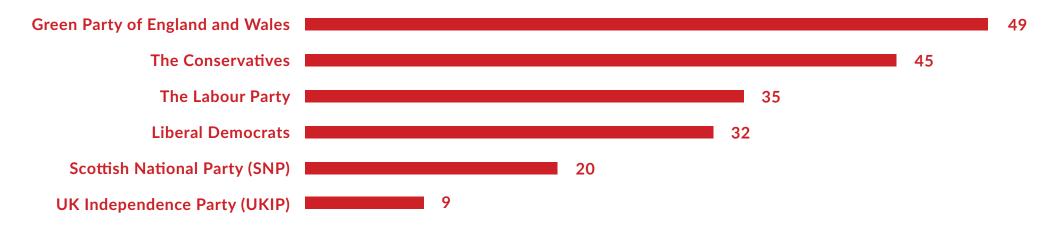
Video communication is becoming more and more important on the Internet. It no longer consists mainly of funny viral videos of cats. Political parties and politicians are also using videos to promote themselves and influence their voters.

The most active party on YouTube are Greens, with 49 new videos and 749 thousand total views. UKIP is the most followed party on YouTube with over 22 thousand subscribers, but in the analysed period their videos had the smallest number of views. Scottish National Party decided to hide the number of their subsribers and is second to last in terms of number of views. SNP and UKIP's videos combined were viewed over three times less than videos of the fourth party, Liberal Democrats.





VIDEOS OF PARTIES' YOUTUBE CHANNELS



The Conservatives uploaded 45 videos during the analysed period, and their content was viewed 479 thousand times. The governing party surpassed Labour and their 422 thousand views. Conservatives ranked higher than opposition also in terms of the number of subscribers, with over 13 thousand users following their channel, while the Labour's channel is subscribed by 10 thousand users.

Liberal Democrats

Try publishing on Thursdays

You rarely publish on this day of the week, while it is the day when you get most views.

Data-driven tips generated automatically in Sotrender platform

Conservatives

You should publish more regularly

During the last 3 months there was a period when you didn't publish anything for 10 consecutive weeks. YouTube works best is you publish at least one video per week on average.

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Scottish National Party (SNP)

Try publishing on Wednesdays, Saturdays

On these days you publish less, nevertheless users view your viedeos the most often.

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VIEWS OF PARTIES' YOUTUBE CHANNELS

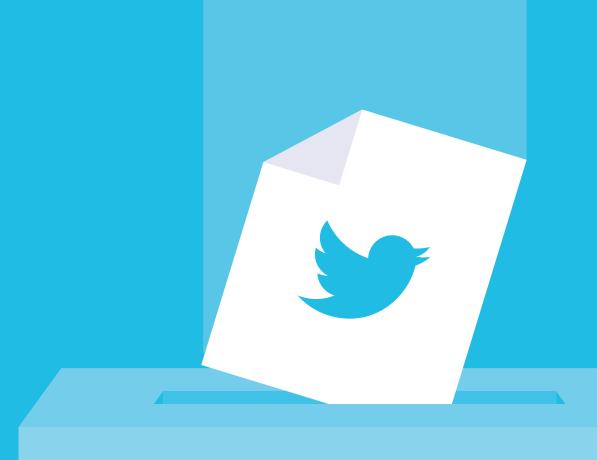


UK Independence Party (UKIP) Green Party of England and Wales Publish longer videos Try to publish more often Vote Labour Thursday 7 May Currently your videos are on average 501 seconds Try to publish at least one video per week. long. Longer videos used to have During those weeks when you published more 2.269 more views. VOLUNTEER SUBSCRIBE SHARE views increased by 134.958 views more. Data-driven tips generated automatically in Sotrender platform Data-driven tips generated automatically in Sotrender platform



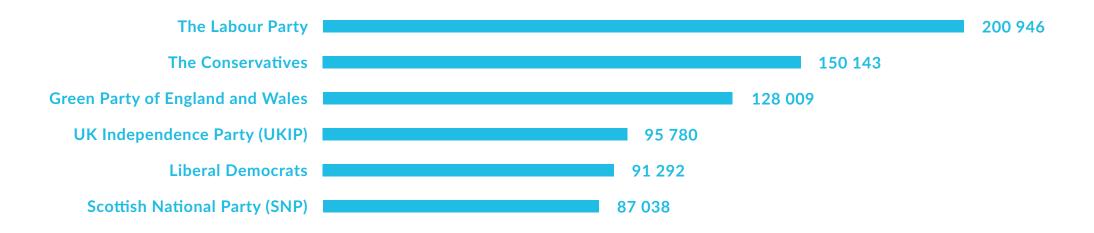
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UK GENERAL ELECTION ON TWITTER





FOLLOWERS OF PARTIES' TWITTER ACCOUNTS



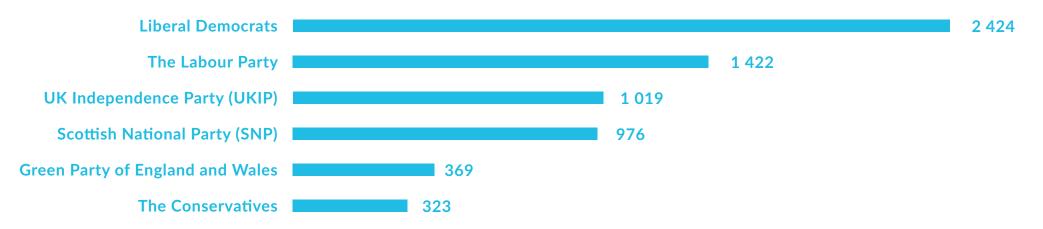
Twitter is a much faster medium than Facebook. It instantly reacts to politicians' speeches, gaffes, conferences. It is also becoming one of the basic means of political communication. We analysed the number of followers, number of tweets published by a party profile (including replies and retweets) and all the activities of other Twitter users (mentions, retweets of party tweets, adding to favourites, replies to tweets).

Three parties have more than 100 thousand followers - besides The Labour Party, these include the Conservatives and The Greens. Labour has over 50 thousand more followeres than the Conservatives. The least followed profile of the six biggest parties is the Scottish National Party, the only party not running in the whole of United Kingdom.





TWEETS OF PARTIES' TWITTER PROFILES



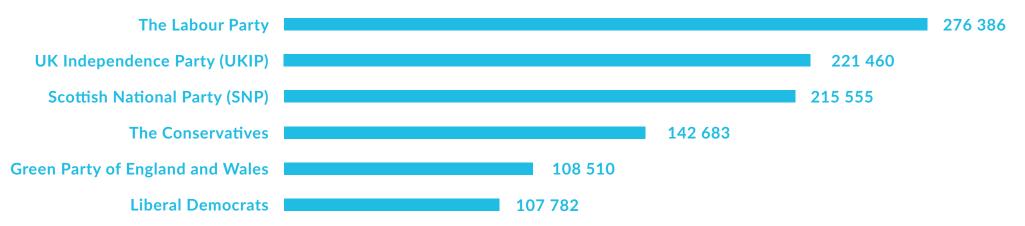
It looks like Liberal Democrats decided to use Twitter in favour of Facebook. During the analysed period (March 1 - April 20) Libdems sent 2424 tweets, that is a thousand more than the second most active party - Labour. The third most active party on Twitter was UKIP with 1019 tweets. The Conservatives in the same period published only 323 tweets.







ACTIVITES OR PARTIES' TWITTER ACCOUNTS



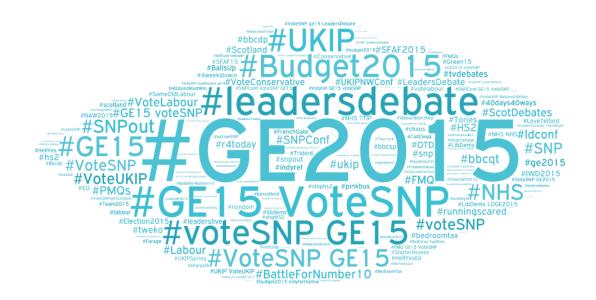
However, The Conservatives' tweets were more engaging then the ones of the Greens and Libdems and governing party places 4th in the engagement ranking. Scottish National Party is almost as engaging as UKIP and these two parties achieved a much higher rate of engagement than the Coalition on Twitter. It's noteworthy that combined engagement of Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives is smaller than that of the Labour Party.







THE MOST POPULAR PARTIES' HASHTAGS





This man can be Prime Minister in three weeks' time. Retweet this post if you back @Ed_Miliband #BBCDebate #em4pm

To see which hashtags were used the most frequently during the campaign, we analysed over 617 thousand tweets sent between March 1 and April 20, 2015. The words were stemmed to their basic forms with the use of Porter's algorithm. After that we calculated their frequency that is reflected on the graph below.

The most popular hashtag for the coming election for all parties is simple #GE2015. Other popular ones include more specific tags like #Budget2015, #leadersdebate, #bedroomtax. The most popular party hashtag is #UKIP.





THE MOST POPULAR PARTIES' HASHTAGS

iberal Democrates	The Conservatives	Scottish National Party (SNP)
#GE2015 855	#GE2015 7947	#GE15 57722
#ldconf 311	#leadersdebate 3416	#VoteSNP 47006
#leadersdebte 287	#Budget2015 2908	#voteSNP 23194
#libdems 70	#VoteConservative 2892	#GE2015 9600
#Budget2015 67	#NHS 2706	#ge15 6326
he Labour Party	Green Party of Englnd and Whales	UK Independence Party (UKIP)
he Labour Party #GE2015 8951	Green Party of Englnd and Whales #VoteGreen2015 11635	UK Independence Party (UKIP) #UKIP 12628
#GE2015 8951	#VoteGreen2015 11635	#UKIP 12628
#GE2015 8951 #VoteLabour 4568	#VoteGreen2015 11635 #ledersdebate 4868	#UKIP 12628 #VoteUKIP 7185



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DR DARREN G. LILLEKER (Bournemouth University)

Darren G. Lilleker is Associate Professor of Political Communication, has published widely on party campaigning and electioneering and their impacts. His most recent work focuses on communication psychology, *Political Communication and Cognition (Palgrave, 2014)*

Social media may not have an impact upon the outcome of an election but, to some extent, the activities that parties and citizens engage in on platforms like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube may be a reflection of broader political attitudes and behaviours which have resonance at this or subsequent elections.

THE CONSERVATIVES AND UKIP DOMINATE ON FACEBOOK

The Sotrender data shows a mixture of winners and losers. The Conservatives and UKIP are fairly dominant on Facebook with around 400,000 followers each. Labour, the SNP and Greens lag behind with the Liberal Democrats with the fewest supporters and much less than their fan base on the eve of the 2010 election. The Liberal Democrats' position shows, if nothing else, that Facebook support mirrors the real world ebb and flow of support. There is also an indication that effort does not equate to success. Despite Labour posting twice the content as every other party they do not earn followers in return for their efforts. Labour, however are the winners in overall numbers on Twitter, although the Liberal Democrats are the most frequent tweeters they languish towards the bottom. UKIP have the most subscribers on YouTube.





LIBERAL DEMOCRATS' EFFORT HAS ALMOST NO EFFECT

Labour similarly do not gain a more engaged audience in return for their frequency of posting. In terms of percentages, rather than raw numbers, we find that the Greens have the highest percentage of supporters who engage (54%) but this is only one percent above the Conservatives and three percent above the SNP. Labour lag slightly on 49%, with UKIP on 46%; perhaps reflecting the fact that support for the party has waned during their time in the coalition, the Liberal Democrats only have 9% of their audience who engage.

The picture for the Liberal Democrats is equally bad in terms of supporters gained on Facebook over the course of the campaign. While 9,308 is not disastrous, it is when compared to the other parties. Here we find an interesting finding that Labour, perhaps due to leader Ed Miliband's 'good' campaign, to date gained the greatest overall number of new supporters. The Greens are second, again interesting to see that despite gaffes by leader Natalie Bennett when explaining the fine detail of party policy they are gaining an interested following. Similar strong performances in the debates appear to have bolstered support for the Scottish and Welsh nationalists, the Conservatives had a large community to start with but this has grown least suggesting the party may have a critical mass of support among Facebook users interested in politics at this time and with this leader and political platform.







ONE VIDEO TO RULE THEM ALL

While the messages follow unsurprising patterns with evidence of negative campaigning alongside self-promotion; more interesting is the reach earned for messages. The link to the Green Party's main campaign video 'Change the Tune' was shared by 95% of their supporters, the closest rival for one single post is the sharing of UKIP's Pledge Card by 70% of their supporters though in actual numbers UKIP outstrip the Greens by nearly 100,000. But in terms of virality, the Green video (featuring a parody of the male party leaders as a boy band singing together) has the widest reach showing how a small party can punch way above their weight if they have the right formula. Interaction with that video is partially responsible for the Green Party's high score for engagement intensity. Despite the Conservatives' high performance on Facebook they are third with Labour appearing to have the most engaged audience across all social media platforms.



Frame from Youtube movie: Change The Tune - Green Party 2015 Election Broadcast, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PPgS7p40ERg

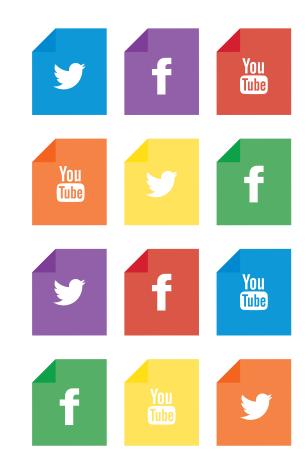




WHO ENGAGES WHERE IN SOCIAL MEDIA?

While the data says a great deal about the behaviour of supporters in extending the reach of parties there is also evidence that some Facebook users are active on more than one party profile. Either these people show support on one profile while trolling the other, or they travel between profiles to seek information. Whatever the case there are interesting patterns among the visitors to the profiles of the two main parties. Conservatives share visitors with UKIP and to a lesser extent Labour, should we infer these are seeking help make a decision or trolling? Similarly Labour share visitors with the Green Party, then UKIP and the SNP, one might suggest again these visitors could be playing either role.

The data should not be used to infer a winner, but it might suggest that overall Labour have the most successful strategy and the Green Party struck gold with one video. The Conservatives are performing well on some platforms and not on others, perhaps it reflects the uncertainty that the polls indicate persists among public opinion. The Liberal Democrats' parlous position in the polls is reflected in their low support across platforms where a party of the whole of the UK struggle to compete against Scottish or Welsh Nationalists who only stand in one of the nations. If the data is reflective of the vote it remains too close to call between the major parties, the smaller parties might do well if attention equates to votes; the Liberal Democrats, however, would appear to have few who wish to publicly endorse the party independent of the effort they put in to social forms of communication.







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ABOUT / sotrender

Sotrender is a social media analytics tool, which enables optimization of marketing activities carried out on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube as well as fast reporting on their results. Providing automatic data-driven tips, Sotrender helps to quickly improve the effects of social media marketing campaigns. The tool is now used by over 800 marketers in 14 countries on 3 continents.

METHOD

Sotrender analyzed the data collected from official Facebook Pages, Twitter profiles and YouTube channels of the parties participating in the UK General Election 2015. For the purpose of this analysis we gathered the data concerning 5 biggest UK political parties (The Labour Party, Green Party of England and Wales, The Conservatives, UK Independence Party, Liberal Democrats) as well as the Scottish National Party.

We investigated all communication events occuring on Facebook Pages, Twitter profiles and YouTube Channels. i.e. number of posts, tweets, videos; number of likes, shares and comments; favourited tweets, replies and retweets, as well as number of views of videos. The data was collected from Facebook, Twitter and YouTube through API with the use of our proprietary technology used in the Sotrender tool. The analysis covers the period between March 1, 2015 and April 20, 2015.









SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYTICS WITH ACTIONABLE TIPS

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