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**A Little Birdie Told Me: Twitter and the 2014 New Zealand General Election**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
of**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the use of Twitter by ten New Zealand political parties, their leaders, and their candidates during the campaign period immediately preceding the 2014 General Election. Using both quantitative and qualitative data, the thesis not only demonstrates that Twitter was a platform used by all ten parties as part of their respective campaign strategies, but also argues that the ways in which Twitter was used was strongly influenced by each party's organisational structure, resources, and, to a lesser extent, culture of professionalism among its field of candidates. This thesis is not concerned with measuring the effectiveness of Twitter in achieving the goals set for it by various political parties, aiming instead to explain the variance of Twitter use during one recent election campaign period.

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## Glossary

App(s)	Abbreviated term for application. May refer to software installed on a smart phone, computer, or website.
Crowd Source	The practice of obtaining needed services, ideas, or content by soliciting contributions from a large group of people and especially from the online community rather than from traditional employees or suppliers.
Favourite	A means to show appreciation of a tweet. Late 2015 saw favourites change to likes.
Followers	Users who have subscribed to receive Tweets posted by the followed account.
Following	The number/size of followers an account has.
Handle	A unique user name used as an identifier on Twitter, the inclusion of which enables a tweet to be addressed to specific users.
Hashtag	The collection of text starting with the # symbol used to mark keywords or topics in a Tweet. Created organically by Twitter users as a way to categorize messages.
Like	A button associated with Facebook content, the clicking of which lets people know that a user enjoys certain content/comments without that user leaving a comment.
Meta Data	The additional data collected about individual tweets including favourite and retweet counts, Twitter client used, and new/reply/retweet status.
New Tweets	Tweets posted by an account that are not a reply to another users, or a retweet of another user.
Original Tweets	New Tweets plus Replies, but excluding Retweets
Reach	The number people who see an individual tweet.
Retweet	A way for a user to forward to their followers a tweet by another user, akin to a share on Facebook.
Selfies	A photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically taken with a smartphone or webcam and shared via social media.

Share	An action taken on Facebook to show one users' content to the friends of another user.
Timeline	A chronological list of tweets from accounts selected to be followed by a given twitter user.
Total Tweets	The cumulative total of New Tweets, Replies and Retweets.
Twitter client	A tool used to interact with the platform, be it the web portal, the official mobile app, a third party app (mobile or not), or an app built to interface with a website.
Web 2.0	The tools that emphasise user-generated content, usability, and interoperability, as well as the websites that make use of those tools.

## **Abbreviations and Acronyms**

API	Application Protocol Interface
FSA	Foreshore and Seabed Act
MP	Member of Parliament
NZES	New Zealand Election Study
TAGS 5	Twitter Archiving Google Spread Sheet V 5.0



## Introduction

Since Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign, political commentators and academics alike around the world, but especially in the United States, have made much of the role played by social media in politics (Carr, 2008; Dutta & Fraser, 2008; Hesseldahl, MacMillan, & Kharif, 2008; Sarno, 2008). While much research has been conducted on the political use of social media in the United States, as well as in South Korea, Australia, and Europe (See Baxter & Marcella, 2012; Bimber, 2014; Conway, Kenski, & Wang, 2013; Evans, Cordova, & Sipole, 2014; Greenberg, 2012; E.-J. Lee, 2013; E. J. Lee & Shin, 2012; Utz, 2009), there has not yet been a systemic and structured assessment of social media use in New Zealand by those individuals and groups seeking election to the national assembly, the House of Representatives. This thesis addresses that gap by examining the use of Twitter by ten New Zealand political parties, their leaders, and their candidates during the 2014 General Election. More specifically, this research examines the quantity and type of content tweeted by parties, leaders, and candidates, placing this use within the context of the overall campaign strategies of the respective parties. It demonstrates that Twitter was a platform used by all ten parties during the 2014 New Zealand General Election, arguing in particular that a party's organisational structure, levels of resourcing, and culture of professionalism strongly influenced the ways in which Twitter was used as part of that party's overall election campaign strategy. In so doing this thesis establishes a solid foundation of quantitative and qualitative data to support future research aimed at assessing the effectiveness, or otherwise, of Twitter during an election campaign in New Zealand. It also creates a baseline from which changes in usage patterns by parties and candidates can be better understood.

This introduction describes the contours of the social media landscape and situates Twitter within that context before reviewing the scholarly literature relating to the political use of social media both within New Zealand and

internationally. This literature review is divided into three sections, the first of which focuses on the use of social media by political operators, whereas the second focuses on user reactions to the use of social media by political operators, and the third focuses on the wider community of social media users. This review serves to establish key points of reference for the ensuing thesis, including analytical measures, as well as to identify gaps or weaknesses in the literature that require filling or strengthening.

Chapter One outlines the research design and analytical framework used to collect and assess data for this thesis. It focuses on both the theoretical and technical aspects of the research, highlighting a number of challenges facing this, and other, projects, as well as sign-posting some of the key limitations of this research. Chapter Two explores the operating environment confronting New Zealand political parties in 2014, and does so in terms of the electoral system and the demographic composition of New Zealand's voting public. It then very briefly explores the history of each party, as well as their respective strategies for contesting the 2014 General Election. It examines the organisational structure and level of resourcing of each party, the targets they set for themselves, and the particular constraints they faced. The following three substantive chapters utilise the data collected for this thesis to explain how various party, party leader, and candidate Twitter accounts were used between 00:01 on 1 June and 23:59 on 19 September 2014. The conclusion then draws together the three strands – party, party leader, and candidate Twitter accounts – in order to relate Twitter use to the broader campaign strategies, signalling both similarities and differences amongst the various parties.

### **What is Social Media?**

Since the early 2000s, the ways in which users experience and interact with the internet have changed drastically. Technological change has transformed the internet from a place where users experienced a pre-existing environment created by others to an environment that allows users to self create, and curate, their experiences. The internet has moved media consumption from a mass

media product to a more personalised experience. Negroponte defined this new form of media as “the daily me” (as cited in Farrell, 2012), which users are able to create without significant technological skill. From the mid-2000s on, one of the dominant drivers of this change has been social media. For example, Pew Research found that 59% of surveyed users in the United States had used Twitter to follow a breaking news story (Barthel, Shearer, Gottfried, & Mitchell, 2015).

Social media is an ill-defined hold-all term used to describe a range of recent technologies focused around websites, tools, and applications. Fuchs and Sandoval (2014) take a social theory approach to defining social media, finding that any media and online platform that primarily supports cognition, communication or community-building and collaborative work falls into the category of ‘social media’. However Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) see social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content.” At the same time, Hill, Dean and Murphy (2014, pp. 2–3) allude to the same need for communication and co-operation in their working definition of social media, which they establish as “the collection of websites and web-based systems that allow for mass interaction, conversation and sharing among members of a network. ...[S]ocial media has four defining characteristics: user-generated content, community, rapid distribution, and open, two-way dialogue”. These three definitions each include a large range of websites and services, many of which offer the ability for users to comment on various content elements. As such, these definitions set out the boundaries of social media for the purposes of this thesis.

What many ordinary people mean by social media is perhaps better defined by academics as Social Networking Sites. These are a subset of social media and are defined as sites that allow users to create a profile and share a wide range of rich media content with other users they allow to see their profile (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010): these include Facebook, MySpace, and Tumblr, as well as Twitter. For the purposes of this thesis, the term ‘social media’ will be used in the more widely-recognised non-specialist sense, standing in for what academics

have defined as Social Networking Sites; this meaning more closely aligns with the meaning intended by those interviewed as part of this research, as well as expected by non-specialist readers.

### **What is Twitter?**

Twitter is a social media platform that sits within a subset of social media known as microblogging that grew out of the Web 2.0 movement of the early 2000s. Kaplan and Haenlein (2011) define microblogging as “Internet-based application(s)...which allows users to exchange small elements of content such as short messages, individual images, or video links”. Twitter limits their “small elements of content” to 140-characters (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011), including any links, handles or hashtags.<sup>1</sup> This space limitation leads to a number of short-hand signifiers being created. This can present challenges for political parties and candidates who have to reconcile two conflicting drivers of behaviour: firstly, a desire to appear professional and be ‘on brand’ at all times while, secondly, fitting in with the prevailing tone of the platform without appearing as outsiders. Although Twitter is the most widely used microblogging platform outside of China, there are a range of others (many only having national or regional breakthrough) such as Jaiku (Finland), Plurk (Southeast Asia), Weibo (China), and Tumblr (New York based, but with global reach) (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011). Just like these, Twitter is focused around user accounts, which include a handle – @username – that allows tweets to be directed at a particular user.

While Twitter is reluctant to provide a detailed breakdown of their users, a partial understanding of its user base is possible from filings required as part of its stock market listing. Twitter has around 1 billion registered accounts (Koetsier, 2013), 302 million average monthly active users (Twitter Inc, 2015), and around 100 million active daily users (Twitter Inc, 2013). In comparison, Facebook has 1.44 billion active monthly users and 936 million active daily users

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<sup>1</sup> In early 2016, possible plans to increase the character limit became public (Oremus, 2016). At the time of writing the extent and timing of these proposed changes are unclear, but their introduction will affect the direction and methods of future research.

(Facebook, 2015). UMR's report, *Mood of the Nation*, found that 76% of New Zealanders have a Facebook account while only 22% have a Twitter account (2015a, pp. 47–48). Within this, 39% of those with a Twitter account use it a few times a week or more, with 19% using it several times a day. In comparison, 83% of New Zealand's Facebook users use it at least a few times a week, with 48% using it several times a day. While Twitter achieved a 22% penetration rate overall, some demographics had noticeably higher rates than this: namely, 18-29 year olds (35%), those with postgraduate qualifications (30%), household incomes over NZ\$100,000 (26%), and those living in the Wairarapa/Wellington region (27%) (UMR Research, 2015b).<sup>2</sup> The smaller size of Twitter's user base, compared to Facebook, means its demographics are not as representative of the wider population.

## **Literature Review**

The scholarly literature focusing on social media in a political context, and particularly Twitter, can be divided into three broad groups: how political operators use social media; how social media users react to that use; and how the wider Twitter community reacts to, engages, and interacts with political issues.

### *Twitter Use by Political Operators*

A central foundation of the research conducted for this thesis is the scholarly literature focusing on those who use Twitter as a political tool and how they use it. As with much of the research into Twitter use, there has been a strong focus on its use in an American context. The Congressional Research Service investigated the use of social media by members of both the United States House

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<sup>2</sup> There are limitations to UMR's *Mood of the Nation* research. While it provides useful insights into the demographics of New Zealand's Twitter users, its approach of documenting usage rates among certain demographics, as opposed to the demographic makeup of the user base, limits its usefulness. Colmar Brunton are planning more in-depth research that will give a better understanding of Twitter's demographics, however the release date for this research has been delayed.

of Representatives and United States Senate over a two-month period in 2011. It found that 83.4% of members had Twitter (Glassman, Straus, & Shogan, 2013). The work of Glassman et al. was supported by graduate students at the University of Texas's Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, who released a more detailed report based on the same information. Its key finding was that, despite the interactive and two-way potential of social media, its usage by elected representatives was still very much one-directional. Furthermore, the size of the following that elected representatives attracted was not related to their level of interaction, but rather was related to external factors associated with their role, such as committee appointments and mainstream media coverage (Greenberg, 2012). The executive summary makes mention of questions raised in the substantive section of the report (Greenberg, 2012, pp. vii, 20, 24–34), focused on issues relating to the applicability, to social media, of traditional rules governing the allocation of funding for communication by elected representatives and issues of process, privacy, security, and ethics, as well as questions around the role played by social media in reinforcing the advantages of political incumbency. Though that study is focused on the United States Congress these issues may be worthy of investigation in New Zealand following Privileges Committee hearings on issues of social media use by Members of Parliament (MPs) (Privileges Committee of the House of Representatives (NZ), 9/15).

Evans, Cordona & Sipole (2014) observe that many of the researchers who have focused on examining tweets sent by political operators have done so by using small samples. It is rare for them to take a holistic view of an entire body of candidates. Their study does so, coding 67,119 tweets from 1,119 candidates for the United States House of Representatives during the last two months before the 2012 full-term elections. It found that female and Republican candidates were more likely to have Twitter accounts than male and Democratic candidates (Evans et al., 2014, p. 456). They also found that differences between the number of followers, tweets, or types of tweets sent by candidates from different parties were better explained by factors such as gender, the competitive nature of the race, or whether or not they were an incumbent or challenger, than by party

affiliation (Evans et al., 2014). These findings fit with Greenberg (2012), who states that differences in style can be accounted for as much by factors, such as committee membership and prominence in the media, as they can by other factors, such as party membership or output levels. These two studies reach similar findings about the level of interaction undertaken by elected representatives and candidates. Greenberg's (2012, p. vii) finding that "current usage is largely one sided", supported by only 6.9% of the tweets being coded as "other", which is the category that contains tweets that are replies to other users' accounts (2012, p. 9), while Evans et al. (2014, p. 457) found a rate of reply of 15%. This difference in reply rates may be explained by Evans et al. (2014) focusing on a campaign period, while Greenberg focused on a non-campaign period, suggesting a potential future vein of useful research focused on how the electoral cycle affects the political use of Twitter. However, the key finding of their research is that a small sample of candidates does not give an accurate picture of social media usage, signalling the best approach is to assess all candidates using the platform in order to obtain a more comprehensive and authoritative picture of Twitter use.

A significant proportion of published scholarship concerning the political use of social media in general, and Twitter in particular, is focused on overseas cases, be it the United States, Europe, Australia, or South Korea. There are few academics working on the topic within New Zealand. These few include Valentina Cardo at the University of Auckland, working on the digital media aspects of the Internet Party campaign during the 2014 General Election, and Verica Rupar at Auckland University of Technology, studying the media's use of Twitter during the same campaign. Deos & Murchison (2012) conducted an early assessment of the use of Facebook by political parties leading up to the 2011 General Election, which was expanded for the World Social Science Forum. The resulting publication (Murchison, 2015) includes useful data about the use of Twitter during the last 30 days of the 2011 General Election. Murchison (2015) found the level of use, and the way it was used, varied among the political parties. The New Zealand National Party (National) took the approach of having two accounts – @NZNationalParty and @natcampaign – while other parties each had

a single party account. Only The Green Party of Aotearoa/New Zealand (Greens) managed to a greater level of replies (46.31%) than the 15% of tweets found by Evans et al. (2014). The use of Twitter by the remaining party accounts were consistent with the trends found by studies of use by members of, and candidates for, the United States Congress (Evans et al., 2014; Greenberg, 2012).

The work by Murchison (2015) and Deos & Murchison (2012) serve as important markers in understanding the development of social media use in New Zealand politics. They provide both qualitative and quantitative data about the use of social media leading up to the 2011 General Election that can be used to assess the development of political parties' use of particular platforms. Though, as Murchison (2015) highlights, research on the use of the social media elements of Web 2.0 in a political context is still in its infancy in New Zealand. One of the areas that she emphasises as needing further exploration is the use of Facebook and Twitter by candidates during the campaign period (Murchison, 2015, p. 108). While the research undertaken for this thesis will suffer from the same limitation as Murchison's, in that it provides a snapshot of a single, stand-alone campaign (2015, p. 108), it does set the stage for a possible longitudinal study of the ongoing development of the political use of Twitter in a New Zealand.

#### *Twitter User Reactions*

Complementing the research on how political operators use social media is research on how users react to that use by political operators. As Eun-Ju Lee (2013) observes, despite its popularity both among voters and political operators, the effectiveness of social media in a political context and the processes that drive this effectiveness are largely unknown. Lee studied the effects on feelings of social presence and counter-arguing caused by different communication methods. Lee's study found users with a higher need for cognition felt a greater sense of social presence when viewing a candidate's Twitter feed, as opposed to watching that candidate on television. It also found that Twitter generated less counter-arguing by those with negative views of the candidate. These results compare with an earlier study on the effects of the level of interaction by political operators on Twitter by Lee and Shin (2012, p. 4),

which found that the effectiveness of a politician's Twitter engagement varied depending on the 'affiliative tendency' of users, which they define as the positive nature of the expectations of social relationships. This means the stronger the 'affiliative tendency' the less effect the level of engagement had on viewer's opinions of the politician in question.

While not focusing on Twitter, Utz (2009) studied the impact of Hyves posts by candidates in the 2006 Dutch General Election.<sup>3</sup> The study had intended to use a survey element to investigate what effect the interactivity of candidates had on potential voters; however, the candidates studied did not, on the whole, interact with users commenting on their posts (Utz, 2009, p. 227). Therefore, despite the result not being what was hoped for, it illustrates how some political campaigners use social media. The study also found that social media campaigning was just as polarising on attitudes as websites (Utz, 2009, p. 232). Due to candidates not actually engaging on Hyves, Utz undertook a controlled study of how interaction affected users' views of candidates. This found that users evaluated candidates more positively when candidates reacted to users' comments on candidates' posts. Utz found a key point of difference between left-leaning and right-leaning politicians active on Hyves: "... left-wing politicians are more active on Hyves than right-wing politicians... but right-wing voters are also less impressed by interaction on Hyves." (2009, pp. 237–238). Utz does, of course, acknowledge that if some left-leaning voters might be converted into votes for right-wing candidates, then right-wing candidates will consider using Hyves to interact with them.

#### *Wider Twitter Community*

Unlike the above scholarship, which focused on obtaining information via survey and/or experiment, many studies concerning the wider community of Twitter users focus on collecting data from users who are not part of the political elite,

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<sup>3</sup> Hyves was a Dutch equivalent of Facebook or My Space, launched in 2004. It peaked at around 10.6 million profiles with around 60% penetration in The Netherlands ("Hyves," 2014).

nor identified political players, thus raising both ethical and technical challenges. Moe and Larsson (2012) assess these issues, many of which can be traced back to the large number of Twitter users involved and the large amount of data those users produce, though they observe that this increase in data does not mean that there is more political communication occurring, just that it has shifted from previously undocumented contexts. Their research focused on hashtags associated with Nordic elections circa 2010. They faced the issue that, despite dealing with the same content – tweets to a public hashtag – in countries with very similar cultural backgrounds, it was only with much perseverance that Moe and Larsson were able to have the various ethics boards reach a consensus on how to deal with the collection of tweets. At one stage the Norwegian Social Science Data Services provisionally required Moe and Larsson to “obtain non-active consent” from users whose tweets were collected, despite defining tweeting to a hashtag as “public acts of expression given in an unsolicited manner” (2012, p. 123). Moe and Larsson conclude by suggesting that there should, if possible, be an international agreement on research ethics rules governing internet data (Moe & Larsson, 2012, p. 123). However, an international or even inter-Nordic agreement on ethical issues is probably unrealistic due to differing and contested views of the public/private nature of social media, but it does raise a challenge for researchers and ethics panels alike.

Despite a significant increase in the amount of content to assess, Moe and Larsson highlight an ongoing reliance on the use of traditional methodologies that were applied to “sampled newspaper articles, ... a selection of television broadcast, ... documentaries, [and]... specific radio programs.” (2012, p. 117). In order to emphasise the size of the increase, they noted that during one month more than 100,000 tweets were sent to #val2010, the hashtag for the Swedish election (Moe & Larsson, 2012, p. 117). They correctly argue that this adherence to traditional forms of analysis is a limitation that needs to be overcome if researchers are to fully exploit the wealth of data that social media research offers. They also raise the issue of data segregation caused by different researchers using different methods to collect data from the same platform, resulting in data being held in different locations and formats. Further

exacerbating this problem is the tendency for researchers to rely on custom-created software that only collects a discrete selection of tweets, and differing meta-data, as opposed to pushing for a standardised system (2012, p. 120). This results in incompatible data sets, making either direct comparison, or future reassessment using new analytical tools, difficult to say the least.

As outlined in Moe and Larsson, one of the key areas of investigation is the mapping of networks and interactions (2012, p. 118). Ausserhofer & Maireder (2013) used this approach in their work looking at connections and networks among Austrian political operators, reporters, and the wider communities that inhabit Twitter. They question whether these online communities are unique or are, in fact, merely offline communities interacting online in ways that reinforce their offline connections. Ausserhofer and Maireder take a two-fold approach in assessing the Twitter networks. They assess the networks themselves, in particular looking for the interaction between the various networks while also assessing the content of tweets to compare with coverage of issues in the mainstream media (Ausserhofer & Maireder, 2013).

Unlike Burgess and Bruns (2011; 2012), and Borondo, Morales, Losada and Benito (2012), which focus solely on tweets to hashtags, and Grant, Moon, & Busby Grant (2010) and LaMarre & Suzuki-Lambrecht (2013), which focus on the actions of individual accounts, Ausserhofer and Maireder (2013) capture data sent both to politically-focused hashtags and sent by a number of identified political operators. This means they are likely to capture more tweets related to the political discussion they are researching. However, because of the number of tweets this generates, and because their study analysed content as well, they limited their analysis to tweets sent during finite time periods. These periods were seven consecutive days per month, during which at least one undefined “significant political event had occurred” (Ausserhofer & Maireder, 2013, pp. 297–298). While their methodology appeared to overcome a number of the issues inherent in the hashtag only or specific user only approaches, the time period limitation constrains the data collected in a way that may influence the conclusions that can be drawn, as it is unclear if the networks that occur

following a “significant political event” differ from those that occur during the rest of the month. This approach raises similar issues to those raised by Evans et al. (2014) in relation to only assessing discrete elements of the data, as opposed to the whole picture, and whether or not this limited approach strongly influences the findings. However, their conclusion that “as a medium for political communication, Twitter is another arena for already established actors” (Ausserhofer & Maireder, 2013, p. 309) is indicative that success and influence on social media is driven by factors outside of the platform itself. This aligns with the findings of Greenberg (2012) and Evans et al. (2014) concerning the various factors influencing the Twitter activity of members of the United States Congress and candidates for the United States House of Representatives.

Ausserhofer’s and Maireder’s research is potentially relevant to New Zealand, due to the similarity in size of Austria and New Zealand. However Ausserhofer and Maireder highlight the lower uptake rate of Twitter in Austria: 1% of the total Austrian population (2013, pp. 294–295) compared to UMR’s finding of 19–21% (Mills, 2013; UMR Research, 2015a) in New Zealand, which may call into question the comparability of any findings. However, Ausserhofer’s and Maireder’s use of the location stated on a user’s profile to determine usage rates among Austrians is less reliable than UMR’s use of a telephone poll, as not all users list a location, highlighting an issue facing all social media researchers: namely, that data on the use of various social media platforms in differing locations worldwide is sparse and in need of further investigation if the transferability of research between contexts is to occur.

Axel Bruns has authored and co-authored a number of articles focusing on Twitter and the political sphere (Bruns, 2012; Bruns & Burgess, 2011; Bruns & Highfield, 2013; Bruns & Stieglitz, 2012, 2013; Burgess & Bruns, 2012). Like Ausserhofer and Maireder, Bruns focuses on the wider networks of users and how they interact with each other, particularly the intersection of the media, political and public spheres on social media. Bruns’ work focuses on the use of hashtags, with the associated limitation that “the @reply conversations following on from initial tweets to the #ausvotes community do not necessarily themselves always

include the #ausvotes hashtag” (Bruns & Burgess, 2011, p. 5). Despite this caveat their key finding here is that there are strong signs of overlap between the networks that form on Twitter and those present in the wider media and political community. This raises further questions over whether or not the politically active users and opinion leaders that political parties are seeking to reach via social media are already within their existing real world networks.

There is, then, a wide range of research being conducted around the world into the use of Twitter in politics, the responses it produces, and the networks that develop in and around it. Yet there is a gap in the research when it comes to the New Zealand context, with a significant lack of quantitative data documenting how parties, leaders, and candidates use Twitter. This means it is difficult both to understand changes in usage patterns over time and to assess the effectiveness of its use. The lack of quantitative data also means that attempts at qualitative research into how Twitter is used to support the wider campaign strategy of political parties will find it difficult to test the validity of the claims made by those within the parties charged with implementing the social media aspects of their campaigns. This thesis will provide a baseline of quantitative data that will support both types of future research. The research undertaken for this thesis will therefore be of interest to those scholars studying political campaigning in New Zealand, as well as those studying the work of MPs. It will also be of interest too to the wider community of scholars outside of New Zealand who are studying the political uses of social media. This research will, moreover, be of interest to the parties and candidates studied (and those not studied) as a means of adjusting and improving their use of Twitter, with potential interest from those engaged in local body politics as well. There may also be elements that are of interest to those who oversee New Zealand’s electoral and political system – Electoral Commission, Parliamentary Service, and Ministerial Services – to better understand how parties and MPs use Twitter in relation to their electoral and parliamentary responsibilities and duties.

## **Chapter One: Research Design**

This first chapter describes how the research and analysis for this thesis was planned and conducted. The scope of the research – an examination of the ways in which major New Zealand political parties, their leaders, and their candidates used Twitter as part of their various campaigns to contest the 2014 General Election – was chosen because it provides a manageable project for a Masters’ thesis and presents a viable opportunity to contribute new quantitative and qualitative data to the existing scholarship on the political use of social media. The chronological scope of the research was limited to between 1 June and 19 September 2014, dates which were selected because this is the period when parties really start to develop their campaign-related activities. (This period is slightly longer than the regulated campaign period, capturing some of the earlier campaign-related preparations.) The parties examined here were selected by virtue of having members in the 50<sup>th</sup> Parliament – specifically National, New Zealand Labour Party (Labour), Greens, New Zealand First Party (New Zealand First), Māori Party, ManaMovement (Mana), ACT New Zealand (ACT), and United Future New Zealand (United Future) – or by being seen by the media and political commentators as having a realistic chance of being elected. Included on this basis were The Internet Party, due to their alliance with Mana, and the Conservative Party of New Zealand (Conservatives) due to the discussion of potential agreements with National (Gooselink, 2014; Mackenzie, 2014).

### **Data Collection**

Before data collection could occur, a complete list of candidates’ Twitter details was needed. At the start of the period studied, many parties had not released their party lists, with only the Greens releasing their full list before 1 June (Green Party, 2014a). Labour’s was released in late June (Labour Party, 2014b), and National’s in late July (National Party, 2014a). The work to create this database of candidates’ details was carried out by Murchison at the University of Otago

throughout the election campaign (Murchison, Beveridge, Meager, & Feinstein, 2014).<sup>4</sup>

In the period leading up to 1 June 2014, work was undertaken to find an appropriate data-collection method. However, as Moe and Larsson (2012) highlight, there is an ongoing issue with a lack of reliable and easy-to-use data-collection methods for social media research, partially influenced by Twitter's changing Terms of Service. The original intention was to collect tweets both **from** and **to** all of the candidates and parties, along with tweets to a number of hashtags, including #NZPOL and debate-related hashtags.<sup>5</sup> However, experimental data collection with possible tools using this approach raised a number of issues. A number of systems were explored, but were discarded due to the high level of technical skill required to operate these. The service that was initially considered to be useable, Twitter Archiving Google Spread Sheet V 5.0 (TAGS 5) (Hawksey, n.d.), had a number of problematic issues, particularly focused around its use of Twitter's Search Application Protocol Interface (API). The Search API requires the content to be found via search terms (e.g. FROM:"metiria" to search for tweets sent by Metiria Turei), while being limited to 15 search terms per 15 minute window. Additionally, some search terms return a large number of spam tweets. This meant that to attempt to capture all of the tweets to and from all of the candidates would have required the use of around 500 search terms and nearly 50 instances of TAGS 5 to be running, each with its own unique Twitter account, as well as additional instances for any hashtags to be collected. Additionally TAGS 5 is limited by Google Spread Sheet's limit of 100,000 cells per file. This placed a limitation of around 20,000 tweets on each instance of TAGS 5. For many instances this was a limit that did not cause issues. However the search terms that collected a large number of spam tweets quickly reached the limit of 20,000 tweets. This caused holes in the data, as well as making handling the resulting files very difficult.

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<sup>4</sup> I supported this work, helping to find the online details for candidates as they were announced. Full details of methodology can be found here: <http://ashleymurchison.co.nz/online-media-nz-mps/>

<sup>5</sup> #NZPol is a hashtag focused on issues to do with New Zealand Politics.

After discounting TAGS, Twitonomy Premium was settled on as the method of data collection. Twitonomy Premium allows users to download the last 3,200 tweets from an account, including all of the metadata required to support the analysis undertaken as part of this research.<sup>6</sup> This limit is imposed by Twitter's API as a means of preventing the wholesale collection of previous tweets by accounts; however, for the purposes of this research that limit was not an issue as the number of candidates who sent more than 3,200 tweets during the relevant period was minimal and 3,200 tweets provides a sufficient sample size upon which to judge usage style.<sup>7</sup> The main limitation of Twitonomy is its backwards-looking nature: it does not capture tweets in real time, meaning if an account is shut down, or a tweet is deleted, then it is not possible to capture it. However, in most cases, the media or bloggers captured deleted tweets of value and made them available. For this research the limitations imposed by Twitonomy were minor, did not have a material impact on the results of this research, and were outweighed by the larger limitations of TAGS 5. Nevertheless, the limitations of both systems reinforce the issues around data collection methods raised by Moe & Larsson (2012) discussed above.

Initial data collection was conducted between 21 September and 23 September 2014. However, a number of accounts were closed, or locked, during this period to abide by Electoral Commission recommendations (Electoral Commission, 2014a). A final follow-up collection was conducted in August 2015, as a means of confirming that deactivated and locked accounts were still unavailable. In total data for 246 of the 256 (96.09%) relevant candidate or party accounts was collected.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Metadata includes the Twitter client used, date, and retweet and favourite count

<sup>7</sup> Richard Hills (Labour – Northcote) and Marama Davidson (Greens – Tāmaki Makaurau) were the only candidates to be impacted by the 3200-tweet limit.

<sup>8</sup> The full coded dataset is available from the author upon request (matt@matthewbeveridge.co.nz).

While quantitative data provides an insight into the style of Twitter usage among parties, leaders, and candidates it does not place Twitter use within the wider context of an election campaign, nor does it provide insight into how political parties implemented their campaign strategy. In order to substantiate observable trends in this collected data, qualitative data from those involved in planning and implementing the various parties' campaigns was needed. Interviews were therefore conducted with representatives of six of the ten parties studied.<sup>9</sup> The interviews followed a semi-structured format and were conducted at mutually-agreed locations in Wellington, between May and July 2015; each interview took between 25 and 45 minutes. In total, there were 3 hours 25 min of interviews recorded, which was transcribed verbatim, taking around another 30 hours. The initial questions can be found in Appendix I and full transcripts of the interviews for which ethical approval was given and release consent gained can be found in Appendix II.

The thesis' final source of primary data was the election expense returns filed with the Electoral Commission (2015I) in early 2015 and made public shortly after. These provide useful insight into parties' and candidates' spending. These are based on the legally required full disclosure of all campaign spending. The data is divided into four categories: Newspaper advertising; radio and television advertising; internet advertising; and other advertising. These returns were used to identify any expenditure on paid social media promotion, such as promoted tweets.

### **Data Coding**

Data collection recovered 7,311 tweets from party accounts, containing a total of 5,178 links, and 87,831 tweets from candidate accounts, containing 38,932 links.

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<sup>9</sup> These representatives were Peter Dunne (Leader, United Future), Cameron Cotter (Communication Manager, National Party), Hayden Eastmond-Mein (Social Media Advisor, Greens), Andrew Burns (Digital Marketing Manager, Labour Party), Callum Valentine (Digital Engagement Manager, Internet Party/Internet Mana), Kapua Smith (Media Advisor, Māori Party). Kapua Smith did not respond when a draft transcript was supplied for checking. Therefore her transcript has been withheld from inclusion.

This resulted in over 95,000 individual tweets and 44,110 links being collected, coded, and collated. Following the collection of this data, a method and framework for making sense of it was required. The analytical measures used in this thesis are primarily driven by the content of, and engagement with, the tweets collected.<sup>10</sup> One of the key factors that influenced the structuring of this sense-making framework was a desire to ensure that it was as comparable as possible with work undertaken by others. However, the ability to do so can be influenced by not just the data returned, but also the way the data is presented. Twitonomy returned each tweet as per Table 1:

**Table 1 Twitonomy Supplied Data**

Date (GMT)	17/09/2014 04:01:52
Handle	<a href="#">@johnkeypm</a>
Name	John Key
Text	The weather forecast is looking bleak for most of NZ for election day so consider getting out early & advance voting! <a href="http://t.co/5iQWzaYgJb">http://t.co/5iQWzaYgJb</a>
URL	<a href="https://twitter.com/johnkeypm/status/512089024727490562">https://twitter.com/johnkeypm/status/512089024727490562</a>
Platform	Twitter Web Client
Type	New
Retweet count	22
Favourite count	20

This meant that a framework based on and comparable with Murchison (2015), which measures tweets based on their type as well as the content to which they link, was possible. Using the data collected, tweets were then coded into one of three categories: New; Reply; and Retweet. A tweet was coded as ‘new’ if it contained original content from the account, as ‘reply’ if it was in reply to another user, or as ‘retweet’ if it was originally posted by another account. The level of each of these indicates how much effort the account holder is willing to invest in the account. The balance between ‘new’ tweets and ‘reply’ tweets is suggestive of whether an account is being used in a uni-directional broadcast

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<sup>10</sup> All figures generated by this research are rounded to 2 decimal places.

style, more akin to traditional forms of political campaigning, or if it is making use of the multi-directional nature of Web 2.0 technologies. Within this context, 'reply' tweets represent a form of "responsive dialogue" (Utz, 2009, p. 225) within which meaningful communication takes place. The tweets were then coded depending on if they contained a link or not, and what that link was to. The number, and percentage, of each of these categories highlight different aspects of how the account was used. In addition, the number of favourites and retweets gained by those tweets coded as new and reply were collated. This coding and collation phase took about 400 hours.

However, raw data alone is limited in the insight it can provide. Therefore two measures, provided by Murchison (2015) and Evans et al. (2014), were used to provide reference points outside of the 2014 General Election against which New Zealand parties and candidates could be compared. Murchison focuses on the use of party Twitter accounts by political parties during 2011 New Zealand General Election. However a key limitation of this data is that it covers just the last month of the 2011 election campaign, 26 October-25 November, as opposed to the longer period, 1 June-19 September, of this project. Evans et al. (2014) by contrast explores the use of Twitter by candidates in the 2012 full-term United States House of Representative elections. Despite the systemic differences between the United States and New Zealand political systems, the lack of quantitative data available concerning the use of Twitter by candidates, particularly focused on systems similar to New Zealand's MMP/Westminster system, means that Evans et al. (2014) represents the best possible proxy against which to assess New Zealand election candidates.

Another key measure is the engagement tweets gained, documented by the number of retweets and favourites gained. The engagement gained by an account is indicative of the desire of other users to spread a message and show support. However, due to the wide variance in the number of tweets sent by the accounts studied, and the wide range of followings they had, a measure of engagement based on the use of raw numbers for retweets and favourites gained could be potentially misleading. Therefore the use of average engagements gained has

been used in many places. These averages relate only to the engagement gained by original tweets (new tweets and replies) sent by each account. The retweet and favourite figures for tweets retweeted by a studied account were removed from the data, as they were not exclusively driven by the account studied. It should be noted that retweets represent a tone-deaf measure akin to Facebook's share option. A tweet may be retweeted as a means of highlighting something negative (See Beveridge, 2014c; Craig, 2012) or something positive. A retweet alone provides no tone. Favourites are more indicative of support for the sentiment of the tweet; they are akin to a like on Facebook. However they both represent blunt measures of engagement and the use of these engagement measures need to be seen within these limits, while offering the best tools currently available.

In order to understand how Twitter was used, the content of the tweets needs to be documented. Once the content is documented, it is possible to compare it against what has been found to encourage engagement elsewhere, such as the research undertaken by Twitter (Rogers, 2014) on what impact content type has on engagement, as well as the party's campaign strategy. To generate data that would be useful for future research Murchison's coding structure was used as a base to develop from:

- Plain tweet statement
- Link to main party website
- Link to other party website
- Link to leader website
- Link to candidate website
- Link to media website
- Link to other website
- Photo
- Link to YouTube
- Link to Facebook

However, the wider scope of this research meant that coding structure presented a number of potential issues: four categories dealing with websites related to the party or candidates campaign, but just one of the many other social media platforms (Facebook) individually identified in the coding structure, leaving others, such as Instagram or Vine, to be coded as "other", resulting in a less

precise portrayal of how candidates and parties used the platform. Therefore the coding structure was changed to:<sup>11</sup>

- |                               |                      |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| - Party/Candidate Website     | - Other Social Media |
| - Media Website               | - Image              |
| - YouTube/Vimeo/Video Website | - Graphic            |
| - Facebook                    | - Blog               |
| - Twitter                     | - Other              |

The initial coding of the party accounts was started in November 2014 and completed by early December, while candidate account coding started in January and was finished in early May. The author undertook all coding, with each tweet containing a link being opened and links manually coded. This gave a good overview of candidates' use of Twitter and a base against which to test claims made by interviewees. However, following the completion of coding, it was discovered that the Graphic code was not discrete enough, grouping party and non-party graphics together. Therefore all links coded as graphic were recoded into party graphic and non-party graphic codes. The collection and coding of these tweets represented the first step in the research process, with the results of the coding being used to inform the preparation for the interviews. The information obtained in these interviews was then used to verify the information gained from the coding of the tweets. This reciprocally supportive use of both qualitative and quantitative information enables the development of a greater understanding of how Twitter was used. It is this approach, of using qualitative and quantitative data, that helps to establish the strong base upon which this thesis, and its conclusions, are based.

Alongside these analytical frameworks, a means grouping Twitter accounts for analysis was needed. There were two obvious groups; party accounts and candidate accounts. Yet this approach meant a large section of the Twitter activity of the parties was obscured, namely the activity of the party leaders,

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<sup>11</sup> A breakdown of the definition of each of these can be found in Appendix III Coding Parameters

eight out of eleven of whom had larger followings than their respective party account. These larger personal followings can be seen as a manifestation of what some have termed the “presidentialisation” of politics (Foley, 1993, 2000, 2002, 2004), or, as others have argued, the “personalisation” of politics (Dowding, 2013; Heffernan, 2003). While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the interplay between these two competing theses, suffice it to say the elements raised by these scholars highlight the growing importance of party leaders in contemporary politics. This supports separating party leader accounts out from the other candidates, including high-profile MPs, for particular analysis. Having now explained the research’s design and its methodological and analytical approach, the thesis now turns its attention to the specific context in which ten New Zealand political parties would contest the 2014 General Election and the strategies each devised to drive their respective campaigns.

## Chapter Two: Party Campaign Strategies

This chapter outlines the electoral and demographic environment within which New Zealand political parties operate before discussing the campaign strategies of the ten parties concerned. The various campaign strategies of the parties need to be explored before the use of Twitter as a campaign tool can be properly understood. This chapter argues that campaign strategy is influenced not just by a party's immediate goals, but also by the financial and human resources available, the ways in which these resources can be employed, the history and purpose of the party, and the party's organisational structure. The commonalities among parties will be explored first before moving on to explore the major differences. The parties are grouped based on their number of representatives in parliament and their recent proximity to executive power. This chapter draws heavily on *Moments of Truth* (Levine & Johansson, 2015), as well as election expense returns, particularly the broadcast allocation, in order to identify the resources available to the parties.

### **New Zealand Electoral Landscape**

New Zealand has seen a number of structural changes to its political and electoral systems. The political system was initially based on that of the United Kingdom, with the New Zealand Constitution Act 1852 establishing a bicameral legislature with an elected lower House of Representatives, appointed upper Legislative Council, and a Governor representing the Crown (Miller, 2010, p. 92). The United Kingdom and New Zealand enacted statutes for the application of United Kingdom Common Law to New Zealand, resulting in Acts such as Magna Carta (1297), the Bill of Rights (1688), and the Act of Settlement (1701) becoming part of New Zealand law (Miller, 2010, p. 92). This initial, close alignment with the United Kingdom has weakened as New Zealand's political system has evolved. The abolition of the Legislative Council in 1950 was a key step, making New Zealand the only unicameral Westminster parliament in the world.

This evolution continued with the introduction of the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) electoral system, via the Electoral Act 1993. MMP provides each voter with two votes: an electorate vote to select a single member to represent a geographical electorate; and a party vote to determine the proportion of seats each party has in parliament. A party is entitled to seats in Parliament if it wins either 5% of the total party vote or an electorate seat.<sup>12</sup> The Electoral Act 1993 increased the size of parliament from 99 electorate seats to 120 seats (65 Electorate and 55 List) (Electoral Commission, 1997). Due to the growth of the population since 1993, the number of electorate seats has increased to 71, at the expense of lists seats, which now number 49, subject to any overhang required to achieve proportionality. The electorate seats are divided into 64 general electorates and seven Māori electorates. The Māori electorates cover the same total geographical area as the general seats, but are populated by those who choose to enrol on the Māori roll. They were established to guarantee Māori representation in parliament. However, their ongoing existence is a point of contention, with parties mainly on the right arguing for their disestablishment, (H. Brown, 2014; National Party, 2005; Tahana, 2008) and the Māori Party in particular arguing to retain them (Māori Party, 2013).

The introduction of MMP resulted in a shift from campaigns focused on electorate seats to a more nation-wide approach, with an increased focus on the party leadership (Miller, 2005, pp. 179–181). This latter element was manifested in 2014 with National's continuing focus on "Brand Key", which Devadas and Nicholls define as the way "John Key [as] a specific politician, ... is ... expressed in and through the highly mediated world that he inhabits. ... [and] how Key as a figure has been grafted onto and made [meaningful] in a political context that is characterized as post-ideological." (2012, p. 18). The aim here being to present an image of a non-career politician who wears his ambition lightly and sees being Prime Minister as another interesting job rather than something he lives

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<sup>12</sup> More information on the intricacies of MMP as applied in New Zealand can be found at <http://www.elections.org.nz/voting-system/mmp-voting-system>.

and breathes for and is, therefore, forgiven for his foibles (Larson, 2011). Additionally all National's electorate candidates were on the party list (Stuff, 2014b). This compares with Labour, which ran a campaign less focused on the leader (Barnett & Talbot, 2015) and with MPs such as Trevor Mallard and Clare Curran not seeking election via the list (Bennett, 2014; Small, 2014a), allowing them to potentially run more traditional electorate-focused campaigns at the expense of contributing elsewhere to the party vote campaign suggesting that there are factors other than just the electoral system at play in the formulation of party campaign strategy.

### *Demographics*

The demographics of both the country as a whole, and the population over 18 in particular, are key factors in the policies and key messages that political parties propose and how those policies and messages are promoted during an election campaign. The following section gives a basic overview of some of New Zealand's key demographics, providing a point of comparison with the data concerning the demographics of Twitter users. This section relies on data derived from New Zealand census and compiled by the Parliamentary Library (2014).

At the 2013 census, the usually resident population of New Zealand was 4.24 million, with 3.19 million over 18 and potentially eligible to vote. The population is 51.34% female, with an overall median age of 37, ranging from 23 (Hauraki-Waikato) to 47 (Otaki). Ethnically, New Zealand is 74.02% European, 14.92% Māori, 11.76% Asian, 7.38% Pasifika and 1.69% other. Of those over 15, 19.82% have no qualification while 5.33% hold a postgraduate qualification. The national median income is \$72,700 for a family and \$28,500 for individuals in general seats, and \$61,600 and \$23,700 respectively in Māori electorates. Nationally, 72.12% of the population have internet access in their household.

The Electoral Commission states that as at 25 August 2014 there were 3.39 million people eligible to enrol in New Zealand. The discrepancy with the census-derived figure above is accounted for by New Zealanders living overseas who are

still eligible to enrol. Of those eligible to enrol, only 3.06 million (90.22%) did so, with this rate varying by age: 71.97% of 18-24 year olds enrolled, compared with 97.69% for 65-69 year olds, and 96.73% for the 50-54 year olds, who are the largest cohort, outside of the 18-24 range (Electoral Commission, 2015n). While there is no specific data available on the demographics of those who do enrol, outside of details provided by the Electoral Commission, the New Zealand Election Study (NZES) uses the electoral roll as a method to select people for its research. This provides information that builds a picture of the difference between those who enrol and vote, and those who do not. In 2014 the NZES surveyed 2,835 respondents sampled from the electoral rolls "weighted by Māori/General electorates, age, gender (from the rolls), highest educational qualification (from the 2013 census), and party vote and turnout (corrected from the marked rolls), in order to be as representative as possible of those on the rolls." ("New Zealand Election Study," n.d.).<sup>13</sup> The NZES sample has more females (52.5%) compared to the wider population (51.34%). New Zealand Europeans comprise 78.2% of the sample versus 74.02% for the wider population while New Zealand Māori make up 13.4% of the sample versus 14.92% for the wider population. The largest differences are seen among the Asian community, 5.1% versus 11.76%, and Pasifika at 3.7% versus 7.38%. These demographic differences matter because they affect not only the policies and messages articulated by political parties, but also how parties choose to campaign on these policies and messages. Some parties focus on appealing to those who vote while others, particularly on the left in the 2014 General Election, aim to mobilise the 'missing million' who do not vote (Gould, Wilson, Morrison, & Corban, 2015; Williams, 2014).

### **Campaign Strategies**

Election campaigns are not just responses to the opportunities and challenges that arise during them, but are often a highly-planned and well-organised series of messages, policies, and stage managed media and public events intended to

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<sup>13</sup> The following sections uses data from the 2014 NZES frequency tables ("New Zealand Election Study - Results from the 2014 NZES," n.d.)

persuade voters to cast their vote in a particular way. New Zealand is fortunate in that every three years, since 1987, Victoria University of Wellington's School of History, Philosophy, Political Science and International Relations have produced a book that provides an insight into the inner workings of political campaigns, documenting first-hand experiences of those leading the campaigns. Contributors to these books include "(campaign) participants, political party leaders... but also a selection of journalists, commentators, pollsters and academic observers" (Johansson & Levine, 2015, p. 15). Of course, how the contributors view and experience the campaign will be influenced by their party, or organisational, allegiances, and vantage point within the campaign. In addition, the usefulness of these books is shaped as much by the absent voices, namely parties not represented in parliament, as by the voices present, as alluded to by Laila Harré (2014a, 2014b).

One area of similarity across the campaigns of political parties is the use of television and radio advertising. These remain key features of New Zealand election campaigns, partly because broadcast advertising is taxpayer funded via the broadcast allocation, as opposed to being funded by parties themselves. The allocation is governed by the Electoral Commission using criteria set down in the Broadcasting Act 1989 and Electoral Act 1993 (Electoral Commission, 2014c). The allocation includes funding for the production and airing of political adverts, as well as time allocations for the broadcast of opening and closing addresses. The opening and closing addresses are broadcast in blocks on Radio New Zealand and TVNZ at times defined within the Broadcasting Act (Electoral Commission, 2014c). Parties are able to supplement their allocated funding with their own money, accounted for in their expense return, to pay for the production of their broadcast material, but cannot contribute their own money to buy airtime (Electoral Commission, 2014c). The final 2014 allocations of both funds and time are laid out in Table 2 below (Electoral Commission, 2014b).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The allocation for 2014 was reviewed at least twice. Broadcast allocations are only available to parties contesting the party vote, therefore only InternetMANA was entitled to an allocation, and not the component parties.

**Table 2 Broadcast Allocation**

<b>Party</b>	<b>Broadcast allocation</b>	<b>Time allocation opening address</b>	<b>Time allocation closing address</b>
National	\$1,087,902	15 min 30 sec	16 min 15 sec
Labour	\$949,756	13 min 30 sec	14 min 10 sec
Māori Party	\$103,610	2 min 30 sec	2 min 40 sec
United Future	\$79,433	2 min	2 min 5 sec
ACT	\$76,930	2 min	2 min
Greens	\$414,439	7 min 30 sec	7 min 55 sec
New Zealand First	\$207,220	4 min 30 sec	4 min 45 sec
Conservative Party	\$62,166	1 min 30 sec	1 min 40 sec
Internet Mana	\$79,433	2 min	2 min 5 sec

For many parties this allocation represents a significant proportion of the funds available for their election campaign (see Table 3). The usefulness of these broadcasts has, however, been called into question, most recently by Brendan Horan in 2014 when the broadcasting of the opening statements clashed with an All Blacks versus Wallabies rugby test (Small, 2014b). Yet the growth of online media has also seen increasing opportunities for parties to reuse and repost the content of these broadcasts, though the transferability of these adverts from broadcast to online and social media is unclear.<sup>15</sup>

Outside of broadcast media, parties used the full gamut of media available, from outdoor advertising, including billboards and hoardings, to rosettes, paid and volunteer delivered direct mail drops, as well as flyers for public and party events, and apparel. Print adverts featured both in major metropolitan dailies

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<sup>15</sup> The ways in which the resources afforded by the broadcast allocation are used to create cross-platform content is worthy of further investigation, as is how the changes in the content and its use relate to the intents of the Broadcasting Act 1989 and the Electoral Act 1993, and whether or not these Acts need updating to account for changes in campaign methods

and regional media. Most striking is the lack of variance in the forms of media across the parties, with most variance being in the volume, caused by the level of resourcing. The one exception was the use of campaign buses by National and Labour. As can be seen in Table 3, this consistency continues in the spending by parties, which can be grouped into three bands: over \$1.9mil (National, The Conservatives); between \$1.0-1.3mil (Labour, Greens, InternetMANA<sup>16</sup>); and under \$0.5mil (Māori Party, United Future, ACT, New Zealand First).

**Table 3 Election Spending Limit**

	<b>Spending limit<sup>17</sup></b>	<b>Total spent</b>
National	\$2,735,800.00	\$2,556,473.30
Labour	\$2,915,700.00	\$1,275,201.36
Māori Party	\$1,656,400.00	\$202,532.12
United Future	\$1,373,700.00	\$1,995.06
ACT	\$2,093,300.00	\$293,241.09
Greens	\$2,555,900.00	\$1,297,609.58
New Zealand First	\$1,913,400.00	\$268,530.23
Conservatives	\$2,735,800.00	\$1,914,072.38
Internet Party <sup>18</sup>	\$385,500.00	\$320,086.98
Mana <sup>18</sup>	\$462,600.00	\$28,265.31
Internet Mana Party <sup>18</sup>	\$1,091,00.00	\$660,574.07

Missing from the election expense returns is any reporting of spending on promoted tweets. While a number of parties reported spending with media agencies that may account for the lack of declared spend, the Greens, Labour and

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<sup>16</sup> Total spending by Internet Party, Mana and InternetMana used.

<sup>17</sup> Party Vote spending limit (inc GST) \$1,091,000 + \$25,700 per electorate contested (Electoral Commission, 2015m).

<sup>18</sup> Due to the structure of the alliance between Mana and the Internet Party, only the joint InternetMana platform contested the party vote, with Mana and the Internet Party contesting electorate seats only. This meant that InternetMana had a spending limit of \$1,091,000. While Mana and the Internet Party had spending limits of \$25,700 per electorate contested. Therefore all three parties were required to complete election expense returns.

National all declared direct spend on Facebook (Electoral Commission, 2015g, 2015i, 2015j), suggesting that had parties undertaken paid campaigning on Twitter it would appear in the expense returns. Therefore, while it is unlikely any used paid tweets, it cannot be ruled out that some parties, or candidates, did.<sup>19</sup>

### *National*

National is New Zealand's largest centre-right party and has held power, either as a majority, minority, or coalition government, for 44 of the 78 years since its founding. This has resulted in the party being described as "seemingly the natural governing party" (Gustafson, 1986, p. x). Founded in 1936 by the union of the Reform and United parties, along with "any other non-Labour groups or individuals who wished to join" (Gustafson, 1986, p. 7), it aimed to counter the growing political and organisational strength of the Labour movement (James, 2015b, p. 219). It contained elements with liberal, urban views, along with those with more conservative, rural outlooks on the world (Stephens & Leslie, 2011). The party's principles focus on maintaining the current constitutional monarchy, personal responsibility, and limited government (National Party, n.d.-a).

National are historically one of the best-funded parties and this continued to be the case in 2014. This funding comes from a wide donor base, with a long-term commitment of support, enabling National to remain well-resourced throughout the election cycle. These resources are tied to a organisational structure that, following National's heavy defeat in 2002, was redeveloped with the aim of enabling the party to run successful party-vote focused campaigns (Stephens & Leslie, 2011). These changes centralised much of the decision-making, such as list ranking, reinforced the power of the party machinery, and party leader, while marginalising the power of the regional and social factions, enabling the party to present a more unified image to the public (Stephens & Leslie, 2011). In addition

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<sup>19</sup> How researchers are able to collect those promoted tweets that are served to users based on targeting parameters, as opposed to purely based on who users follow, and do not appear on the accounts publicly viewable timeline, is a methodology issue that requires further investigation.

to these reforms, National recently launched a foundation to manage its investments to provide the party with a secure income stream to fund future operations (National Party, n.d.-b).

National entered the 2014 General Election campaign leading a coalition government supported by ACT, United Future, and the Māori Party.<sup>20</sup> National's primary goal was to remain in power, either as a majority government, or a minority government supported by a small number of minor parties (Key, 2014a, 2014b). National set an internal target of 47% of the total party vote (Joyce, 2015, p. 129). As with all National campaigns since Key was elected leader, there was heavy use of his image throughout the campaign. However, primary campaign messages were focused around sticking to "the plan that [was] working" (Key, 2014a, 2014b), an economy that was "strengthening", and National's record as "a competent government" that had "a strong plan for the future" (Joyce, 2015, p. 124). These messages were contrasted with attacks on the disunity seen among the opposition parties (National Party, 2014c, 2014d), highlighting the risks National claimed the country faced from a potential government made up of "hapless, bumbling" parties (Davison, 2014b). Towards the end of the campaign National faced the risk of voters trying to "help" the party by vote splitting to provide them with coalition partners, particularly as National's share of the vote declined in public polls (Joyce, 2015, pp. 129–130), which they used social media to counter (National Party, 2014e).

National made use of the full range of traditional political marketing means, including leaflet drops, t-shirts, rosettes, television adverts, hoardings, billboards, and online advertising. Moreover they used promoted Facebook posts to reach a targeted online audience (Electoral Commission, 2015j). However, it appears this approach was not used on Twitter. They also made use of the social media platforms controlled by the Young Nats, National's youth wing.

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<sup>20</sup> ACT's sole MP, John Banks, resigned from Parliament in June 2014 following his conviction for filing a false electoral return related to the 2010 Auckland Mayoral Election. His conviction was quashed on 28 November 2014 (Fox, 2014b; Kenny, 2014).

## *Labour*

Labour was founded in 1916 as the political wing of the industrial labour movement (Aimer, 2015). This close alignment with the union movement continues today, with the unions playing a role in the parliamentary leadership elections (Labour Party, 2014a). Over time Labour has morphed from a socialist party to a social democratic party, via experiments with neo-liberalism in the 1980s and third-way policies in the 2000s (Aimer, 2015). Alongside this, the membership of the party has diversified from predominantly male wage earners to a party that has social and identity-based sector groups (Aimer, 2015, p. 211) that are represented on key organisational apparatus within the party (Stephens & Leslie, 2011). While representation is broad, power is highly centralised, with the party apparatus having a strong say in the selection of both list and electorate candidates (Stephens & Leslie, 2011).

Labour's goal in 2014 was to replace National as the major party in government. To achieve this, Labour aimed to execute a multi-tiered campaign plan, with an overarching theme of "Vote Positive" embedded in "the strength of Labour policy" (Barnett & Talbot, 2015, p. 140). Policy would be focused on three broad areas – Home, Work, and Family – intended to provide "lenses" through which voters could understand how policy ideas were linked (Barnett & Talbot, 2015, p. 140). Andrew Little, current Labour leader, has since argued this cluttered approach and the complicated nature of the policy platform hindered the articulation of what a Labour-led government's vision would be (2015, pp. 134–135). In addition, both Little (2015) and Barnett and Talbot (2015) admit that the party faced issues around voters' views on the "state of our party and caucus, and our readiness for government" (Barnett & Talbot, 2015, p. 138). Along side this were issues voters had with the possibility of a coalition Kim Dotcom's InternetMana (Little, 2015, p. 135).

Labour continued to use traditional marketing, such as hoardings, billboards, a campaign bus, and broadcast adverts. However, Labour faced significant funding issues (Barnett & Talbot, 2015, p. 145), which restricted its ability to campaign, manifested in limits on the volume of material they could produce. To make best

use of these limited funds elements of their campaign – leafleting and social media adverts – took a more targeted, data-driven approach (Barnett & Talbot, 2015, p. 144). This data-driven approach still depended on ‘real-world’ interactions (Barnett & Talbot, 2015, p. 144) undertaken by volunteers door knocking and at public events to collect the data needed. In addition, this limited funding also impacted on its ability to train “candidates, campaign managers, and volunteers” (Gould et al., 2015).

Labour entered the 2014 General Election facing questions of party unity, with limited financial resources, declining approval ratings, and a campaign strategy focused on a message of Vote Positive. However, this message did not align well with the actions of many of its MPs and candidates during the campaign, as well as throughout the preceding parliamentary term (Gould et al., 2015, p. 3; Salmond, 2014; Trevett, 2014b). Labour’s successful Te Tai Tokerau candidate Kelvin Davis observed “[e]ven after [Labour] came out with Vote Positive there were still a lot of negative messages and criticism instead of just promoting what we offer.” (One News, 2014e).

### *Māori Party*

The Māori Party grew out of the protests against the fifth Labour Government’s passing of the Foreshore and Seabed Act 2004 (FSA) (Godfery, 2015). After resigning as the Labour MP for Te Tai Hauāuru, due to the passing of the FSA, Tariana Turia stood as the Māori Party candidate in the resulting by-election, being returned to parliament with 93% of the vote (Electoral Commission, 2004) and a party membership of 20,000 according to Smith (as cited in Godfery, 2015). Godfery argues that Turia’s election represents the first time an MP has directly represented a “Māori party” (2015, p. 241). While the Māori Party can be seen as a direct result of the FSA protests, Godfery (2015) argues it also has deeper roots in the Māori rights movement and represents an evolution of that movement. This has a direct impact on the structure of the party, whose constitution is deeply rooted in traditional Māori concepts of decision making, such as “all decisions of the Māori Party shall be made by consensus” while also being

influenced by the experience surrounding the passing of the FSA (Godfery, 2015, p. 242). The importance of this consensus-based approach can be seen in the party's desire to remain in a position where it is able to achieve change, as opposed to being in opposition.

The Māori Party entered the 2014 General Election facing the retirement of both founding co-leaders and solid challenges from Labour for their now vacant seats. The party's ongoing representation in parliament was dependent on new co-leader, Te Ururoa Flavell, holding Waiariki (Flavell, 2015, p. 159) against a challenge from Mana's Annette Sykes, who enjoyed the financial resources that the coalition with the Internet Party brought. Therefore, the Māori Party campaign strategy was first and foremost the Flavell campaign strategy, with a focus on the methods that have traditionally worked in the Māori seats, summed up by Flavell as "face-to-face" politics (Flavell, 2015, p. 160), such as door knocking, flyer drops, and house meetings. The Māori Party were constrained by a lack of financial resources (Flavell, 2015, p. 161), which meant that both national and electorate campaigns were looking for alternative, cost-effective ways to campaign. The campaign messages focused on the gains made by the Māori Party from being in government, as well as leveraging the profile of a number of key supporters and candidates, in particular Tame Iti and Dr Lance O'Sullivan (R. Brown, 2014; Fox, 2014c). Buttressing this was a message of Tū Māori Mai (Stand as Māori), which represented a call for unity across the party and also a reflection of the commitment the party had to stand as Māori in Parliament (Flavell, 2015).<sup>21</sup>

While much of the Māori Party's campaign efforts were focused on the Māori seats, there were elements aimed at broadening their appeal amongst the general population, including standing candidates in general seats and using social media to encourage anyone to vote for them (Māori Party, 2014). Many of the policies highlighted by the Māori Party during the campaign were focused on

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<sup>21</sup> Tū Māori Mai translates as Stand as Māori and was inspired by Lieutenant Colonel James Henare's speech on 23 January 1946, 28<sup>th</sup> Maori Battalion (NZ) Association (as cited in Flavell, 2015, p. 158).

gains they had made that helped not only Māori, but also others who were disadvantaged. A major issue facing the Māori Party was the combination of geographically-large electorates, with traditionally low voter turnout, making it harder to reach potential voters. Social media represented a cost-effective way to counter this, though its use is complicated by the lower rate of internet access in Māori seats compared to general seats (68.35% versus 72.83%) (Parliamentary Library (NZ), 2014).

### *United Future*

Like the Māori Party, United Future resulted from a split with the Labour Party, when Dunne launched the United Party in 1996 (Edwards, 2015). However, unlike the Māori Party, the United Party attempted to grow via mergers with other parties, including Advance New Zealand and the Outdoor Recreation Party. It became United Future in 2000 following its merger with the Future New Zealand Party, whence it gained 6.69% of the vote in 2002 (Edwards, 2015, p. 265). United Future remains in parliament at the pleasure of the National Party, with Key indicating National supporters in Ōhāriu should vote for Dunne (Levine, 2015, p. 56). The 50<sup>th</sup> Parliament saw United Future struggling with issues of membership (Dunne, 2015a, p. 175) and Dunne's role in the leaking of Rebecca Kitteridge's compliance review of the Government Communication Security Bureau to Fairfax's political reporter Andrea Vance (Hickey, 2013; Rutherford, 2014; Rutherford & Pryor, 2013; Watkins, 2013). United Future's low membership levels meant that their resources were significantly constrained, best exhibited by their spend of just \$2,000 on the party vote campaign (Electoral Commission, 2015k). Instead, the limited resources they had available were focused on electorate campaigns, both in Dunne's seat and other electorates. This electorate focus is highlighted by Dunne's electorate campaign spending nearly eight times what the party spent on the party vote campaign (Electoral Commission, 2015c) and a number of candidates spending \$1000-\$2400 on their electorate campaigns (Electoral Commission, 2015a, 2015b, 2015d, 2015e). This local spending was focused mainly on pamphlets and billboards. Earned media – defined by Harvey as “the dissemination of a group's

message through other outlets for free, such as news media coverage” via campaign activity such as formal speeches, debates, events, commercials, editorials and letters to the editor, to prompt in-depth stories from the media (Harvey, 2013, p. 423) – was key to the United Future party vote campaign, with a strong reliance on Dunne to generate this.

### *ACT*

ACT was formed in the early 1990s by former Labour MP Roger Douglas, as a vehicle to continue the market deregulation and privatisation he started as Finance Minister in the fourth Labour Government (Edwards, 2015). While ACT has had periods of electoral success, reaching a high of 7.14% of the party vote in 2002 (Electoral Commission, 2002), since 2008 it has relied on winning the Epsom electorate seat to remain in Parliament. Its ongoing success in doing so depends upon “National’s implicit endorsement of the ACT candidate” (Edwards, 2015, p. 266). It faced the 2014 General Election a leaderless, MP-less, battered and bruised version of its former self. Its biggest challenge was overcoming the damage done by the “five-year litany of ACT meltdowns so fantastic it verges on surreal” (Seymour, 2015, p. 168). ACT’s goal was returning to “its former glory, winning multiple seats and breaking the 5 per cent threshold by 2017” which required a strong Epsom candidate and allowing new party leader Jamie Whyte to become known, and liked, by voters (Seymour, 2015, p. 169).

ACT aimed to run an earned media strategy, particularly focused on their crime, government waste, racial equality, and tax policy launches (Seymour, 2015, p. 170). However the responses to their racial equality and crime announcements were highly critical (Seymour, 2015, p. 170), which along with the attention focused on Jamie Whyte’s comments about incest (Levine, 2015, p. 46), presented a negative image to the public. Alongside their earned media strategy, ACT undertook both direct voter contact, using call centres and volunteer-delivered flyers, as well as traditional billboards and hoardings for wider campaigning. Within this also sat a campaign specifically targeting the Chinese community that included targeted mail, Chinese-language speaking call centre

operators, and appearances in Chinese media. This aspect of the campaign aimed to place ACT in opposition to the discriminatory treatment the Chinese-community has been subject to in New Zealand over many years, including the “xenophobic campaigns subliminally directed at the Chinese community... by every opposition party” (Seymour, 2015, pp. 170–171). The messages were focused on crime and promoting New Zealand as an open and tolerant society. With the Chinese community representing the largest subset of the 11% of the population that identify as Asian, the community represent fertile ground for a party aiming to gain 2-5% of the vote, especially when other parties have been shown to harbour fears about them.

### *Greens*

The 2014 General Election offered an opportunity for the Greens to increase the number of MPs they had and to gain a position in a coalition government, something that had eluded them since their separation from the Alliance in 1997. Achieving this required a change of government, which polling suggested required a wider coalition of three, four, or even five parties, potentially including InternetMana, while the alternative was a National-led government, with two or three minor parties in support (Barnett & Talbot, 2015, p. 139). In the lead up to the election, the Greens approached Labour about campaigning as a coalition during the campaign to create the image of an alternative government. However Labour rejected this (James, 2015a, p. 85; Young, 2014).

The Greens ran a party-vote focused campaign, with local electorate candidates used as a means to advance the party vote first and foremost. The Greens articulated their aim of “more MPs”, both internally and externally, as meaning 15% of the vote and 20 MPs (Green Party, 2014c; Norman, 2015, p. 147). The positive feeling around the Green campaign was highlighted with their having the resources to outspend the Labour party for the first time. Moreover, Russel Norman, former Co-Leader (2015), states that the organisational structure of the Greens was strengthened by the experiences gleaned from its role in the 2013 Citizens Initiated Referenda on Asset Sales. This provided the party and its

activists with additional experience that enabled them to run a campaign that made use of the Greens email database and social media presence, along with paid advertising, and saw 6,500 billboards erected, face-to-face contact with 60,000 voters, and the delivery of 1.8 million leaflets (2015, pp. 147, 150–151). The 2014 campaign was centred around three policy platforms – a cleaner environment, a fairer society, and a smarter economy – aimed at maintaining the support of historical Green voters while also targeting those concerned about child poverty and blue-green voters interested in growing New Zealand’s green economy. Despite this focus on policy, Norman compared the events of the 2014 General Election to the 2002 ‘Corngate’ saga and the issues around the Exclusive Brethren in 2005 (2015, pp. 147, 149). This meant that the limited access to mainstream media coverage that the Greens could normally expect become even more limited, pushing the focus of the campaign more towards direct voter contact (Norman, 2015, p. 147).

#### *New Zealand First*

Until Winston Peters’ victory in the 2015 Northland by-election, New Zealand First had not held an electorate seat since Peters held Tauranga at the 2002 General Election. Since then, New Zealand First has been reliant on reaching the 5% threshold in order to gain representation in parliament, which they failed to do in 2008. They have tried to place themselves to the left of National and to the right of the Greens, arguing they would restrain National or prevent the Greens from holding the balance of power. As with previous election campaigns, much of the 2014 campaign focused around Peters and his unique style of populism, exemplified by his “Two Wongs doesn’t make it right” joke in early August (Day, 2014; O’Brien, 2014; One News, 2014a, 2014b). New Zealand First targeted earned media as a way to generate exposure, much of which was focused on Peters commenting on a wide range of issues, with his populist angle. While New Zealand First made use of traditional means of electioneering, there was no paid online campaigning. In addition, they made use of Hire A Hubby to erect their billboards in various parts of the country (Electoral Commission, 2015h), use of

which may be evidence of an older membership base who would be less likely to engage in social media use.

### *Conservatives*

The Conservatives aim was to enter parliament for the first time and, when there, to “put a leash on Government” (Conservative Party, 2014, p. 8). The means they used to attempt to achieve this included the traditional less targeted methods – billboards, flyers, and broadcast ads – using their available resources to reach as many voters as possible, instead of targeting likely voters. They also used a number of less conventional means to gain representation: firstly, despite never having reached parliament, the Conservatives attempted to broker an Epsom-style deal with National, as part of a potential coalition, focusing on Murray McCully's East Coast Bays seat. This deal did not eventuate, leaving the Conservatives needing 5% of the vote or to win an electorate seat. Moreover Craig sought, and was granted, an injunction against MediaWorks to enable him to appear on *The Nation's* minor leaders debate on TV3 (*Craig v MediaWorks Ltd*, 2014).

Like other smaller parties, the Conservatives struggled to find volunteers. However, they were able to compensate for this as a result of leader Colin Craig's contributions to the party (Electoral Commission, 2015o), with much of their material being delivered by paid means, as opposed to volunteers (Electoral Commission, 2015f). This meant they were the second largest spenders, after National (Electoral Commission, 2015m). The Conservatives tried to place themselves as the anti-politicians, the party that could be trusted to listen to the electorate, highlighted by their key policy of implementing binding referenda. In addition, they attempted to place themselves as an alternative to New Zealand First, both on issues of appearance, making reference to being voted the “cleanest (party) in NZ Politics”, and on issues of policy (Levine, 2015, pp. 43–44).

### *Internet Party/Mana/InternetMANA*

Unlike the other parties so far examined in this thesis, InternetMANA was only launched in 2014. It was an alliance of Mana and the Internet Party, the latter finally launching in March 2014 (AFP Wellington, 2014; Satherley, 2014; Wilson, 2014). Therefore, InternetMANA faced the challenges of building a public profile of their new brand, as well as an understanding of what they stood for as a joint platform. This party also needed to create a strong and effective joint party organisational structure to plan and then implement a campaign. However, they were not constrained by a lack of financial resources to the same extent as other minor parties, thanks to significant donations (Electoral Commission, 2015o) by party founder and “visionary” Kim Dotcom (Farrar, 2014a; Fox, 2014a). The main focus of InternetMana’s strategy was returning Hone Harawira to parliament and growing the vote to return additional list MPs. The Internet Party’s target audience is hard to determine. The alliance with Mana, and the selection of Laila Harré, with her previous involvement in the Alliance and Greens, as party leader suggests they were targeting left-wing voters who were unhappy with the direction of the Labour or Green parties. However, the *Moment of Truth*, in the last week of the election campaign, along with their focus on issues of mass surveillance and internet governance, points to a target audience concerned with those issues.<sup>22</sup> However, the size of the overlap between these two groups is unknown.

### **Conclusion**

There is a strong coherence to the means of campaigning in New Zealand, with an ongoing focus on traditional methods, such as hoardings, billboards, broadcast adverts, and leaflet drops, with additional elements of retail politics. The main differences among the parties considered in this thesis are driven by the level of resources each have available to fund the creation and deployment of these methods. Moreover, the use and quality of many of these methods can be

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<sup>22</sup> The *Moment of Truth* was held at the Auckland Town Hall during the last week of the election campaign, “intended to indict and convict the Prime Minister and his government in a single evening, based on testimony from celebrated ‘leakers’” (Levine, 2015, p. 49).

used as a proxy measure of the strength of their organisation, and their ability to gather sufficient resources to undertake a coherent, well-organised election campaign.

Labour and National both aimed to lead the formation of governments after election night, thus their approach was to gain as broad of a base of support among voters as possible. This meant their respective campaigns were aimed at appealing to a wide range of demographics, with Labour aiming to gain support from the “missing million” who did not vote in the 2011 General Election. Meanwhile the minor parties that sought to gain over 5% of the vote used means that targeted demographics that were less concentrated in individual electorates, but offered sufficient potential votes to reach their target. Those parties that sought primarily to win an electorate seat needed to balance the means used to enable them to target the demographics of the seat they were contesting while also enabling them to contest the party vote (e.g., United Future and Ōhāriu). Having now explored the various campaign strategies within the underlying demographic and electoral context, this thesis now turns its attentions to the ways in which each party twitter account was used to support and advance the respective campaign strategies.

## Chapter Three: Party Accounts

This chapter focuses on the ways in which ten New Zealand political parties used their respective party Twitter accounts during the 2014 General Election campaign period. While Twitter played a role in the campaign of each of the ten parties, not all used a party-branded account, instead focusing their efforts on party leader or candidate accounts. The party accounts are divided into four groups based on activity level: High activity, consisting of the Greens and the Internet Party; Moderate activity, consisting of National, Labour, and ACT; Low activity, consisting of Māori Party and United Future; and No or automated activity, consisting of New Zealand First, Conservatives, and Mana. Despite the accounts within each group having similar levels of activity, there are significant differences among the accounts driven by the differing aims of the parties and their levels of access to resources.

### High Activity

Between 1 June and 19 September the level of activity shown by the party accounts varied greatly. The Greens and the Internet Party clearly stand out as having a significantly higher level of activity than other parties, sending 2,630 tweets and 2,280 tweets respectively. The Greens started the studied period with 11,387 followers and the Internet Party with 6,982 followers. This meant the Greens were the most followed of the party accounts, with the Internet Party coming in third, less than 400 followers behind Labour. The strong growth in the Internet Party's following since its launch in January 2014 indicates a high level of interest in the party, its philosophy, its policies, and/or the personalities involved.<sup>23</sup> The campaign period saw the Internet Party's following grow by 49.26% to 10,553, while the Greens grew by 29.12% to 14,703. Despite lagging behind the Greens in terms of followers, the Internet Party was able to achieve a

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<sup>23</sup> The Internet Party's Twitter account was created in October 2013 (Internet Party, n.d.), with the party launch intended for 20 January 2014, but this was prevented by the risk of breaching Section 217(2) of the Electoral Act 1993 (Keall, 2014a), with the final official launch happening in late March 2014 (Brian, 2014).

proportionally higher level of engagement, as demonstrated by Table 4 and Table 5. This is particularly highlighted by the Internet Party obtaining average retweets and favourites within 1-3.5% that of the Greens, with a following of between 61.32% and 71.77% that of the Greens.

**Table 4 Greens and Internet Party Retweets**

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Greens</b>	<b>Internet Party</b>
Total retweets	11,467	10,594
Average retweets	8.88	8.80
Median	5	5
Max retweet	171	166
Min retweet	0	0
Tweets with 0 retweets	231	26
Tweets with 1 retweet	108	160
Tweets with 50+ retweets	21	22

**Table 5 Green and Internet Party Favourites**

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Greens</b>	<b>Internet Party</b>
Total favourites	10,876	9843
Average favourites	8.42	8.18
Median	5	5
Max favourite	252	129
Min Favourite	0	0
Tweets with 0 favourites	162	22
Tweets with 1 favourite	146	136
Tweets with 50+ favourites	19	17

This proportionally higher level of engagement is achieved via the Internet Party having a lower number tweets with no retweets and favourites than the Greens, while more of their tweets gained between one and seven retweets or favourites.

There are three potential explanations for this heightened performance: the content they posted was more engaging to their followers; their followers were more willing to engage; or a combination of the two. The potential means of achieving this proportionally higher level of engagement are discussed below in relation to the links posted by the two parties.

The internet has been claimed to offer political parties a means to engage in direct two-way communication with voters, with these claims being strengthened with the advent of Web 2.0 tools, in particular social media (Murchison, 2015; Utz, 2009). It is therefore important to test how willing political parties are to engage in this two-way communication. Replies to other Twitter users represent the manifestation of this two-way communication. During the studied period the Greens sent 269 (10.23%) replies, while the Internet Party sent 199 (8.73%). However, while standalone figures tell us how willing to engage the parties were, they lack a point of comparison. In order to gain a deeper understanding of how this engagement fits within party's Twitter use, and how it has changed over time, a reference point is required. As has been laid out above, in New Zealand-focused literature Murchison's (2015) work, focused on the 2011 New Zealand General Election, represents the single New Zealand specific reference point available. Murchison found that in the last month of the 2011 election campaign period, 257 (46.31%) of the tweets sent by the Greens were replies. However in the same time period in 2014, the Greens sent 150 replies (11.52%) and during the whole period under review sent 269 (10.23%). In comparison, during the last month of the 2014 election campaign period the Internet Party sent 73 replies (8.44%) with a total of 199 (8.73%) during the whole of the campaign period under review.

This decrease in replies from the Greens, in both nominal and percentage terms, may be explained by Murchison's finding that in 2011 28% of candidates had a Twitter account (Murchison, 2015) while in the 2014 campaign period this had

increased to 57% for the parties included in this project.<sup>24</sup> This meant potential voters had a wider range of party representatives of whom they could ask questions, meaning there may have been less questions for the party account to answer. The question-answering role of candidates is highlighted by Hayden Eastmond-Mein, Green Party Social Media Advisor, who observed “most brands don’t have these 14 kind of like actual people who can be out there talking about specific aspects of what you’re doing” (2015, l. 373–375). However, the significant decline in the Greens’ percentage of replies during the last month of the election campaign is only partially driven by a decrease in the actual number of replies; 257 in 2011 versus 150 in 2014. It was also driven by a significant increase in the number of tweets sent, 555 in 2011 versus 1,302 in 2014, including an increase from 131 (23.6%) to 655 (50.91%) retweets. Therefore the decline in percentage terms is as much a symptom of the increased level of content being produced by the parties, including retweeted content, as a declining willingness to engage. A definitive answer to the question of what has driven this decline in replies is difficult to determine without a content analysis of all tweets sent to the party, and candidate accounts, as well as their replies. However, a comparative analysis of the number of replies sent by both party accounts and candidate accounts between the 2014 and 2017 General Elections may provide valuable insight into this question without the commitment of significant research resources.

The types of tweets parties send only shows part of the picture on how they used Twitter. Equally important is the kind of content they used. Linked content – such as websites, graphics, and photos – within tweets increases the media richness of the tweets, providing a way for parties both to increase the density of information, as to affect the level of engagement they gain. Table 6 lays out the level of links contained in the Greens’ and Internet Party’s tweets.

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<sup>24</sup> During the 2014 campaign the Greens had 75% of their candidates on Twitter whereas the Internet Party had 100% of their candidates on Twitter.

**Table 6 Greens and Internet Party Links**

	<b>Greens</b>	<b>Internet Party</b>
Number of tweets containing a link	1680	1563
% of total tweets containing a link	63.88	68.55
Total number of links	1836	1613
Tweets containing two or more links	154	50
Links in original tweets	981	863
Links in retweets	855	750

The lower percentage of the Greens' tweets that contained a link can be explained by their use of live tweeting of policy announcements and speeches by party leaders at campaign launches, where a large number of tweets contain no links (Eastmond-Mein, 2015, l. 486–493). These tweets fit with the aim, stated by Eastmond-Mein, of providing opinion leaders and supporters with salient elements of a speech to retweet, as a means of further spreading the party's message (2015, l. 182–187). The effectiveness of this approach can be seen with Russel Norman's speech to the Green Party Annual General Meeting, when a live tweet received 50 retweets and 65 favourites (Green Party, 2014e), compared with the 17 retweets and 12 favourites on a Tweet containing a graphic and a link to the policy announced (Green Party, 2014d).

Shifting focus to the content of links tweeted, Table 7 shows a number of similarities in the type of links sent by both parties, as well as a number of areas where the types diverge. These areas of divergence are key to understanding the differences in how Twitter was used by each party. In particular, the Greens had a much stronger use of the party website links, with around twice as many as the Internet Party, however they closely aligned in terms of using party graphics.

**Table 7 Greens and Internet Party Link Type**

Link type	Greens		Internet Party	
	Raw	%	Raw	%
Party website	329	17.92	164	10.17
News media	288	15.69	381	23.62
YouTube	48	2.61	128	7.94
Facebook	56	3.05	58	3.60
Other social media	15	0.82	36	2.23
Twitter	5	0.27	4	0.25
Photo	755	41.12	359	22.26
Party graphic	134	7.30	119	7.38
Non-party graphic	41	2.23	58	3.60
Blog	12	0.65	122	7.56
Other	153	8.33	184	11.41

Another area of difference is in the use of links to blogs. The Greens had just 12 links to blogs, nine being retweets, three related to their The Green Room events, and two from NZ Gamer related to a Green Party policy launch (Green Party, 2014f; Hughes, 2014).<sup>25</sup> However the Internet Party had 122 blog links, with one third of these being from retweets. This heavy use of blog links by the Internet Party was driven by their approach to issues of technology, internet governance, and mass surveillance, which are discussed in more detail below.

For both parties, much of their retweeted content fitted into two categories, photos (Greens 52.63%, Internet Party 36.93%) and media links (Greens 17.19%, Internet Party 19.20%). Following the release of Nicky Hager's *Dirty Politics* on

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<sup>25</sup> The Green Room was a live-streamed response by the Greens to the first leaders' debate between David Cunliffe and John Key, run in conjunction with the Public Address blog. More details can be found here: <https://www.greens.org.nz/greenroom>.

13 August (Hager, 2014; Watkins, 2014), the Internet Party encouraged people to post photos of themselves reading the book with exaggerated faces to #DirtyPoliticsSelfie to indicate their dislike of the allegations contained in the book. Internet Party Digital Engagement Manager Callum Valentine said that these were intended to counter the narrative of “the Internet Party equals Kim Dotcom” which they were “constantly combating” (2015, l. 326–328). This sharing of Dirty Politics Selfies can be seen as an attempt by the Internet Party to help build, and reinforce, a sense of “collective identity” amongst its supporters. Drissel states that a sense of collective identity is key for “any social movement... to gain active supporters” (2015, p. 108), with Polletta and Jasper (as cited in Drissel, 2015, p. 108) linking collective identity to “an individual’s cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community...”. The sharing of a large number of images of similar reactions can help build this by suggesting to sympathetic viewers that they are not alone in their reactions. This may not have been apparent, since much of the news coverage of the release of *Dirty Politics*, and the allegations contained within it, focused on how political actors and commentators had responded, the stories directly reporting on voters’ reactions to the book were limited (Campbell Live, 2014; Kirk, 2014b; NZ Herald, 2014; One News, 2014c). Thus, for many, the Internet Party’s promotion of Dirty Politics Selfies may have been the first indication these potential votes on Twitter were not alone in their reaction to the book’s allegations.

Dirty Politics Selfies was not the only action of the Internet Party that is suggestive of an attempt to build a sense of collective identity among its supporters. Their use of content from websites, such as *Mashable*, *The Intercept*, *Russia Today*, and *Wikileaks*, were intended to “create a lens for our supporters to look through” (Valentine, 2015, l. 370–371). This also helped supporters place themselves within a wider-ranging global movement calling into question the actions of the United States, and its Five Eyes partners, in relation to mass online surveillance. This tied in closely with the inclusion of Edward Snowden and Julian Assange at the “Moment of Truth” event and their laying out of how New Zealand fits into the mass surveillance network (Russon, 2014). This approach of using media links to create a lens for supporters was also followed by the Greens,

with the additional aim of easing the transition of the account from a parliamentary-focused account to a campaign-focused account (Eastmond-Mein, 2015, l. 128–138, 146–148).

Alongside trying to facilitate the creation of a sense of collective identity among their followers, both parties tried to tap into a network of highly engaged and connected users that has been termed “the Twitterati”. While not an original term, Oxford Dictionaries define the term as “keen or frequent users ... of Twitter” (“Twitterati,” n.d.). Though in a New Zealand context the term has a narrower meaning, focused around a subset of users who regularly engage with #NZpol and discuss other political and social issues (See Edwards, 2014; Gower, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d; Matthews, 2015). However this simple definition, necessitated by space, belies the amorphous, contested nature of the term. The Internet Party aimed to target the Twitterati with content that was “a little bit more insider than Facebook” (Valentine, 2015, l. 229). At the same time Eastmond-Mein stated his view that “Twitter, even outside of the campaign, is such a bubble” that is “relatively skewed left” (2015, l. 180–181). However, within the Twitterati they both saw a collection of people they felt were useful for their parties to connect with. A wider term used by Valentine and Eastmond-Mein to describe them is “opinion leaders”, be they members of the media, or just those who were influential within their own online or offline communities (Eastmond-Mein, 2015, l. 180–187; Valentine, 2015, p. 13:45).

By targeting this particular group of users the two parties were attempting to achieve two things: use the less mediated nature of Twitter as a way to push their message directly to online opinion leaders – who would in turn spread the party’s message within their own networks – and get their message in front of the media on Twitter, with the aim of gaining media coverage. This latter approach fits with the findings of Ross and Bürger (2014) from before the 2011 General Election that MPs were using Twitter in an attempt to place stories in the media. Green MP Gareth Hughes stated he could think of a number of times when his tweets had resulted in contact from a member of the media (Ross & Burger, 2014, p. 55), while Labour MP David Cunliffe stated that he saw

Facebook as a “retail” platform and Twitter as a “wholesale” platform (Ross & Burger, 2014, p. 56).

Despite these advantages, the Twitterati represented a double-edged sword for political parties: one edge allowed parties to spread their message, the other a “self-appointed swords of Damocles waiting with baited [sic] breath to strike” with the clarion call of “you’re doing it wrong” (Stewart, 2014). The Internet Party experienced the latter edge following both Kim Dotcom’s “kills hooker” tweet and their “remix culture” use of Picasso’s *Guernica* (Beveridge, 2014b).<sup>26</sup> The former was picked up by the mainstream media (Collins, 2014; Keall, 2014b) while the latter was picked up by blogs and some media (Farrar, 2014b; Hunt, 2014; Slater, 2014).

Within the Internet Party there was displeasure over how the media were covering their campaign, which came to a head at the InternetMANA campaign launch when party press secretary Pam Corkery lashed out at reporters (APNZ, 2014; Corkery, 2014; Ryan, 2014), followed by Kim Dotcom, at the “Moment of Truth” event, accusing the media of having “failed New Zealanders in the past” and suggesting they “need to wake up and do [their] jobs” (Fisher, 2014b). In order to circumvent this perceived media bias, a semi-nightly “news bulletin”, *Not the Six O’clock News*, was launched.<sup>27</sup> Hosted by Laila Harré, posted on YouTube, and promoted via social media, it was intended to provide the coverage of their campaign that they felt was not being provided by the media (Internet MANA, 2014) and to connect with those who distrusted the media and their reporting. However, despite promotion to nearly 10,000 followers on Twitter and 28,400 likes on Facebook (Beveridge, 2014d) only the first and seventh episodes gained more than 2,000 views, gaining 3,906 and 7,575 views respectively (Internet MANA, n.d.). The success of these two particular episodes is likely linked to the attraction of a first episode and the attraction of the guests in the seventh episode (Journalist Glenn Greenwald and member of Kim

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<sup>26</sup> Kim Dotcom’s tweet read: “Hi, I’m Batman/ I MEAN BURCE / Shit. / \*\*kills hooker\*\*”.

<sup>27</sup> This was intended to be nightly, but not always possible on the campaign trail.

Dotcom's defence team Robert Amsterdam), as opposed to representing any success in promotion.

The outward articulation of these anti-media views clashed with elements of the Internet Party's activity on Twitter: 23.62% of the Internet Party's links were to media websites compared with 10.17% to the party website and 7.38% to party graphics. These media links included sites, such as *Russia Today*, that played a role in the framing and informing issues of mass surveillance and internet governance discussed above, but also links to many New Zealand-based media outlets. The juxtaposition between this heavy use of media links and the public comments about the media's performance, along with the production of *Not the Six O'clock News*, indicates the comments on media coverage may have been an attempt to play to the base the party was trying to build, many of whom have a distrust of commercial media organisations (MANA Movement, 2014; Mana News, 2015; Trinder, 2015).

While the aims for these two parties were similar, the means they used to achieve them were different. For both parties Twitter was a key tool for engaging with their base and connecting with those they deemed to be influential. However the Internet Party Twitter account was more focused on framing and informing the debate, and discussing the issues they felt were important in the campaign, along with significant attempts to build a sense of collective identity among their followers. (Incidentally, this approach aligns with the findings of scholars exploring the use of social media to support the creation of social movements by terrorist, insurgency, and non-state paramilitary organisations (such as Amble, 2012; Drissel, 2015; Farwell, 2014; Klausen, 2015; Menkhaus, 2014).) These elements were also present for the Greens, but were tempered by the stronger presence of party-related content, particularly party website links. Both of these approaches had elements of a wholesale-style approach to placing stories, or quotes, with the media and opinion leaders, as a means to help overcome the issues they perceived they faced in gaining media attention, which were more significant for the Internet Party than the Greens.

Both parties were well resourced, compared to other parties with similar levels of electoral support. The Greens had a campaign office in Auckland, staffed by both paid workers and volunteers, which operated alongside the party head office located in Wellington. This co-location of key staff and volunteers allowed the social media staff to be closely involved with, and informed about, the planning of campaign activities, which in turn enabled them to closely align the Twitter activity with the overall campaign. Alongside this, the high level of resourcing allowed for the production of larger numbers of high-quality party graphics that were likely to generate greater engagement. This structure was only possible because of the Greens' ability to fundraise at levels they had not achieved before (See Davison, 2014a), facilitated by a party head office with five paid staff throughout the full three-year election cycle (K. Hague, personal communication, 2015).

In contrast, the Internet Party modelled their campaign and party office on that of an internet start-up. While this office was well-staffed and well-funded, there was a lack of political control from the leadership early on, which was not fully rectified until Laila Harré joined as leader in late May (Valentine, 2015, l. 278–289), nearly five months after the party launch and following the announcement of the alliance with Mana. This lack of political leadership affected the choices that were made, including the campaign strategy. These choices were also influenced by the short timeframe available for the development of the Internet Party, along with its desire to 'crowd source' a number of key elements, including its policy platform and candidates. The result was that by the start of the campaign period under review, the Internet Party had no clear indication of who its candidates were and a policy platform that was not finalised. This drove their Twitter use to focus on framing debate and highlighting issues of concern to the party. The resources the party had available meant that once their campaign strategy was decided, they were able to strongly align their actions on Twitter with the intended strategy.

### **Moderate Activity**

Labour, National, and ACT all exhibited a moderate level of activity during the period studied, sending between 490 and 735 tweets, with a focus on content directly related to the party. At the start of the period, Labour was the second most followed account with 7,319 followers. National placed fourth with 5,748, while ACT were fifth with 1,455. At the end of the period their followings had grown to 10,924, 7,589 and 1,838 respectively. Both Labour's and National's party leader accounts had larger followings than their party accounts, with John Key starting the period with 109,392 followers, whereas David Cunliffe started with 10,048, behind Russel Norman's 11,125. One element that stands out about National's content is the level of retweets they had: 45.31% as opposed to either ACT 20.57% or Labour 20.41%. This can be explained by the party posting a significant amount of original content on Key's account, with the party account retweeting it, as opposed to posting the original content on the party account. This was driven by the larger following of Key's account and the role of Brand Key in the wider National campaign.

As Table 8 shows, in terms of engagement gained ACT achieved 12-17% of the average retweets or favourites of National and 10-15% of the average of Labour, with a following 16-25% that of the bigger parties. This proportionally low level of engagement is highlighted by 42% of their original tweets gaining no retweets and 51% no favourites. In comparison National achieved 40% of the total retweets and favourites of Labour, but their averages came within 10-20% of Labour. One key element that explains this success on a per tweet basis is the consistent level of engagement National achieved.

**Table 8 Labour, National, and Act Retweets**

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Labour</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>ACT</b>
Total retweets	4944	1998	555
Average retweets	8.45	7.46	1.25
Median	4	5	1
Max retweet	77	47	13
Min retweet	0	0	0
Tweets with 0 retweets	112	20	187
Tweets with 1 retweet	67	15	105
Tweets with 50+ retweets	9	0	0

**Table 9 Labour, National, and Act Favourites**

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Labour</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>ACT</b>
Total favourites	4846	1806	386
Average favourites	8.28	6.74	0.87
Median	5	4	0
Max favourite	76	58	6
Min favourite	0	0	0
Tweets with 0 favourites	76	16	226
Tweets with 1 favourite	87	43	119
Tweets with 50+ favourites	8	1	0

While National may not have reached the same heights of engagement as Labour, they had fewer tweets with zero engagement, thus resulting in more of their messages being spread, but not as far as Labour. The return to the party from this is difficult to determine as Cameron Cotter, National Communications Manager, states the typical audience on Twitter does not align with the typical National voting base (2015, l. 106–109). This meant they saw the party account as a means to have their message represented on the platform and to “contribute to a live debate” (2015, l. 196–197). However they did not engage with users, sending just three replies (0.61%), compared with ACT’s 141 replies (25.22%)

and Labour's 83 replies (11.30%). This places ACT as the only party in this group to be above Evans et al. (2014) 15% reply rate, though Labour is close. However, nearly one third of ACT's replies are accounted for in just two exchanges (ACT Party, 2014a, 2014b), suggesting this is not a party engaging with a wide range of users, but a party engaging in protracted discussions with a small number of users.

On the wider topic of replies, Andrew Burns, Labour's Digital Marketing Manager, suggested that the apparent low level of replies by parties is caused by the low number of tweets "to respond to" (2015, l. 122) contrary to the assumptions of many outsiders. He estimates Labour replied to more than 80% of the legitimate questions received, adding that it is difficult to respond to criticism on Twitter (2015, l. 135), which appears to be what ACT have tried to do. Cotter also noted the resource-intensive nature of replying on social media presents a challenge, commenting that political campaigns in New Zealand are "pretty small teams" that had "a number of other things" to do (2015, l. 184–190). However National's lack of replies is more likely driven by the view that Twitter users are not naturally right-leaning voters. This conclusion is supported by Labour being able to reply to 80% of questions and to have replies make up over 10% of their total tweets, despite being significantly more resource-limited than National. In addition, National's 2011 campaign account, @natcampaign, sent 12 replies (12.88%) in the last month of the election campaign, compared to the main party account that sent none, resulting in a total reply rate of 7.64%.<sup>28</sup> Therefore the 2014 General Election campaign represented a change in the way that National dealt with replies, establishing a new baseline level of replies that is suggestive of a view that Twitter is a platform worth being on, but one in which engagement, by the party account, is not the best approach.

A prime measure of how information dense a party's tweets are is how many tweets contain links, as well as how many links there are per tweet. This varied across the parties, from 82.09% of National's original tweets to 57.43% of ACT's

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<sup>28</sup> Tweets of both accounts combined.

and 59.66% of Labour's. However, within these tweets National averaged 1.45 links per tweet compared to Labour's 1.14 and ACT's 1.02 links per tweet. The inclusion of multiple links per tweet allows for the use of content likely to increase engagement, e.g., photo or graphic, as well as a link to a site, such as a media or party website. This combination can help drive engagement, in some cases resulting in an increase in engagement of 62% (See Rogers, 2014) and also highlights a level of sophistication and planning. However, the lower percentage, and average, for Labour and ACT may be explained by their higher rate of replies, which potentially have a lower rate of link usage.

Of the different types of links, two particularly focus on the advancement of party policies and ideas: party website and party graphics. These made up 59.73-70.43% of the total links and 80.45-87.46% of links in original tweets sent by the three parties compared with 17.55-25.22% of total links and 24.78-39.65% of links in original tweets for the Greens and Internet Party. In contrast, the use of media website links by the two major parties, Labour (1.80%) and National (1.34%), was significantly lower than it was for parties such as the Greens (15.69%) or the Internet Party (23.62%), with ACT (9.15%) falling between the two groups. This can be accounted for by National and Labour having a greater ability to influence the media agenda via other means compared to smaller parties; therefore they had less need to frame the coverage via Twitter and could focus on promoting their policies.

Many of the photos tweeted by these parties were retweets from candidates, MPs or known party activists and affiliates: for ACT this applied to 18 of 26 photos, Labour 85 of 116, and National 148 of 169. For at least one party, this retweeting of candidate and activists photos was part of a plan for the party account to act as a force multiplier to both increase the reach of the candidate and MP's tweets, and to support them in building their following (Anonymous, Personal Communication, 2015). It is likely the reasons were similar for the other two parties. When these photos included supporters and voters there was an additional benefit of helping to create collective identity. However both these

elements are reliant on MPs and candidates creating relevant content to be retweeted, which is not something that parties are easily able to influence.

For ACT, despite appearing to have a real person running the account, there seemed to be no coherent plan to use Twitter to advance their message. Their content was focused heavily on links to their party's website while forgoing the use of content types likely to increase engagement, such as graphics (See Rogers, 2014). Additionally, while Act's engagement in protracted exchanges with other users lifts their overall rate of reply, the usefulness of which was questionable. As with the Greens and Internet Party, ACT had a higher level of tweets linking to media websites, highlighting that for many small parties the media represents a key source of content that can be used to frame the debate in a way that they see as being advantageous to them while also highlighting the subordinate nature of their relationship with the media.

In contrast to this, National had a focused message centred on "sticking to the plan that is working" (Joyce, 2015), while Labour focused on a theme of "Vote Positive" embedded in "the strength of Labour policy" (Barnett & Talbot, 2015, p. 140). This desire to push a strong centralised message led to heavy use of party websites and party graphics links: 59.73% of National's and 66.4% of Labour's total links were to either the party website or party graphics. Although ACT had a higher combined level of party website and graphic links (70.43%), the split between the two types was much more uneven: 64.33% versus 6.10%, compared to National, 34.35% versus 25.38%, or Labour, 45.60% versus 20.80%. This highlights the point that ACT's content lacked elements that were likely to result in a higher level of engagement, particularly retweeting. This highlights Seymour's admission that social media was not used as "strategically or comprehensively as it might have been" (2015, p. 170). This is additionally highlighted by ACT's creation of a "Sunday Series" of weekly videos, which each outlined an ACT policy position. However just ten links to YouTube were tweeted during the whole of the studied period, suggesting that each video was only promoted once, or twice, as opposed to being used as a source of easily reusable content that could have been used to maximise reach and engagement.

For Labour and National, their use of Twitter was driven directly by the party campaign strategy, but also indirectly by the historical strength and record of the parties that has allowed them to directly influence the media's agenda to a greater extent than smaller parties and, therefore, having less need to use media links to help frame the debate. While Labour faced the 2014 General Election in a more financially constrained position than had been the case in the past, National's and Labour's robust, broad-based organisational structure was able to support a party head office throughout the electoral cycle. This enduring party apparatus enables fundraising and strong party campaign structures, both of which support the development and implementation of a sophisticated, coherent social media campaign, with elements such as party graphics and multiple links per tweet. In addition, the use of experienced professional staff to manage the digital element of the campaign means these parties were able to maintain a focus on a style of activity that is likely to gain engagement from targeted users.

### **Low Activity**

The low-activity accounts consist of United Future and the Māori Party. These accounts are defined as low activity based on their low number of tweets, 235 for the Māori Party and 293 for United Future. Although in comparison to the findings of Murchison (2015) – relating to the last 30 days of the 2011 General Election – the Māori Party have shown a significant increase in total activity from 27 tweets in 2011 to 107 tweets with 65 retweets in 2014. The extended period of this study shows that the Māori Party had a sustained level of use, with 128 tweets in the period from 1 June till 19 August, for a total of 235. United Future did not have a presence on Twitter during their 2011 campaign, only establishing a Twitter account in July 2013 (United Future, n.d.). Moreover both of these accounts compare well to the 15% rate of reply found by Evans et al. (2014), with United Future reaching 17.41% (51 tweets) and the Māori Party reaching 12.77% (30 tweets).

The biggest issue facing both party accounts was their comparative lack of followers. United Future had the lowest number of followers (197) of all ten parties at the start of the studied period. The Māori Party was better placed, with 1,434 followers, placing them just behind ACT. However both party leaders had greater followings: Dunne (4,458) and Flavell (2,364). This placed more of the focus of the social media campaign on the leader's accounts. The United Future party account was created in 2013, after Dunne saw the use that a wider social media footprint could offer a smaller party like United Future (2015b, l. 103–115). The delay between Dunne's realisation following the 2011 General Election and the creation of the account might highlight the protracted process that under-resourced parties face in deciding and implementing new initiatives. The failure of these party accounts to build larger followings, and the resulting focus on the leader accounts, is partially explained by the resourcing issues both parties faced. These were highlighted by stories concerning Māori Party fundraising events in 2014 (Fisher, 2014a; Stuff, 2014a; Trevett, 2014a) and United Future only spending \$2,000 on the nationwide party-vote campaign (Electoral Commission, 2015k). This lack of funds means that the parties do not have the resources to support building followings on social media throughout the election cycle. This places them at a disadvantage during election years, therefore reinforcing the focus on the leader's account with its higher following. Dunne highlights this when he says "I don't run the United Future Account... it [the Twitter campaign] was focused around my account [be]cause I have the following, the United Future account certainly piggybacked off that." (Dunne, 2015b, l. 252–255). However, although focusing the party campaign around the leader's account may solve the issue of finding a larger audience, it raises other issues, particularly what happens when the leader leaves Parliament, as happened to the Māori Party when Tariana Turia (1,157 followers) and Pita Sharples (1,579 followers) both stepped down before the 2014 General Election. The party loses a large audience for its message while still having a small party following.

If a party is successful in being elected to parliament then they might be tempted to compensate for their lack of funding between elections via the parliamentary

funding intended to support their, and their MPs, parliamentary work. In particular, there may be a desire to use these resources to support the growth of their social media channels. However, this raises a number of issues: for instance, does the way they use it fall within the tight rules around the use of parliamentary funds? (See Parliamentary Service (NZ), 2014). Additionally, if they are successful in achieving this growth, are the parties well funded enough during the election campaign to continue to produce content of the quality and quantity needed to make use of these expanded social media channels? If not, there may be a lack of consistency with the party brand, or style, with negative impacts on the engagement they gain, thus negating the benefits gained from having established a larger following.

A limited following for the party account, tied with a larger following for party leaders, and a lack of resources, means that there is less incentive for parties to post content such as party graphics on the party account. This is shown by the minimal use of party graphics on Twitter by either the Māori Party, with three tweets (1.28%) containing a graphic, or United Future, with four (1.37%) during the whole studied period, compared with 21 (16.03%) and 14 (9.33%) party graphics respectively on their Facebook pages during just the last month of the election campaign. Additionally, the significantly higher number of tweets containing photos – Māori Party (11.06%), United Future (15.02%) – compared to party graphics reinforces the view that there was a purposeful decision made to focus fewer resources on the party Twitter accounts. In turn, this lack of graphics is likely to have affected the level of engagement that the accounts received (See Rogers, 2014), with the Māori Party gaining an average of 1.18 retweets and 1.85 favourites per tweet, and United Future gaining 1.67 retweets and 0.42 favourites.

The combination of the high level of retweeted content in general – Maori Party 65.11%, United Future 37.88% – and the high level of retweeted photos – 40-50% of photos were retweets – indicates that Twitter was seen as a platform focused around resharing content from other users, as opposed to original content. For the Māori Party at least, this retweeting of other user's photos of

themselves with the party billboards and hoardings (Flavell, 2015) was intended to foster a sense of membership in a widespread group of supporters. While the intent was similar to the Internet Party's Dirty Politics Selfies, in the case of the Māori Party there was a less concerted effort to execute this on Twitter, with just 14 photos retweeted during the period studied.

Flavell (2015) articulates a sophisticated, ambitious program for the Māori Party's campaign-related social media that fits well with the overall campaign strategy. However the actions of the party account in implementing that vision do not fit so well. There was a significant lack of the type of content that Rogers (2014) finds is likely to result in a significant engagement and a low level of linked content in general, with just 42.13% of all tweets containing a link. While United Future had a higher level of linked content (62.80%), the type of content they were sharing again did not fall into the categories of content likely to result in high engagement (See Rogers, 2014). Furthermore, there does not appear to be a unified plan to make the most of the account in conjunction with Peter Dunne's account, though this is likely the result of Dunne articulating a strategy that focused around his own account.

For these two parties, their party account's role was to be a place for people to find content if they searched for the party by name and to provide a base level of content to suggest that the party was active on the platform. Despite both parties articulating rather sophisticated social media strategies, neither was able to allocate the resources required to implement them successfully. This is linked both to a lack of election campaign-related resources, as well as a lack of a strong, well-resourced organisational structure that can help to grow the party account's following during inter-election years.

### **No, or automated, Activity**

The 2014 New Zealand General Election saw New Zealand First exemplify a highly automated Twitter presence, Mana being inactive, and the Conservative Party unrepresented by a party account. For the Conservative Party much of

their campaign was focused around Colin Craig, the party's leader, most recognisable face, and most prominent candidate. The Conservatives were not limited by resources with Craig donating significant funds to the party (Electoral Commission, 2015o), placing them second in total campaign spending (Electoral Commission, 2015m). Therefore, their lack of a party account can be considered a purposeful choice, intended to place the focus of their Twitter efforts on Craig's account. This contrasts with Facebook where they had both a Colin Craig page and a Conservative Party page (Conservative Party, n.d.; Craig, n.d.).

The New Zealand First account was active during the period studied, starting with 255 followers, compared to Winston Peters' 6,282. From the limited information available from Tracey Martin (Personal Communication, 2015), New Zealand First had no paid employees, with one party board member being responsible for the New Zealand First Facebook page while no mention was made of running the party twitter account. However, it is apparent from the six (6.74%) replies and one (1.12%) retweet that it was not a fully-automated system. The highly-automated nature of the New Zealand First account may be linked to the chequered track record that social media has within the party and Peters' related desire to keep control of the party accounts close to his inner circle. Their 2011 return to parliament saw the parliamentary staff seizing control of the various party-related social media accounts (Anonymous, Personal Communication, 2016) while 2013 saw reports of Facebook accounts being closed due to issues concerning the membership of youth wing leader Curwen Rolinson (Bennett, 2013; Gulliver, 2013; Radio New Zealand News, 2013), along with issues around the use of social media by some of their MPs (Chapman, 2013a; Marwick, 2014). However, the concentration on Peters' account fits with the focus of the New Zealand First brand being synonymous with Peters.

The Mana account was completely inactive during the period studied, having not tweeted since 25 November 2011 and there is no data available on its activity during the 2011 General Election campaign. Although Mana were active on social media, as Valentine highlighted, Facebook was their stronger platform (2015, l. 76–81). The component parties of InternetMANA focused their resources on

their strengths. When active, Mana's Twitter account had a similar, automated, style to New Zealand First's account.

The level, and style, of Twitter activity from New Zealand First indicates they viewed Twitter as a platform they had to be on, but were unwilling, or unable, to dedicate the level of resources required to produce much content. Meanwhile the Conservatives aimed to focus on Craig's account, with the lack of a party account helping to retain this focus. At the same time, the InternetMANA campaign strategy was for the Internet Party to focus on growing a following on Twitter, while Mana focused on Facebook where it already had a well-established brand and a strong network of supporters.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has highlighted two key elements of the use of party Twitter accounts during an election campaign: firstly the level of activity they display and, secondly the alignment between the party campaign strategy and that activity. There was a large variance in the level of activity seen across the ten accounts, from the 2200+ tweets of the Greens and Internet Party to the inactive Mana account and the non-existent Conservatives account. The accounts that had a stronger alignment to their party strategy also, generally, had higher activity levels. For the Greens and the Internet Party, Twitter provided a means to frame and inform the debate and to counter the difficulty they had in getting their messages covered by the media. National's and Labour's activity was much more focused on the party message, using party graphics, links to the party website, and photos, to the almost total exclusion of media or blog links. Despite their moderate level of activity, ACT's approach to Twitter was reflective of a party without a coherent plan on how to utilise it. United Future and the Māori Party represent the parties that had well-planned campaigns, but the implementation by their party accounts was lacking. Finally, New Zealand First used their party account as a broadcast tool for their website, with very little active human input into the content.

The level of resourcing available to parties heavily influences both of these aspects, with the four parties with the strongest alignment, and four of the five most active accounts, belonging to parties that spent over \$1,000,000 during the campaign. However, resources are not just what is directly available to a party during the election, but are also the ability of the party to maintain enduring organisational structures during the inter-election period. It is the existence of these organisational structures outside of election years that is the common theme linking the parties that were both active on Twitter and had strong alignment between that activity and their party strategy. These organisational structures, and the resources that allow them, enable the parties to have well-established command and control systems, with clear lines of communication that enable the creation of high-quality, high-volume content, including graphics, quotes, live tweeting, and the ability to reply to other users. Parties that lacked strong organisational structures and the resources associated with them were likely to have less active party accounts, which did not strongly align with their party strategy.

## Chapter Four: Party Leaders' Accounts

Party leaders are normally the highest profile individual representatives of a political party. They are the people most likely to be the public face of the party, play a key role in the formation of new coalition governments (S. Church, Personal Communication, 2015), and are central in determining the ability of their party to advance its policy agenda (See Heffernan, 2003). This is reflected on Twitter, with most leaders accounts having a greater following than their respective party accounts, while providing a more personal way for parties to connect with users. This chapter divides the party leader accounts into four groups based on the means of control: automated; self controlled; staff controlled; and hybrid. This chapter will compare the follower base of each leader account with the associated party account before discussing each of the different groups of accounts and how they fit with the wider campaign strategies of the respective parties.

As can be seen in Table 10 eight out of the eleven party leader accounts had a greater following than their party's account.

**Table 10 Party Account and Leader Account Followings<sup>29</sup>**

<b>Party</b>	<b>Leader</b>	<b>Leader account 30 May</b>	<b>Party account 30 May</b>	<b>Leader account 19 Sept</b>	<b>Party account 19 Sept</b>
National	John Key	109,392	5,748	120,758	7,589
Labour	David Cunliffe	10,048	7,319	13,512	10,924
Māori Party	Te Ururoa Flavell	2,364	1,434	3,160	1,862
United Future	Peter Dunne	4,458	197	5,285	350
ACT	Jamie Whyte <sup>30</sup>	682	1,455	1,200	1,838
Greens	Russel Norman	11,125	11,387	14,288	14,703
	Metiria Turei	8,556		11,425	
NZ First	Winston Peters	6,282	255	8,630	483
Conser- vatives	Colin Craig <sup>30</sup>	1,668	0	2,258	0
Mana	Hone Harawira	570	809	1,072	944
Internet Party	Laila Harré <sup>31</sup>	944	6,982	6,565	10,553

A potential advantage of a leader’s Twitter account, that may explain the larger following, is its ability to be more personal in nature compared to a “corporate” party account, making the account more interesting to followers. However, it is likely that the reasons for this higher leader account following are more complex. Future research exploring reasons why users choose to follow party leader accounts versus party accounts would provide a useful insight into the style of content that users are interested in.

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<sup>29</sup> The data on the number of followers for individual accounts was collected for a side project of the authors; therefore there are some gaps in the data. However, it still outlines the situation well.

<sup>30</sup> Data collected 3 July.

<sup>31</sup> Data collected 29 May (day she was appointed as leader).

## **Automated**

The automated account represents the least resource-intensive approach to Twitter. It is an account that is linked to another platform, such as Facebook or a website, which generates the content posted on the Twitter account. This was the case with Craig's account, which sent 12 tweets, 11 of them containing links to Facebook. This has not always been the case. One tweet, from 2012, that resurfaced during the election campaign (Craig, 2012; Beveridge, 2014c) was originally posted using Twitter's web client. At the same time, Harawira's account sent 15 tweets, posting automated links to updated content on the Mana Party website. As with Craig, this was the total extent of the tweets.

This automated approach results in tweets that contain little or no information of their own and require users to navigate to a different site to gain any deeper understanding. This results in a lower level of engagement, both in terms of retweets and favourites, as well as clicks on the links. While Craig and Harawira both gained higher averages than Flavell and Dunne for retweets, and higher than Dunne for favourites, this was due to a small number of tweets gaining many retweets – over half of their total retweets came from less than a quarter of their tweets. In total, they only gained 2-5% of the favourites or retweets of the other leaders.

For Harawira, and Mana, the limited activity on Twitter fits with the InternetMANA campaign strategy, which had Mana focus their social media attention on Facebook where they had a stronger support base. For Craig, and the Conservatives, the lack of a party account combined with a leader account that made limited use of Twitter, linked to a Facebook page, is indicative of a party strategy that included being seen on as many platforms as possible while not having the organisational wherewithal required to make the most of these platforms. For the Conservatives, this lack of wherewithal was unlikely to have been financial, but organisational – simply not having experienced, professional staff with the skills and experience to administer the accounts.

## Self Controlled

The self-controlled party leader account is the most common type, utilised by Russel Norman and Metiria Turei (Greens), Laila Harré (Internet Party), Te Ururoa Flavell (Māori Party), and Peter Dunne (United Future). The average total number of tweets sent by all leaders was 801, while the self-controlled accounts averaged 1,534; with respective medians of 473 and 1,734. This demonstrates that self-controlled accounts are likely to be much more active than those accounts controlled by other means. However, whether this activity ties in successfully with the party campaign strategy, or not, is a different question.

Dunne was not only the face of United Future on Twitter, but also the driving force behind the campaign strategy. Dunne highlights that United Future saw social media as a way to compensate for their lack of resources (2015b, l. 44–49). Their lack of size and resources means they struggle to influence the media agenda, commenting on stories driven by others rather than driving their own. Twitter was thus seen as a means by which they could combat this in two ways: to focus on content that Dunne felt mattered to voters; and to grab the attention of the media and other Twitter users with comments and observations that made people think "what the hell is all that about" (Dunne, 2015b, l. 58–61, 140–145).

Dunne achieved the first of these aims by using a focus on policy to counter a campaign that he felt "was becoming increasingly side-tracked by...side shows" (2015b, l. 59–60). This focus is exemplified by the "policy of the day" videos, which numbered around 30 during the course of the campaign (Dunne, 2015b, l. 67–68) and were posted across Facebook, YouTube and Instagram. During the campaign period Dunne tweeted 57 links to these sites, making up 17.43% of all links tweeted, though not all of these were to "policy of the day" videos. Dunne admits that the execution of those videos was somewhat lacking, for example focusing on the quantity of videos produced, instead of focusing on a few core messages, as well as issues around which social media platform to use (Dunne, 2015b, l. 82–97, 212–222). However, he argues they provided a cost-effective way to get their policy messages out while also combatting the perception that United Future did not have any policies. Moreover, Dunne saw being

“deliberately sort-of vague” and “racy” (2015b, l. 155, 134) with his tweets as a means of grabbing the attention of potential voters and the media, intending to exploit the media’s use of Twitter as a source for stories (as documented by Ross and Burger (2014)).

The Māori Party faced two key issues in the lead up to the 2014 General Election – firstly, the view that they were simply National’s ‘lap dogs’ (Kirk, 2015), and secondly the retirement of their high-profile co-leaders, Pita Sharples and Tariana Turia. The campaign aimed to counter the first issue by highlighting the gains made by the party (Flavell, 2015) “sitting [at] the table rather than across the road throwing rocks at each other” (Iti as quoted by Fox, 2014c). The content tweeted by Flavell contains two elements of the Māori Party’s campaign strategy – links to the party website and party graphics. However, while compared to other self-controlled accounts, Flavell posted a similar percentage of party websites or party graphics links, suggesting that the level of importance placed on the party message was similar. Yet these percentages hide a key element. There is significant difference between the raw number of links to party graphics posted on Twitter by Flavell, 14 (6.63%) compared to Facebook where 29 of the 131 (22.14%) posts on the party page contained a party graphic, a similar disparity existing between the party Twitter account and Facebook page. Thus, despite the allocation of resources to create party graphics, these were not used as frequently on Twitter as they were on Facebook. Why this is the case, when a key element of their campaign strategy was to highlight the policy gains made during the previous Parliament, and to reinforce their Tū Māori Mai tagline, is a question worthy of greater exploration. The cause of this discrepancy is difficult to determine, but it is likely to be related to a combination of the self-controlled nature of the account, the on-the-fly nature of Flavell’s use of Twitter, and the limited access campaign staff have to his account (Marama Fox, Personal Communication, 2016). Simply put, Twitter was something Flavell did as and when the opportunity arose with little to no input from campaign staff. This placed in his hands the responsibility of making sure his Twitter activity adhered to the campaign strategy at the same time as undertaking the other responsibilities of a party leader during a heated electorate and party vote

campaign. These issues raise questions around the capability of self-controlled accounts to be used as an effective part of a Twitter campaign, or if there is a need for at least some form of hybridisation between the self-controlled and the staff-controlled accounts to access the advantages of each type, while minimising the disadvantages.

The two Green Party co-leaders provide an ideal case to assess the impact different styles of Twitter use on engagement levels. Both accounts have similar levels of followers while also targeting similar groups of voters, yet there are clear differences between the content choices and usage styles. Metiria Turei linked her Twitter account to her Facebook profile. As a result, Turei has the highest raw number of Facebook links of all leaders and the highest percentage of Facebook links among the self-controlled accounts.<sup>32</sup> Compared to other self-controlled accounts, Turei has around ten times the proportion of links (35.76%) to Facebook as the next most prolific person, Internet Party leader Laila Harré (3.59%), and around 18 times as many as Norman (1.95%). As a number of those interviewed for this project, including Eastmond-Mein, have stated, Twitter and Facebook are very different audiences and linking the two platforms makes it harder to differentiate messages; both in terms of content and tone. The style of tweets produced by a linked Facebook account has an effect on the level of engagement. With the exception of Flavell, Turei had the lowest average retweets, (3.14) and favourites, (5.23) per tweet among the self-controlled accounts. This compares with Harré's 6.14 and 7.69 respectively, achieved with a consistently lower number of followers than Turei. In comparison, Norman, targeting a very similar demographic of Twitter users, gained an average of 8.52 retweets and 9.52 favourites per tweet. Turei's figures are 36.85% and 54.94% that of Norman's while having a following of 75-80% that of Norman. In addition to this, her use of party graphics (2.31%) and party website links (5.54%) was around half that of Norman (4.08% and 10.73%). This suggests that Turei's style of Twitter use, with its focus on linking to Facebook posts and low use of party

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<sup>32</sup> Only Colin Craig's account had a higher percentage of Facebook links, but that account only sent 12 tweets.

graphics and links to the party website, has the effect of driving down engagement and lowering the potential reach.

In addition to having fewer links to Facebook (22 vs. 310), Norman had a higher number of links in total (1127 vs. 867); he also sent more of each type of link, except links to Twitter (0 vs. 1) and other social media (6 vs. 6). In particular, the higher level of photo links, 40.82% versus 28.95%, may explain some of the difference in retweets with Turei, as per Rogers' (2014) findings. When tested against the Greens' campaign strategy, and the desire to use Twitter as a means of framing the debate, Norman is more closely aligned than Turei. Turei's choice to link her Facebook and Twitter accounts has resulted in the appearance of a highly-active Twitter account while constraining the content posted, resulting in a significantly reduced potential reach for that content.

One stand-out feature of the self-controlled accounts is their use of links to media websites compared to party websites. Flavell has the lowest total number of party website and media website links, 16 vs. 28, and the closest ratio, 1:1.75, with Laila Harré having the highest ratio of 1:3.31. Even when party graphics are included, media websites still outnumber party website for all but Flavell, who sent two more party website/graphic links than media links. The ratio for the rest of the self-controlled accounts sits between 1:1.50 and 1:2.11. This indicates that for these self-controlled accounts the aim of Twitter was not directly promoting the party, its website and policies, but using original tweets and retweets to frame and inform the debate and provide their followers with a lens through which to view events while also showing their supporters their relevance to the media. This is not surprising given that for all the parties, except the Māori Party, using Twitter as a means of framing the debates occurring during the election campaign period was a deliberate part of their strategy. For the leader's with highest number of media website links (Harré, Norman, and Turei) this approach was aided by the existence of party organisations that were able to source, and distribute, useful media website links to them, as opposed to relying on the leaders seeing the stories themselves and sharing them.

As has been laid out above, a key strength of social media is the ability for leaders to engage directly with voters and the self-controlled accounts exploit this strength. As Table 11 shows, all of the self-controlled accounts had a greater rate of reply than the 15% noted in Evans (2014).

**Table 11 Self-Controlled Leader Account Replies**

<b>Leader</b>	<b>Tweets in reply</b>	<b>% of total tweets</b>
Russel Norman	297	15.67
Metiria Turei	513	23.00
Laila Harré	567	32.70
Te Ururoa Flavell	215	33.81
Peter Dunne	571	48.51

While these levels of reply represent higher levels of engagement than that found by Evans et al (2014), future research into who these accounts are replying to would provide useful insights. Are they replying to a wide range of users, or is it a smaller group of already highly-connected users, reflective of offline networks (See Ausserhofer & Maireder, 2013; Bruns & Burgess, 2011). An initial, preliminary examination of the data suggests that, despite the higher percentage of replies, the number of unique people being replied to is limited, with many being discussions of events rather than policy.

Self-controlled party leader accounts are likely to be highly active during the campaign period, to be highly engaged with other users, to have links in almost 40% of their tweets, and to focus content predominantly on photos or links to media websites. The Twitter accounts of Harré, Norman, and Flavell adhered as strongly to the party campaign strategy as their respective party accounts did, though for Flavell and the Māori Party it was not as strong as Harré and Norman. Turei, through her choice of linking her Facebook account to her Twitter account, was less well aligned. Finally, Dunne, by virtue of being the largest account for United Future, and one of the key drivers of the campaign, aligned more closely with the strategy than the party account did. These elements reinforce the

conclusion that access to resourcing and strong organisational structures strongly influence the ability of a party to execute the Twitter element of its campaign strategy. The exception here are those parties with limited resources, weak structure, and high-profile leaders, such as United Future, where the strength of the leader within the party drives the creation of a campaign strategy that is naturally matched to their own online behaviour.

### **Staff Controlled**

Staff members controlled the accounts of both John Key and David Cunliffe. Burns confirmed the status of David Cunliffe's account as being controlled by staff (Burns, 2015, l. 466–470). The status of John Key's account has been a topic of media discussion during a number of stories (Kirk, 2014a; Rutherford, 2015; Trevett, 2015), as well as being confirmed by Cotter as staff controlled (Cotter, 2015, l. 231). In addition to these accounts, the style of Jamie Whyte's tweeting indicates a staff-controlled account, though this could not be confirmed due to no one from ACT being available for an interview. It should be noted at this stage, that unlike overseas leaders, such as Barack Obama, no staff-controlled leader's account in utilised a personal sign off on tweets to indicate it was the leader tweeting (Pilkington, 2015).

In comparison to the self-controlled accounts, staff-controlled accounts were less active: David Cunliffe's account sent 473 tweets; John Key's 351; and Jamie Whyte's 91; and contained a higher level of original content: retweets comprising 6.55%-17.38% of the accounts tweets, compared with 19.80%-60.69% for the self-controlled accounts. Across these tweets, the level of engagement gained was equally varied, with some of the variance being accounted for by the significant differences in the followings of the accounts. As the least active of the three staff-controlled accounts, Jamie Whyte had the lowest level of engagement with only 336 retweets and 285 favourites, an average of 3.95 and 3.35 per tweet. In comparison Cunliffe gained 3,607 and 6,906 respectively, an average of 8.16 and 15.62, and Key gained 3,725 and 6,481, an average of 12.84 and 22.35. When

consideration is given to the ten-fold difference in followers between Cunliffe and Key, it is possible to conclude that Key's followers are less likely to engage.

The number of followers each account had was a topic of media reporting during the election, with television current affairs show, Seven Sharp, running a story on the level of "fake" followers party leaders had ("Seven Sharp: Twitter's Fake O' Meter," 2014). It found 52% of Key's 111,000 followers were real, compared with 82% for David Cunliffe. Despite the questions that arise around the accuracy of the "real" versus "fake" figures Seven Sharp used (Beveridge, 2014a), their findings should be a warning that the number of followers an account appears to have should not be used as a proxy for success.<sup>33</sup> However, if it is assumed that Seven Sharp's figures are correct, that still gives Key around seven times as many "real" followers as Cunliffe.<sup>34</sup>

This comparative lack of engagement for Key's tweets is likely to be driven by the message contained in the tweets, as opposed to the means in which that message was communicated. It is possible to conclude this because both accounts had similar levels of content found to drive higher levels of engagement (See Rogers, 2014). This fits with the underlying view held by many, including those interviewed for this thesis, that Twitter in New Zealand skews to the left, compared to the wider population, and that for National there is not a strong alignment between its supporters and Twitter users. This, like many elements concerning the demographics of Twitter users (see wider Twitter community section of the literature review), is still based on anecdotal evidence, and is worthy of further investigation.

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<sup>33</sup> Twitter Audits methodology on how it defines a "fake" account is explained on their website, but is less than clear (Twitter Audit, n.d.).

<sup>34</sup> 56,680 "real" followers for Key, versus 8,200 for Cunliffe. As both Key and Cunliffe's accounts are verified accounts, they are both recommended as an account to follow to all new users, that Twitter identifies as being in New Zealand, during the sign up process. This means that a lot of followers are likely to be either spam or accounts that go unused for extended periods.

As the staff-controlled accounts were less active, in general, than the self-controlled accounts, so they made fewer replies: Cunliffe 4.86%, Key 0.57%, and Jamie Whyte 0.00% versus 15.67-48.51% for self-controlled. This suggests that these accounts are seen more as tools of broadcast, as opposed to tools for engagement with users. As Burns explained, there are two possible reasons for this lower rate of reply: first, the number of opportunities to reply to users is a lot lower than many outsiders assume; and second, Twitter not being well suited to high-profile users engaging in protracted conversations with opponents. In addition, resources may limit the ability of administrators to reply to all tweets, necessitating a selective reply policy, which carries a risk of how users who do not receive a reply will react to seeing others being replied to. This risk is amplified by the growing use of social media as a source for media stories.

The level of retweeted content reinforces the broadcast nature of the staff-controlled accounts: 6.55% for Cunliffe; 6.59% for Whyte; and 17.38% for Key, compared to the self-controlled accounts 19.80-60.69%. This suggests that National, Labour, and ACT saw more use in posting their own content than in retweeting other user's content to achieve their campaign objectives. Furthermore, National and Labour were able to use other means to influence the mainstream media agenda, thus being able to focus on their own content as opposed to using social media as a way to contest the media narrative.

Cunliffe's and Key's accounts contained a similar number of links, 297 versus 292, while Whyte had 74. Between Cunliffe and Key there are a number of similarities in the content they linked to, as can be seen in Table 12.

**Table 12 Staff-Controlled Account Links**

	<b>John Key</b>	<b>David Cunliffe</b>	<b>Jamie Whyte</b>
Contains links	292	297	74
Total links	351	337	74
Party website	64	75	62
Media	6	6	6
YouTube	11	14	2
Facebook	1	4	2
Other social media	1	1	0
Twitter	0	0	0
Photo	189	175	0
Party graphic	74	50	0
Other graphic	0	1	0
Blog	0	3	1
Other	5	8	1

Areas of significant difference can be seen in the number of links to blogs (three vs. zero), as well as the single non-party graphic tweeted by Cunliffe. When the overall level of party-related content is considered, Cunliffe sent more (138 vs. 125). However, when this is broken down into party website links and party graphics, Cunliffe had more website links (75 vs. 64) while Key sent more party graphics (74 vs. 50). Thus, Key's account was more focused on pushing short, simple messages, compared to Labour who used more party links, suggesting more in-depth information. Yet these also require users to take extra steps to find the information, which less are likely to do, which fits with Little's view that the messaging was more complex and harder to understand than it needed to be (2015).

This focus on party-related content means that Key's and Cunliffe's accounts sent, in raw numbers, more links to party websites or party graphics than any of the self-controlled accounts, with the exception of Russel Norman's 121 party

website links. Whyte's account sent more party website links than Norman's. In addition, Key and Cunliffe had a higher average number of links in each of those tweets. Cunliffe averaged 1.13, with Key topping the party leaders on 1.20, while Whyte averaged just one link per tweet. This higher density of links allows for the inclusion of content that is likely to increase engagement, as well as links to where more detail can be found, increasing the information density of the tweet and the likelihood of content being spread.

It is unsurprising that the accounts for the leaders of the two largest parties in New Zealand had such a strong party message focus. Unlike the smaller parties, Labour and National have other means at their disposal to influence the media narrative and can, thus, focus their online messaging on issues of policy and other messages to set the agenda, as opposed to framing and reframing the debate using media sources. The coherence of this messaging can be explained by the staff-controlled nature of the accounts. While there have been reports of US presidential campaigns having up to 22 people in the sign-off process (McCabe, 2014), the New Zealand staff-controlled accounts did not face the same issue, with two to three people involved for each party, and both parties' sign-off processes became more streamlined as the campaign proceeded (Burns, 2015, l. 412–420 439–444; Cotter, 2015, l. 54–59 65–70). This involvement of a number of people allowed for a more collaborative, reflective process that strengthened the focus of the content and brought to bear a greater level of critical judgement to the content-creation process, enabling a greater alignment with the party strategy, compared to self-controlled accounts. For both National and Labour, the ability to staff these accounts comes from the resources to which they have access along with a strong organisations structure that exists beyond the election period.

### **Hybrid**

A hybrid account sees a leader having direct, regular input into the content of tweets, but not being actively involved in sending the tweets, as exemplified by Peters' account, of which Claire Trevett observed he "can't send his own tweets

but he can dictate them” (2014c). However, the account did tweet images that indicate he was formulating ideas for tweets (Peters, 2014a, 2014b). The account exhibits the reduced level of tweets seen in the staff-controlled accounts, 192, while also showing the high levels of replies seen among the self-controlled accounts, 29.17%. Furthermore, the account focused on media websites and photos at the expense of party websites and graphics, as well as a lower average number of links per tweet that contained links (1.02), as seen in the self-controlled accounts. Peters has developed a style of Twitter usage that is effective at driving engagement. The account was able to obtain more retweets on average (9.61) than any party leader, except Key, and more favourites (12.75) on average than other leaders, except Key and Cunliffe. This holds true even when his most successful tweet, a picture of his neighbour’s cat laying on his keyboard (98 retweets, 210 favourites) (Peters, 2014b), is removed from the figures. However, due to the lack of party-related content (eight party website links and no party graphics) this success may be driven by a similar populist approach in his tweets as Peters is known for taking in the mainstream media.

This personally-involved but one-step removed style of account can be seen as an attempt to gain the advantages of the more personable style of use inherent in self-controlled accounts while enjoying the safety that comes from having a professional communicator controlling the account. It also caters to Peters’ desire to keep control of the party apparatus within a circle of close confidants and advisors.

## **Conclusion**

Broadly speaking, the alignment between party leader accounts and the party strategy was similar to that seen between the corresponding party account and the party strategy, the exceptions being Winston Peters and New Zealand First and Metiria Turei and the Greens. Peters was significantly more active on Twitter and used it as a means to use his already well-established personal brand, a brand that represents one of the key selling points of New Zealand First. Meanwhile, Turei took the approach of linking her Twitter account to her

Facebook account, resulting in a higher total number of links, but a lower level of media and party campaign related links.

Unsurprisingly the leader's accounts with the strongest alignment are those with staff-controlled accounts, Key and Cunliffe. The vesting of account control in staff allows for a greater coherence in the content posted, both to the leader and party accounts, and for the account to respond in real time to events, which is more difficult with a personally-controlled account due to the other demands on the leader during an election campaign. However staff-control removes the personal, human element of the engagement, something that may have added benefits for the smaller parties. Although alignment between account actions and party strategy is not dependent upon staff control, as has been shown it is supportive of stronger alignment, this approach does nevertheless require the dedication of resources to controlling the account that the smaller parties may not have available to them.

## Chapter Five: Candidate Accounts

This chapter focuses on the Twitter accounts belonging to 432 candidates of the ten New Zealand political parties examined in this thesis. These candidates either contested electorate seats or stood as list-only candidates. The focus and goals of the individual candidates were varied – some were running in unwinnable seats simply to raise the party-vote levels, others were challengers trying to unseat incumbent MPs, while some were trying to bring new parties into parliament. Murchison et al. (2014) compiled a database containing the online details of 553 candidates contesting the 2014 General Election. Of these, 266 candidates (48.28%) were found to have 267 Twitter accounts.<sup>35</sup> However, when narrowed to candidates from the ten parties studied here, the total number of candidates reduced to 432, with 247 (57.18%) having 248 accounts. Of these 247 accounts used by candidates, content was collected from 238 accounts for the purposes of this thesis, with this section focusing on 226 non-party leader accounts. The ten accounts not collected were locked, or closed, on the eve of Election Day to comply with recommendations from the Electoral Commission(2014a) and have not become available again since.<sup>36</sup>

While these overall figures show the total uptake of Twitter by candidates, there are differences across the various parties (see Table 13).

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<sup>35</sup> James Macbeth Dann (Labour – Ilam) had two: one focused on candidate-related content, one a personal account. Only the candidate-focused account has been collected and used.

<sup>36</sup> Accounts not collected: Willow Prime (Labour – Northland); Stuart Nash (Labour – Napier); Lesley Soper (Labour – Invercargill); Jamie Strange (Labour – Taupo); Shane Reti (National – Whangarei); Steve Taylor (Conservative – New Lynn); Bruce Carley (ACT – List); Asenati Taylor (New Zealand First – Manukau East); Rangi Mclean (Māori Party – Tamaki Makaurau); and Lois McClintock (Internet Party – Wigram).

**Table 13 Candidates on Twitter**

<b>Party</b>	<b>Total candidates<sup>37</sup></b>	<b>Candidates on Twitter</b>	<b>% of candidates on Twitter</b>
National	74	58	78.38
Labour	85	72	84.71
Māori	27	13	48.15
United Future	11	6	54.55
ACT	44	16	36.36
Green	60	45	75.00
NZ First	32	11	34.38
Conservatives	64	6	9.38
Mana <sup>38</sup>	18	5	27.78
Internet Party <sup>38</sup>	15	15	100.00

There is a strong alignment between the percentage of candidates on Twitter and the activity of the party accounts, with the four parties with the highest percentage of candidates on Twitter all placing in the high or moderate activity categories. In contrast, the parties that had less than 35% of their candidates on Twitter were in the no, or automated, activity category. In addition, the two low-activity category parties, Māori Party and United Future, occupy the middle band of the percentage of candidates on Twitter. This suggests that the importance placed on Twitter by the party, and their ability, or not, to support a highly-active account with content influences the take up of Twitter among candidates.

The 226 candidates sent a total of 79,025 tweets, consisting of 25,770 new tweets, 23,176 replies, and 30,079 retweets. The average candidate sent 114.03 new tweets, 102.55 replies, 133.09 retweets, and an average total of 349.67

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<sup>37</sup> Includes party leader accounts.

<sup>38</sup> There were two candidates standing for the joint InternetMANA party, as opposed to standing for one of the two primary parties. Neither of these candidates were on Twitter, and are not included in any of the figures.

tweets between 1 June and 19 September, with an average of 3.15 tweets per day. This compares to an average of 1 tweet per day in Evans et al. (2014, p. 455) data set of US House of Representatives candidates.<sup>39</sup> These averages suggest that candidates in New Zealand replied to other Twitter users at around twice the rate, 29.19% versus 15%, found by Evans et al. (2014). While the average activity of candidates in New Zealand compares favourably with that of US House of Representatives candidates, this aggregate approach hides key differences among the parties. These differences can be seen in Table 14.

**Table 14 Candidate Averages<sup>40</sup>**

<b>Party</b>	<b>Average new tweets sent</b>	<b>Average reply tweets sent</b>	<b>Average tweets retweeted</b>	<b>Average total number of tweets</b>
National	78.73	40.00	50.46	169.20
Labour	105.00	114.09	94.19	313.28
Māori	68.91	88.36	123.82	281.09
United Future	98.00	97.80	198.40	394.20
ACT	45.36	33.93	21.57	100.86
Greens	149.12	173.33	291.58	614.02
New Zealand First	63.11	43.22	16.00	122.33
Conservatives	287.00	86.75	165.50	539.25
Mana	97.25	16.75	14.25	128.25
Internet Party	302.00	238.46	375.77	916.23
Overall	114.03	102.55	133.09	349.67

While Mana’s candidates had a lower rate of reply than found by Evans et al. (2014), at 13.06% it was not significantly less. In contrast to their party and

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<sup>39</sup> Evans et al. average candidate figure, 88 (p. 457), excludes candidates who sent zero tweets. This study includes those candidates in its figures. The average figured used here is calculated from the raw figures of 67,119 tweets from 1119 candidates (p. 455) across 60 days.

<sup>40</sup> Excludes party leaders.

party leader accounts, National candidates were willing to engage on Twitter, having an average of 23.64% replies, compared with 0.57% for Key's account and 0.61% for the National account. This reinforces the argument that the lack of replies from the National and John Key accounts were a conscious decision for those accounts to not engage with other Twitter users as part of a planned strategy, as opposed to an underlying inability or unwillingness to do so.

Labour candidates had the highest average rate of replies (36.42%) across the parties, which may be accounted for by their #AskLabour campaign (Burns, 2015, l. 268–274), where each candidate taking part had a unique hashtag, #AskLabour(candidate name), that was included on their physical advertising material. This allowed voters to post to the hashtag on Twitter, or Facebook, with a question for the candidate. This crossover between online and offline campaigning exposed a wider range of people to the candidate's online profile and is likely to have encouraged the higher level of engagement. Although, as Burns observes "it wasn't as widely picked up as we would have liked" (Burns, 2015, l. 271–272), the resulting effect on the rate of reply of their candidates appears strong. However, any conclusive proof requires further study of the data.

Outliers in the data set, particularly for smaller sample sizes, heavily influence averages. As Table 15 shows, a number of parties had candidates who sent zero tweets, thus driving down the average.

**Table 15 Candidates with Zero Tweets<sup>41</sup>**

	<b>Total candidates</b>	<b>Candidates who sent zero tweets</b>	<b>% of candidates who sent zero tweets</b>
National	56	6	10.71
Labour	67	2	2.99
Māori Party	11	2	18.18
United Future	5	0	0.00
ACT	14	1	7.14
Greens	43	2	4.65
New Zealand First	9	0	0.00
Conservatives	4	1	25.00
Mana	4	1	25.00
Internet Party	15	0	0.00
Total	227	15	6.61

Additionally with some candidates sending more than 3,100 tweets, median values provide a clearer picture of the activity of candidates across the parties (see Table 16).

**Table 16 Candidate Medians<sup>41</sup>**

<b>Party</b>	<b>Median new tweets</b>	<b>Median replies</b>	<b>Median retweet</b>	<b>Median total</b>
National	34	7.5	17.5	77.5
Labour	50	21	22	121
United Future	107	79	93	304
Māori Party	20	0	0	21
ACT	18	17.5	9.5	71
Greens	90	25	106	225
NZF	6	3	2	18

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<sup>41</sup> Excludes party leaders.

Conservatives	233.5	27.5	62.5	603
Mana	49	1.5	12	107.5
Internet Party	292	135	351	754

Together these three data points – median tweets, average tweets, and candidates with zero tweets – highlight that a significant number of candidates from these parties had little willingness to use Twitter. There are a number of possible interlinked reasons behind this: candidates lacked the time or resources needed to use the platform more actively; they lacked the knowledge required to use social media effectively; parties were unable to articulate a reason for candidates to use it; and a lack of engagement by other users discouraged candidates from using Twitter.

The first two of these potential explanations are at odds with claims made in recent years that politics, both globally and within New Zealand, has been professionalising. Miller documents the increase in the use of professionals as part of the party vote campaigns in 1999 and 2002, but highlights this is restricted to National, Labour, and ACT, with the other small parties still relying on “as much in-house expertise as they can muster” (2005, pp. 182–183). This is even more the case at the local candidate campaign level. Many, if not all, of those involved in the campaigns are volunteers, not professional operators; this also extends to the candidates themselves, many of whom are selected from outside the professional political sphere (See Fairfax Media, 2014; Gillespie, 2014; NZN, 2014; Wairarapa News, 2014). This affects how campaigns are structured and resources allocated. Parties attempt to combat these issues with training for candidates and campaign volunteers alike. However, much of this takes place at the party conferences held before the election, leaving a comparatively short period of time between many candidate selections, the party conference, and the election, thus hampering candidates’ ability to effectively put into action the skills and knowledge learnt at the training events. These issues of resource allocation among candidate campaigns have consequential effects on the levels of engagement gained, particularly since one of the key drivers of engagement on

Twitter is the size of an account's following, which takes time, and an active presence, to build.

As has been laid out above, engagement is influenced by two main elements: the type of content posted and the size of the following the account has. Rogers (2014) has documented the significant impact content type can have on the engagement a tweet gains. While many candidates made good use of content to drive potential engagement, many others lacked a strong base of followers to earn engagement from. These influences are addressed separately below.

At least 30 (13.22%) of the candidates for whom data is available, including one sitting MP, entered the studied period with fewer than 100 followers, with an additional 15 (6.61%), including two sitting MPs, starting the period with fewer than 200 followers.<sup>42</sup> Thus, almost one in five (19.83%) of all candidates on Twitter started the studied period with less potential reach than can be gained from two-three hours of door knocking (J. Shaw, Personal Communication, 2015). These same candidates finished the campaign period with between 34 and 401 followers. At least 100 of the candidates for whom figures are available started the studied period with fewer than 1,000 followers. Despite the incomplete data available, it is possible to assume that across the complete field of candidates at least half of all candidates had fewer than 1,000 followers as at 1 June.

In comparison, of the 60 most followed candidates for whom data is available, only eight were not sitting MPs.<sup>43</sup> The most followed of those candidates, Tamaiti Coffey, entered the election with a high level of name recognition from his time as a weather presenter (Fairfax Media, 2014) and a large established base of followers (26,774) accumulated since joining Twitter in 2009 (Coffey, n.d.).<sup>44</sup> This resulted in him gaining an average of 3.03 retweets and 6.61 favourites per

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<sup>42</sup> The data on the number of followers for individual accounts was collected for a side project of the authors; therefore there are some gaps in the data. However, it still outlines the situation well.

<sup>43</sup> Excluding party leader accounts.

<sup>44</sup> Labour, unsuccessful Rotorua candidate.

tweet, compared with an overall average for Labour candidates of 1.16 and 2.00. This means that Coffey contributed 3.68% of all retweets gained by Labour candidates and 4.67% of all favourites while his tweets made up 1.41% of all Labour candidates' tweets. To place these followings in context, Bruner (2013) found that 50% of all active Twitter accounts had fewer than 154 followers, with 96% having fewer than 978.<sup>45</sup> With around 30% of candidates having more than 978 followers, the field of candidates performs well compared to Twitter overall. However, these are candidates who, seeking public office, attempted to use Twitter as part of their campaign, yet only around 25% of them have 978 or more followers, suggesting there is an issue for many of them in gaining sufficient followers to make the use of Twitter a relevant part of their campaign strategy.

This low level of following for many candidate accounts is potentially explained by many candidate selections, particularly for list-only positions, not being complete until two-four months out from election day (Green Party, 2014b; Labour Party, 2014c; National Party, 2014b). This limits the time candidates have to build a following on Twitter. There are examples, such as in South Korea, of parties using the size of a prospective candidate's social media profile as an element in the selection process (E.-J. Lee, 2013). These low follow rates also suggest that for many, Twitter is seen as something they should have, but is given a low priority when it comes to resource allocation. This is exacerbated by the short campaign period and the late timing of party conferences and candidate selection. These are also symptomatic of the weak professional culture underpinning New Zealand politics, with unpaid candidates and comparatively low levels of fundraising for campaigns, leading to a situation where importance is placed on being seen to be doing something, irrespective of whether it is productive or effective.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Defined as an account that has a publicly available tweet from the last 30 days.

<sup>46</sup> Internet Party candidates were paid the same base salary as an MP. The first time candidates have been directly paid (National Business Review, 2014). The impact of this on their campaign is worthy of further study.

One of the key determinants of engagement is the size of an account's following, and with many of the followings among the 226 candidates on Twitter being comparatively low, a lower overall level of engagement, compared to party and party leader accounts, is to be expected (see Table 17).

**Table 17 Candidate Retweets and Favourites<sup>47</sup>**

	Retweets		Favourites	
	Gained	Average per tweet	Gained	Average per tweet
National	5425	0.82	10,297	1.55
Labour	17,040	1.16	29,288	2.00
Māori	2232	1.29	3572	2.06
United Future	496	0.51	408	0.42
ACT	275	0.25	403	0.36
Greens	19,674	1.42	31,535	2.27
NZF	233	0.24	399	0.42
Conservatives	49	0.03	104	0.07
Mana	147	0.32	268	0.59
Internet Party	7,309	1.04	10,380	1.48
Overall	52,880	1.08	86,654	1.77

For National, Labour, the Greens, the Māori Party, and the Internet Party, the retweets gained by their candidate accounts represent a significant increase in additional reach for the content they posted, though for the other parties the additional reach gained by their candidates was minimal.

In an MMP environment, an important goal for most candidates is to gain as many party votes as possible by providing potential voters with information about the party's policies. Within the coded data, there are two elements that

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<sup>47</sup> Excludes party leaders.

focus more closely on this than others –party/candidate websites and party graphics (see Table 18).

**Table 18 Candidate Party Website Links and Party Graphic Links<sup>48</sup>**

	Party/candidate website		Party graphics	
	Number of links	% of total links	Number of links	% of total links
National	406	7.54	317	5.89
Labour	658	9.26	297	4.18
Māori	35	3.93	34	3.82
UF	91	11.40	19	2.38
ACT	91	15.64	9	1.55
Greens	1099	8.83	504	4.05
NZF	20	3.85	0	0
Cons	3	0.20	1	0.07
Mana	1	0.33	23	7.52
IP	309	5.75	299	5.57
Overall	2790	8.02	1529	4.39

Across all of the candidates, 32,440 tweets contained 34,793 links. Of these links, only 12.41% of them were to party/candidate websites or to party graphics. However, there is a clear division in the figures, with candidates for the four parties that had strong, centralised campaign control – Internet Party, National, Labour, and Greens – having not only a higher percentage of party-orientated links, but a higher overall level of links, than those that had a weaker level of campaign control. These four parties had paid staff whose role it was to support the overall social media strategy of the party and candidates, providing a single point of contact for candidates and their campaign teams when advice and support was needed. Staff-members also enable the provision of a greater number, and potentially higher quality, of party graphics and a focus on party website links. This provided both a clear example of what was expected, as well as a more structured, disciplined process for the dissemination of party messages. However, it should not be assumed that all candidates from parties

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<sup>48</sup> Excludes party leaders.

with higher overall rates of party message-focused links performed equally well, or that all candidates from the parties with lower overall rates had equally low levels. Within each party there was a wide variance. (It is worth noting that this is largely disguised by the use of averages necessitated by the space available in this thesis.<sup>49</sup>)

Across all the candidates, 10.80% (3,758) of links were to Facebook. However, this conceals the extent to which Facebook accounts were linked to Twitter, with 30.38% of New Zealand First candidates' links being to Facebook, compared with 3.85% to party or candidate websites. Facebook is only surpassed by links to media websites (37.50%). These differences are even more extreme with Conservative candidates, (46.39% to Facebook versus 0.20% to the party website) and Mana (75.16% versus 0.33%), while less extreme for ACT candidates (33.85% versus 15.64%). As outlined above, in relation to Turei's and Norman's accounts, a high level of Facebook links drives down engagement and this appears to be the case for candidate accounts. The four parties with the highest level of Facebook links – New Zealand First, Mana, Conservatives, and ACT – also have the four lowest averages for retweets and four of the lowest five averages for favourites.

Nikki Kaye's account represents a key example of Facebook links driving down engagement, particularly retweets. Her account sent 360 original tweets, with 158 links to Facebook, averaging 1.59 retweets and 3.04 favourites. In comparison, Steven Joyce, with 3,000 less followers, sent 292 tweets, averaging 3.16 retweets and 3.17 favourites. This meant that when Kaye posted party graphics on Facebook, only part of the text, and not the image, was posted to her Twitter account. This resulted in a lower level of retweets and graphics not being seen by her Twitter followers, thus diminishing the impact of the message. The same sort of impact on candidates' levels of engagement is likely to have occurred elsewhere.

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<sup>49</sup> A full reporting of the coding for each candidate can be found in Appendix VII Individual Candidate Twitter Account Totals.

The range of activity levels seen across the 226 candidates is as broad as can be expected, from 15 candidates sending zero tweets to eight candidates sending over 2,000, and from 71 candidates who gained under 10 retweets in total to 36 candidates who gained over 500 retweets in total. The median number of tweets sent by party candidates was less than 100 for four parties, with another two parties' median being below 120. Among these tweets, just 12.41% of the links were to either party/candidate websites or to party graphics. There were a number of high-profile MPs seeking re-election, including Nicky Wagner, Nathan Guy, Michael Woodhouse, Damien O'Connor, Phil Goff, and David Shearer, whose tweets contained less than 5 links to party/candidate websites or party graphics. Additionally, some candidates linked their Twitter accounts to Facebook, resulting in low engagement and a lack of party-related content being posted. The variance was spread across all parties with some varying more in one area than in others. This suggests that New Zealand political parties struggle to obtain a high level of control over the messaging and online activity of their candidates. This is caused in part by an inability of the parties to exercise influence over the minute-to-minute actions of their candidates, especially low-ranked list-only candidates. This is compounded by the weak professional culture of New Zealand politics, with candidates, especially ones with little chance of being elected, not seeing the importance of remaining 'on-message' or presenting an image of someone ready to hold high public office.

While the above mentioned elements start to build an understanding of the way Twitter was used by, the quantity of data that has been collected lends itself to further investigation, both as a single-point data set and as a comparative data set for future research into changing trends. However, the limits of space mean that this thesis is unable to undertake that research, and which must be left for future researchers to consider.

## Conclusion

While all ten major political parties contesting the 2014 General Election had some presence on Twitter, the ways in which and the extent to which Twitter was used as part of their respective campaigns varied depending on the existence, or not, of enduring organisational structures and the level of available resourcing. Parties that had stronger organisational structures and higher levels of resources were more likely to have active party and party leader Twitter accounts which aligned closely with their party campaign strategy. For parties with active party accounts, the extent of this alignment decreased as the control over candidate accounts moved away from the centre towards self-controlled candidate accounts. Those closer to the campaign's centre of control, such as senior MPs, remained likely to be more active and to have a closer alignment with the party strategy. For parties that had less active accounts, there was a weaker alignment with the party strategy, if there was an apparent strategy at all, with this being reflected in the candidate accounts. While in regard to the level of engagement between party accounts and other users, the reluctance among parties to "fully embrace the participatory ethos underlying Web 2.0" observed by Murchison (2015, p. 108) during the 2011 General Election is still present, but to a lesser extent, with parties on the whole engaging more. The level of engagement by candidate accounts varied greatly, but on the whole exceeded that found by Evans et al. (2014).

Thus, despite the literature arguing that social media provides a means for smaller, less well-resourced individuals and groups to gain an amplified voice, the ability to have a coherent message articulated across a wide number of accounts requires a certain level of organisational structure and resourcing that many parties contesting the 2014 New Zealand General Election did not have. There is, simply put, no level playing field here.

National was the highest spending party in 2014, with only the Conservatives coming close. In contrast to the Conservatives, who relied on a single major donor, National's donor base was much wider, with a long-term level of commitment; meaning National is well-resourced throughout the election cycle. National's party structure was redeveloped following the lessons learnt from National's 2002 election defeat in order to enable the party campaign to focus on attracting party votes (James, 2015b). These changes centralised much of the decision-making, including list ranking, and reinforced the power of the party machinery, in particular the parliamentary leader. Moreover, they marginalised the power of the regional and social factions within the party, enabling the party to present a more unified image to the New Zealand voting public (Stephens & Leslie, 2011).

National aimed to remain in power, setting an internal goal of 47% of the party vote, which would allow them to govern alone, or with the support of small coalition partners if needed. They utilised the full range of advertising methods available, including leaflet drops, billboards, hoardings, a branded campaign bus, print adverts, broadcast adverts, website adverts, and paid Facebook adverts. Twitter was a well-used, but secondary, element to National's social media campaign, where the primary focus was placed on Facebook with its wider user base. Their Twitter efforts focused around the centrally-controlled party and party leader accounts, showing strong alignment with the party campaign strategy, which saw Twitter as being part of the ongoing conversation that was happening on Twitter, and ensuring National's voice was heard within that conversation. National did not see a large overlap between their target audience and what is viewed as the typical New Zealand Twitter user, resulting in National's party and leader accounts being used as broadcast tools, with just five replies being sent between them. Engagement with users was left to candidate accounts. There are two elements to this reluctance to engage with other users: the commitment of resources required to maintain a highly-engaged Twitter presence; and the return that dedication of resources might generate. There is also an element of reputational risk management: accounts generally need either to fully engage with all users, or with none, as selective engagement with users

runs the risk of accusations of favouritism. While National had the highest number (six) of inactive candidates across all parties and the sixth lowest percentage of party website links (7.54%), their candidates also had the second highest percentage of tweets with links (52.56%) and the highest percentage of party graphic links (5.89%) of all parties. However, these party-related links were roughly equally to the level of Facebook links.

Overall, National candidates on Twitter were not as focused and disciplined as the party and party leader accounts. This weaker alignment was most likely driven by an inability of the party to directly control or influence the actions of candidates, despite having a well-resourced structure to provide support to candidates, alongside the unwillingness of candidates to substantially change their online behaviour as part of their campaign to be re-elected. This results in a large body of candidates using Twitter in a way that does not directly advance the interests of the party. Further compounding this is a weak professional culture where many of the candidates have limited campaign experience and even less experience as candidates.

Labour are currently the primary opposition party in New Zealand and have been since losing office at the 2008 General Election. The 2011 General Election saw Labour struggle to gain traction with the electorate, gaining 27.50% of the party vote, with the 2014 General Election seeing them fall to 24.50%, their worst result in decades (Stuff, 2014c). Alongside this, Labour has faced issues with fundraising, resulting in the Greens outspending Labour for the first time during the 2014 campaign (Electoral Commission, 2015m). Despite these ongoing funding issues, Labour is able to maintain a strong organisational structure, including maintaining a head office, throughout the election cycle.

Labour's primary goal for the 2014 General Election was to win the Treasury Benches from National, with a secondary goal of increasing the number of their MPs while achieving a greater level of gender balance across the caucus (Small, 2013). However, due to a number of events, including the launch of the Internet Party, and the challenges in the relationship between Labour and the Greens, a

change of government did not occur on election night. Labour's campaign was focused around a slogan of "Vote Positive", matched with a range of policies. However, this slogan clashed with perceptions voters held around issues of "internal tensions within Labour, and disarray on the centre left in general" (Barnett & Talbot, 2015, p. 139). The leaking to 3 News' Patrick Gower (Gower, 2015a) of a draft of the review led by Bryan Gould into Labour's processes and structure (Labour Party, n.d.) is symptomatic of these issues and forced the party to hastily release a version of its own. This review found that Labour were limited by their financial resources, which were less than in previous campaigns (Gould et al., 2015) and affected not just direct campaign spending, but also limited the training and support available for candidates and volunteers.

The 2014 election campaign marked a shift in Labour's strategy as the party adopted a more targeted approach to voter outreach, including emails and direct mail. Social media sat within this wider campaign, with Twitter being used to motivate the party base and to spread a message that aligned with the campaign brand of "Vote Positive". The use of candidate-specific hashtags to allow direct engagement with voters was an idea that, while excellent in theory, was poorly executed in practice. With most of the engagement occurring in geographic areas that matched demographics with typical Twitter users, or with candidates who already had a high profile on Twitter, it was not strongly picked up by the voting public. Nonetheless, it does appear to have resulted in a higher level of replies by Labour candidates.

Overall, Labour's party Twitter account showed a high level of alignment with its campaign strategy, as did the leaders' Twitter account. This is to be expected with both accounts being controlled by the campaign team. But, as was seen with National, as the distance from the centre of control over the campaign structure increased, adherence to the campaign strategy decreased. This is highlighted by the difference between the level of party website and party graphic links seen in Cunliffe's tweets (22.26% and 14.84%), the party account (45.60% and 20.80%) versus candidate accounts (9.26% and 4.18%).

2011 saw the Green Party deemed a “medium-sized party” (Green Party, 2011) by the Electoral Commission, a decision that marked a point in the party’s evolution where it was able to achieve a consistently higher level of support than that achieved by other small parties. Consequently, the party has been able to gain access to more resources; their outspending Labour for the first time in 2014 best highlights this. The Greens made use of many of the same campaign methods as National and Labour, as can be expected from their increased spending power, with the exception being the lack of a campaign bus.

The Greens had two, albeit not fully compatible, main goals for the 2014 General Election: first, change the government, with the Greens as part of the new government; or second, advance a number of policies, particularly environmental ones, if the first goal was not achieved. The first goal revolved around displaying an ability to work with Labour in a way that would foster stable government. The second goal would require creating an environment where the Greens could work constructively with National. These two aspects culminated late in the election campaign, with 3 News reporting the Greens were looking at working with National while also calling for Labour’s policy platform to be audited and costed (Levine, 2015, p. 59; One News, 2014d).

The Greens are active on social media throughout the election cycle, allowing them to build their following and engagement in order to provide a foundation for campaigning. They aimed for the transition from pre-campaign to campaign mode to be as seamless as possible to protect the sense of community they had actively tried to establish. Within the campaign, the Greens’ use of Twitter had three key elements: to connect with, energise, and mobilise a base of supporters; to frame debate and issues using both party and media resources from New Zealand and overseas; and to reach both media and non-media opinion leaders who use Twitter. The party account’s alignment with the campaign strategy was high, with use of party website and party graphic links, along with links to media websites and “other” links to help frame the debate. Co-leader Russel Norman followed a similar approach to that of the party account. However, Metiria Turei was less well aligned with the party strategy, as a large proportion of her links

were to Facebook. This had the result of driving down her engagement while also limiting the content that she was posting. On average there was a strong alignment too between the actions of the candidate accounts and the campaign strategy. This is a significant achievement for a party with 43 candidates, but it can be seen as a sign of the growing organisational strength and experience of the Greens. Having said that, an approach of using Twitter to frame and inform the current debate is easier for candidates to align with, as they are not as dependent on the party to provide content, compared to National or Labour who took a more policy-focused approach to their actions.

InternetMANA faced a unique set of challenges leading into the 2014 General Election. InternetMANA's aim was to gain the Internet Party and Mana a larger share of representation in Parliament following the election. Thus, they faced the challenge of building a coherent joint brand from two disparate elements: Mana a well-known, if not well-supported, brand, with a high-profile sitting MP, Hone Harawira; and the Internet Party, a high-profile party, driven by its "visionary" Kim Dotcom, but with an unclear ideological position. Mana had a well-established organisational structure of party branches with pools of volunteers, which had served them well in previous elections, but lacked a centralised inter-election head office to guide planning. The Internet Party lacked the party branch structure, and its associated volunteer base, with much of their structure based on the model of an internet start-up, not an established political party. However they were resource rich due to significant donations made by Kim Dotcom. The question of brand identity was exacerbated by the choice of one party brand, InternetMANA, to contest the party vote, while both component parties stood electorate candidates under their own party brands. This extended to social media, where each party retained its own accounts, but used joint branding. Within social media, each party focused on its areas of strength, with Mana focusing its attention on Facebook and the Internet Party utilising both Facebook and Twitter. This was highlighted by the disparity between Internet Party leader Laila Harré's 1,734 tweets and Mana (and InternetMANA) leader Hone Harawira's 15, as well as Internet Party's 14 candidates with 11,991 tweets compared to Mana's four candidates with 513.

For the Internet Party, Twitter was used as a means to frame the debates occurring around issues of mass surveillance and internet governance, as well as the allegations in *Dirty Politics*. This framing was done using links to a wide range of media and blog sites, alongside the promotion of #dirtypoliticselfies to encourage people to share images of their reactions. Both of these were attempts to help build a sense of collective identity among followers and to build that following into a social movement. This continued on the party leader's account where more links to media, YouTube and "other" content were posted than to party graphics or the party website. This was also the case for the candidates. In comparison, Mana candidates took a highly-automated approach to Twitter with over 75% of their links being to Facebook, with an accompanying decrease in engagement. Mana candidates represent the one area of the InternetMANA campaign on Twitter where there was a noticeable deviation from the party's campaign strategy.

The similarity in approach to Twitter seen between the Internet Party and the Greens, alongside the stronger alignment between campaign strategy and candidate activity, suggests that parties with strong organisational structures that take a framing approach to Twitter are more likely to have candidates whose activity aligns to the party strategy. This is possibly because the approach aligns well with the style of Twitter use that these candidates are accustomed to in a personal capacity outside of the campaign. The more direct campaigning approach seen from the larger parties is less familiar to those fledgling candidates.

United Future was the most financially challenged of the parties contesting the 2014 General Election. This was not a new issue for the party, but culminated in 2013 when the party was deregistered by the Electoral Commission for failing to have the minimum 500 members (Chapman, 2013b). Furthermore, Dunne resigned from Cabinet under controversial circumstances related to the leaking to Fairfax's Andrea Vance of a key government report (Hickey, 2013). United Future had an electorate deal with National, which should have allowed Dunne

to focus on the wider party-vote campaign (Forbes, 2014). However, media reports suggested that he faced a close run battle with Labour (Forbes, 2014; Parker, 2014; Radio New Zealand News, 2014), forcing him to focus more attention on Ōhāriu. This came at the expense of the party-vote campaign, which was exacerbated by their limited resources, declaring just \$2,000 in expenses (Electoral Commission, 2015k). This ongoing lack of resources has affected the party's ability to maintain a support structure during inter-election years, limiting their ability to build a presence on social media during that time. This has led to their party Twitter account, started in 2013, gaining the smallest following (197) of all party accounts at the start of the studied period. This resulted in a reliance on Dunne's account and its greater following.

Dunne aimed to the focus on policy, through initiatives such as his "policy of the day" videos. These focused on a single policy each day and were intended to counteract both the prevailing perception that United Future did not have policies and his perception of a campaign that was distracted by sideshows. Dunne also attempted to portray United Future in a more "racy" way, encouraging people to "dig further" into the party and its policies. This approach was not followed by the party account, or the five candidate accounts, where there was a focus on party links and policy, but little content designed to encourage engagement. For United Future, social media, and in particular Twitter, presented a means to reach an audience at much lower cost than other means of campaigning. Yet they encountered the issue that, without a base of followers for its party and candidate's accounts, the engagement to be gained from a single leader's account is limited, as is its ability to counteract a well-entrenched narrative about the party and its leader.

The Māori Party faced a number of challenges leading into the 2014 General Election: the loss of both co-leaders; solid challenges from Labour in their now vacant seats; the party's representation in Parliament being dependent on new co-leader Te Ururoa Flavell holding his seat; and the challenge he faced from Mana's Annette Sykes, who now enjoyed the financial resources that the coalition with the Internet Party brought her. As a result, Flavell ran an

electorate-focused campaign. The Māori Party's party-vote campaign was focused on using the profile of a number of key supporters and candidates, in particular Tame Iti and Dr Lance O'Sullivan (R. Brown, 2014; Fox, 2014c). The intent was to use them to highlight the gains the Māori Party had made by being in government. Alongside this was a message of Tu Māori Mai, which represented a call for unity across the party and also reflected the commitment the party had to stand as Māori in Parliament (Flavell, 2015).

2014 saw a better-funded Māori Party campaign than in previous years, however they still placed third to last for total expenditure, only surpassing United Future and Mana.<sup>50</sup> As with other parties, the lack of ongoing funding for the party means that outside of the election campaign period there is a weak organisational structure, with much of the ongoing activity focused on the electorates leading to the task of maintaining and growing social media platforms being neglected, and in turn the focus shifting to the leaders' accounts. Many of the Māori Party's social media plans were inspired by other social media campaigns, such as Michelle Obama's #bringbackourgirls (Flavell, 2015, p. 165). These plans were focused on enabling members and supporters to actively support the party with minimal effort. There was a need to provide support to "assist the novices amongst" (Flavell, 2015, p. 164) the candidates and supporters. This was provided, partially, by the establishment of a private Facebook group to allow the sharing of "interpretations about activities within the wider political landscape..." (Flavell, 2015, p. 164). The existence of this group sets the Māori Party apart from other parties in that they are the only one to publically acknowledge a means by which they directly, but privately, engaged with rank and file party members to support the execution of their social media campaign.

The planning and conceptualisation of the Māori Party's social media campaign strategy shows a level of sophistication that is not seen in other small parties, suggesting a party that is attempting to use the resources it is rich in – namely

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<sup>50</sup> Most of the Mana related party vote spending was allocated to the InternetMANA party expenses.

people – to make up for the resources it is poorer in – namely money. However, in the case of Twitter it appears that the sophistication seen in the planning has been let down in the execution due to issues of financial resources and weak national-level organisational structure. Despite a desire to focus on the policy gains that the party had made, the number of party website and graphic links across its accounts is low. This makes it extremely hard for key messages to be seen by potential voters. This is exacerbated by the activity of the candidate accounts, where despite having ten candidates (excluding Flavell) on Twitter, only three sent more than 100 tweets. Thus, if the plan included the retweeting of others users' content to highlight the level of support the party had in the community, it was unlikely to do anything as their candidates were simply not active. The execution of the Twitter element of the campaign was not able to fulfil the potential of the sophistication seen in the planning stage. The driving force behind this failure is a lack of a strong party structure. This meant that even when content was produced, it was not used in all the places that it could have provided a benefit. This is highlighted by the 21 party graphics posted on Facebook in the last month of the campaign, versus only 17 on the party and party leader account from 1 June to 19 September. In addition, the 11 candidate accounts posted only 34 party graphic links.

Having failed to reach the 5% threshold in 2008, New Zealand First returned to Parliament in 2011 with eight MPs, spending the parliamentary term rebuilding. In 2014 they aimed to remain in Parliament with expanded numbers and return Peters to a position of “king-maker”. New Zealand First were returned in 2014 with eleven MPs, including six new ones, although Peters was not the “king-maker”. The strategy of New Zealand First on Twitter mirrored their overall campaign strategy, focusing heavily on Peters. The party account was mainly automated, tweeting links to blogs on the party website, with some human monitoring. The focus of Peters' account was populist, including making use of cats and dogs to gain attention. As with the other parties that lack a strong organisational structure throughout the election cycle, New Zealand First's candidates were not strong at directly advancing a party message. Just 3.85% of the links posted by New Zealand First candidates were to the party website, with

no party graphics. Additionally, only two of the nine candidates sent more than 100 tweets. The median candidate sent just 18 tweets over the 111-day period studied.

2014 represented the second attempt by the Conservatives to gain representation in Parliament. For the Conservatives, Twitter was a platform for which they had no real strategy: there was no party account; the leader's account sent just 12 tweets, with no original content; and only four of their 64 candidates were on Twitter. However, three of these four candidates sent over 500 tweets. As with Craig's account, much of the content consisted of links to Facebook, with a consequential negative impact on engagement. There was no apparent attempt to use Twitter as a means to directly spread the party message, with just three links to either the party website or party graphics across all the accounts. This compares with at least eight party graphics posted by the party Facebook page during the last month of the election. It is likely that, despite the high level of financial resources available to the Conservative Party, there was not a structure in place to support candidates in their use of Twitter.

2014 saw ACT retain the Epsom electorate, but unable to gain additional seats. Therefore, ACT remains in a position where their ongoing representation in Parliament is dependent upon the largesse of National. For ACT, their party strategy was focused around their policy launches and gaining earned media. This approach should have fitted well with social media, with the use of party website and graphic links to help explain policy and to encourage followers to retweet that content. Yet this did not occur, as admitted by Seymour (2015). The result was a low level of alignment between the campaign strategy and their Twitter content. Both the party and leader accounts, as well as candidate accounts, had high levels of party links among their tweets; however, across all three account types there was a significant lack of content, such as party graphics, that was likely to drive higher engagement. Accordingly party messages were being posted, but in a way that was unlikely to result in a high level of reach.

Here, then, this thesis has demonstrated that Twitter was used by ten New Zealand political parties contesting the 2014 General Election. However, the level of use and the extent to which this use aligned with their campaign strategy varied across the parties depending on their organisational structure, level of resources, and, to a lesser extent, culture of professionalism among the candidates. This conclusion is derived from an analysis of primary source material – namely, quantitative tweet data, qualitative interviews with some of those individuals directly responsible for tweeting and other social media activity, and election expense returns, as well as a number of personal recollections, primary source accounts, of the election campaign – and relies on a range of secondary sources, including existing scholarship and contemporaneous media reports. This analysis is not limited to how many tweets were sent, but includes the type of tweet, the level of engagement received, and the level and type of linked content within those tweets. Significantly, the primary Twitter data collected for this thesis complements and extends on the work undertaken by Murchison (2015), and Deos and Murchison (2012), which currently comprises the bulk of the quantitative analysis of the political use of Twitter in New Zealand. It creates a dataset that establishes a baseline against which the future use of Twitter by parties, leaders, and candidates can be assessed and understood. It also allows future researchers to apply the analytical tools used by Evans (2014), Greenberg (2012), and LaMarre and Suzuki-Lambrecht (2013) to explore relationships between parties' and candidates' use of Twitter and the factors that may influence this use, such as incumbency, gender, party, age, or location. In addition to this data, this thesis provides an analysis of how the use of Twitter aligned with the wider aims of the respective party's campaign strategies.

This thesis found that, despite claims in the literature that social media provides a means for smaller, less well-resourced individuals and groups to be able to compete with larger organisations (D. Boyd, 2008; D. M. Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Downey & Fenton, 2003; Johnson & Kaye, 2000; Kellner, 1999), data in New Zealand tends to suggest otherwise. Within the ten parties studied those with the greatest alignment between their campaign strategy and the use of Twitter had

greater access to financial and human resources and a strong, long-term organisational structure. However, even within the parties with strong alignment the party account and staff-controlled leaders' accounts were more closely aligned with the party campaign strategy, as the separation between the candidate and the party hierarchy increased the alignment decreased. This signals the appreciable role played by cultures of professionalism, which is sometimes lacking in New Zealand politics.

The implications of this thesis are significant as they highlight a number of areas of future research that will help to develop a fuller understanding of how social media in general, and Twitter in particular, is used in a political context in New Zealand. These include the role played by high-profile users, closely associated with parties, who are not seeking elected office – including high-profile members of the union movement, senior executives in business, and political commentators – who are active on Twitter in ways that could be seen as being politically motivated. Additionally, there is scope for research focused on how candidate accounts that enjoy larger online profiles than the party leader, such as Tamati Coffey and Jacinda Ardern, affect how a party utilises both the candidate's account and the leader's account. Widening the scope further, an in-depth analysis of the network structure of New Zealand Twitter, in particular those discussing politics, would provide useful insights into the depth and breadth of those engaged with political parties on Twitter. It would also help to establish the veracity of the term *Twitterati*, and who may or may not make up that grouping. Furthermore, the reasons for the lower usage rate of Twitter among candidates outside of the ten parties this study is concerned with is worthy of investigation too. The most pressing area for future research must be the effectiveness of Twitter use in a New Zealand political context. Now that this research has documented both the actual Twitter use by parties and candidates, along with the aims that parties have for their Twitter use, it is possible for the effectiveness of these approaches to be tested. The means to undertake these tests are set out in the currently available literature (See E.-J. Lee, 2013; E. J. Lee & Shin, 2012), though the impact of the differing political systems may necessitate methodological adjustments. As is presumably the case with much

academic research, the answer to one set of questions leads onto other sets of questions demanding our attention and consideration.



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## Appendices

### Appendix I Interview Questions

Interview Schedule of Campaign staffers/Campaign strategists including MPs/Candidates

1) Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research project. Firstly, if you have questions or anything you feel is relevant during the interview, please feel free to ask.

2) To start off, could you please state your name, the organisation involved in the election campaign that you worked for between 1 June and 20 September 2014 and your role within that organisation and if that position was a volunteer position, a paid position, or were you an outside contractor?

3) Ask about some background of how they ended up in the job. Experience, both work and previous campaigns.

4) As a starting point, I would like to develop an understanding of the structure of the campaign leadership team, and how social media fitted within that. Could you describe, or draw if that is easier, the command structure that the social media team operated within during the campaign?

5) Key issues to gain information about: was social media at the top table, was it treated as a single thing, or was each channel treated as a different element, was it part of the overall communications plan?

5a) When did the social media team move into campaign mode? (3 year campaign)

6) I would now like to start talking about the overall campaign. Could you please tell me about the general direction and structure of the overall campaign?

7) Using probing questions to establish the target audience/market of the overall campaign.

8) Moving on, I would like to talk now about the social media campaign as a whole. We have established that the target audiences for your party's overall campaign were X, Y and Z. Was the aim of the social media campaign to reach all of these target audiences? Or was the focus of the social media campaign narrower?

9) What influenced this decision?

10) Was the target of your Twitter campaign different to your wider social media campaign?

11) What influenced this decision?

12) It is understood that political parties have databases that identify voters in terms of their location, political preferences, income, etc. Was this information used to help target social media efforts? If so, how?

13) Conversely, was information gained from Twitter used to contribute to those databases?

14) Were the different social media channels seen as just multiple ways to get the same message out, or were the messages tailored to the audience you aimed to reach via Twitter?

15) Would you describe your social media campaign as more Broadcast or engagement?

16) Was the aim of Twitter to just reach as many people as possible, or to engage with users?

17) How did the campaign team see the possibility for two-way communication? Was there a planned decision around how this would be used?

18) What was the measure of success for the campaign? Both over all, and on a tweet-by-tweet basis.

19) Can you explain the decision making process around the selection of the hashtag your party used? Or the decision to not use a hashtag, if your party didn't have it.

20) Can you give me an overview of the process involved in planning a typical tweet during the election campaign?

21) Was this process the same at the start of the period concerned and the end of the period? If yes go to next question, if no, ask how did it change? What brought about those changes?

22) Was the leader's Twitter account controlled exclusively by the leader or by staffers? If so, was this acknowledged to followers in any way (i.e. In Australia Kevin Rudd signed off KRudd when it was him directly tweeting)?

23) Was this the same approach used by other senior MPs/Candidates?

24) Were candidates encouraged to use Twitter, or was it something that they were left to decide on for themselves?

25) What sort of support/training/information was given to candidates, particularly those new to Twitter, to help them make the most of it?

26) Did you establish protocols for MPs and candidates to follow with respect to tweeting?

27) Was a dedicated messaging plan circulated to candidates and/or party members during the campaign?

28) Were tweets or blog posts supplied to candidates to use?

29) What prompted you to make choice X? (Being something they or their party did during the campaign).

30) Did you have someone dedicated to monitoring social media by other parties and your own candidates/MPs?

31) How did you deal with things that went wrong? (For example a candidate going off message on social media, or a candidate buying followers)

32) Do you believe the vision you had for your Twitter campaign at the start of the campaign was achieved?

Thank you for your time. Is there anything you feel we haven't covered, but that you think is important?

(Leave recorder running till they leave the room/venue/phone is hung up)

## Appendix II Selected Interview Transcripts

1 *Peter Dunne, United Future, 13 May 2015, Bowen House*

2

3 0:07 Matthew: Thank you for agreeing to take part in this. Just so you know this  
4 is the first one, so I may need to go back over a few things. If you have any  
5 questions at any point, please feel free to speak out. Can you start off stating your  
6 name and the organisation you were involved with in the election campaign.

7

8 0:34 Peter: Right, my name's Peter Dunne, I'm the member of parliament for  
9 Ohariu, I'm the leader of the united future party, and I guess it is in those two  
10 capacities that this interview really has relevance.

11

12 0:45 Matthew: Yes. Can you give us a bit of an overview; you have been an MP for  
13 30 years? So our experience of political campaigns will have changed.

14

15 1:06 Peter: When I first became an MP in 1984, political campaigns still revolved  
16 around the big evening meetings and the aim then was to get a story on the late  
17 night television or in the morning papers, now of course political campaigns are  
18 far more sedate in that sense. The action occurs during the daytime, and it used  
19 to be about the 6 o'clock news, recently, I think this last election in particular, it  
20 is about the next sound bite on social media.

21

22 1:38 Matthew: So the first thing I want to do is establish an understanding of the  
23 structure of the campaign leadership team and how that was laid out and how  
24 social media fitted within that structure. Could you describe, or if you want draw,  
25 a rough overview of the command structure of, your team.

26

27 2:01 Peter: Largely it was driven from me. It involved the party's board, it  
28 involved our network of candidates, and their key organisers, and essentially we  
29 had a campaign manager based in Auckland, who had run various liberal  
30 democrat campaigns, in various seats and councils seats in Britain in previous  
31 years. So he was responsible for keeping in contact with candidates for insuring  
32 they were properly resourced in terms of pamphlets, billboards etc. we ran

33 through this office a cross check to make sure that where people difficult  
34 questions of policy, how they might be given the appropriate answers to give. We  
35 also used external consultants to help us prepare our election manifesto. We  
36 made the calculated decision to produce a formal manifesto that we released as a  
37 document because no one else was doing that anymore. Therefore it was actually  
38 quite important for two reasons, one united future is often criticised "well you've  
39 got no policy". Well actually we've got enough to fill a very thick volume as the  
40 manifesto showed. And also just to demonstrate that we were taking the whole  
41 process seriously. We were just sort of playing around at the fringes. In so how  
42 the campaign unfolded was a lot of very quick contact as issues arose between  
43 the key players. Our advertising agency is Auckland based, they have been now  
44 for let me think, since at least 2005. They are pretty experienced. The challenge  
45 for us was financial resource; we just didn't have a large number to play with. So  
46 we had to be pretty sharp and tight, which drove us back to thinking about how  
47 we utilised social media and what we decided to do and I think in retrospect it  
48 was a good idea but we didn't do it properly. Was to produce, and we literally did  
49 them on my mobile phone each day, a policy of the day.

50

51 4:15 Matthew: Yes, that is one of the things I do actually have to ask about. So  
52 that's.

53

54 4:17 Peter: [Mumbles]

55

56 4:18 Matthew: If you just finish explaining...

57

58 4:19 Peter: Yeah, well the thought behind that was it goes back to we had  
59 produced the manifesto, and we thought in a campaign that was becoming  
60 increasingly side tracked by um side shows really, that the best way for us to get  
61 a point of difference was to concentrate on some policy issues. So we decided to  
62 produce and they were unscripted, they were very short sharp probably 15  
63 seconds me direct to the camera policy of the day in a one liner. And we thought  
64 that that by putting that out on Facebook and twitter, our own website, that we  
65 would attract enough people to actually latch on to the the ideas, um I think that

66 the sort answer is we didn't and secondly, we are quite proud of the fact that  
67 over the period we ran the polices of the day, I think we ran 30 or 31 different  
68 ones, over that period of the election campaign. So there was never a repeat. I  
69 think that was a mistake, I think we should have run 3 or 4 and hammered them.  
70 But we were trying to demonstrate our breadth of policy and sort of our depth,  
71 what it ended up looking I think like was a bit scatter gun and what we failed to  
72 do was tie that, whatever the policy of the day was, into a theme of action for the  
73 day. Um so it was a um a novel idea, I think it was a good one, um Newstalk ZB  
74 and one or two other outlets, but Newstalk ZB particularly, faithfully reported  
75 each one, so we got pick up through their news outlets. But we didn't get the  
76 general pick up we expected.

77

78 6:20 Matthew: That was definitely one of the things I did want to discuss. Um so  
79 yeah.so its something you think has the potential to work, it's just the execution  
80 maybe wasn't there this time?

81

82 6:39 Peter: Yeah, I think, the thought behind it really was, we were moving into a  
83 space where with social media particularly there was much more direct  
84 communication with voters. You know, we saw all sorts of people posting pieces,  
85 either either either um video or just opinion that related to an instant um  
86 situation. "Just been at the Kapiti shopping centre, great welcome" and we did a  
87 bit of that but it was really think well if there are people out there who actually  
88 looking for stuff, as to, particularly amongst the smaller parties, as to what you  
89 stand for, this was a way of getting to them with what we thought were issues  
90 that were likely to appeal to some or all of them, or you know different sectors.  
91 Um so I think the idea was right, very easy to do, I think actually the execute. In  
92 terms of the presentation I think we did that all right, and it probably took about  
93 5 minutes each day to do. Looking at it again, rather than deciding on a day to  
94 day basis which ones we would highlight, I think as I said we would want to focus  
95 on just two or three and do them in a more ordered way than we did. I think the  
96 idea was right and I think that in terms of going directly to voters and saying, you  
97 know it was effectively like a series of on going television commercials.

98

99 8:08 Matthew: Just moving back to the overall campaign stuff, when, at what sort  
100 of point did the social media work that you do kind of move into a campaign  
101 mode. Was it quite...

102

103 8:19 Peter: It was probably around...well officially ah around the time that  
104 parliament was dissolved, so around the beginning of July. But I guess really  
105 from, I'm not sure when, shortly after the 2011 election I had been conscious that  
106 um this was a vehicle that could be used to promote messages themes, ideas and  
107 attract interest. You know for a small party, the big issue is...getting noticed,  
108 attracting interest, even getting people to just stop for a moment to see what  
109 your brand and what your message is. And I think for a party like united future,  
110 which is um the parallels between what happened to the. To our sister party the  
111 Liberal Democrats and us are striking, the scale is different, but but absolutely  
112 striking. Um that is...we are the sort of party that that is nice to have, but when  
113 when the risks are tight, in Britain it was the case of the Scottish nationalists  
114 holding the purse strings here it was the risk of Mana Dotcom having too much  
115 influence, when that sort of risk gets tight, um we become dispensable.

116

117 9:44 Matthew: So when, with your social media, and particular with twitter, and  
118 you've talked about how you've been kind of, its been in the back of your mind  
119 since 2011, that this is a tool that can be used and that it is a long term game um  
120 what sort of target audience, firstly who were your target audience for the  
121 overall campaign and then was who you were targeting with social media a  
122 different subset of that, or was it kind of?

123

124 10:16 Peter: That's a very good question, we had a clear picture in mind as to  
125 who we were targeting at the national level. Um people of a sort of a general  
126 liberal persuasion, I don't mean trendy liberal, but sort of classical liberal, non  
127 act cause they are not liberal, persuasion, people who therefore have...sort of  
128 blue green? Outdoor conservation types, probably more established socially, so  
129 probably 35+, ah...not absolutely as defined as that, because my own electorate  
130 has a slightly different profile, and that was important to us. Now that's not quite  
131 your average twitter audience. So what I was trying to do there was to certainly

132 reinforce the messages cause there are people who would respond to them using  
133 that medium. But also to present us perhaps in a slightly more.... what's the  
134 word...? Racy? Um...you know just being slightly more in touch with a different  
135 audience. Um trying to strike out to some people there who might not give us a  
136 second thought, but just sort of might be be tempted to stop and say "hey wait a  
137 minute, I saw that, that's actually quite interesting, I need to dig further". You'll  
138 notice a lot of times in my responses to people I made reference to go to our  
139 website and look at the policy, cause I felt it was a bit like there was a fish  
140 nibbling at the bait. And that really what I was trying to do, to attract a bit of  
141 interest. But also I was...there is another audience which is called the media, the  
142 media these days, and its not just an election phenomena it still does it, takes so  
143 much of its stuff off what they pick up on twitter. So by putting out snappy  
144 opinion on twitter, that might have people thinking "what the hell is all that  
145 about" you then provoke some media interest.

146

147 12:27 Matthew: So an example of that is, I'm just going off memory, your tweets  
148 about tax policy?

149

150 12:32 Peter: Yeah

151

152 12:32 Matthew: And things like that last year which...

153

154 12:34 Peter: Which were sort a little bit...they were designed to be deliberately  
155 um not unclear but deliberately sort of vague, but sufficiently pointed, so that  
156 someone might think "heey, hang on, I better find out more" and that was really  
157 designed to get media in particular.

158

159 12:54 Matthew: So again, that fishhook to try and get...a bit of bait in the water?

160

161 12:54 Peter: Yeah and to some extent it worked, but in the heat of the moment,  
162 the other thing that happens, is that as the election campaign came increasingly  
163 down to a two horse race, the interest in the minor parties just ah, from the  
164 media just dropped off all together.

165

166 13:10 Matthew: Yes. Um...

167

168 13:15 Peter: And I'm still doing that sort of thing, I mean I put out a comment last  
169 week that had a bit of pick up about when it came to environmental law, I would  
170 take Geoffrey palmer's word over nick smith's every time.

171

172 13:28 Matthew: Yup

173

174 13:28 Peter: Um now, you think that's fair enough on the face of it, but that's,  
175 actually there's a bit of a deeper meaning there, things like RMA reform, and  
176 various other issues that are around at the moment.

177

178 13:39 Matthew: Um, so you were doing that on twitter, but your face book  
179 presence was aimed kind of more at your core audience because of...?

180

181 13:45 Peter: Yeah, that was a bit more traditional.

182

183 13:47 Matthew: Because of the difference in the Facebook and twitter...

184

185 13:52 Peter: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

186

187 13:55 Matthew: Ah, demographics for the want of a better word.

188

189 13:55 Matthew: Um...so I know that a lot of parties have data bases to help  
190 identify voters, and people who are likely to support you and things like that. Did  
191 you use that information to target your social media campaign?

192

193 14:10 Peter: Not specifically, if anything we used it the other way around.

194

195 14:13 Matthew: Which was my exact next question

196

197 14:16 Peter: We used it to try ahh um...partly because of the sort of people we  
198 are after, but we used the social media networks to try and sort of give us  
199 contacts into new areas or new groups of people...and yeah know, yes and no.

200

201 14:35 Matthew: So you didn't use the. Was there any situation where you  
202 used...gleaned information out of potential voter that you then fed into the  
203 database or it wasn't kind of that.

204

205 14:42 Peter: Not really, no, no.

206

207 14:45 Matthew: Um...so did you, you saw the different social media channels, like  
208 Instagram, cause I know you used that, videoing and YouTube and stuff, you  
209 tailored what you put out on those to the audience, to an extent, to the audience  
210 you knew were on there? Um to give you different chances...

211

212 15:03 Peter: And look, a lot of it was experimental, because I think a) the  
213 technology is still experimental, everyone is still learning and we were certainly  
214 learning, and there are pluses and minuses about Instagram, for instance not  
215 everyone...I had a number of people contact me cause initially we started doing  
216 the policy of the day on Instagram and I had number of people who'd come back  
217 and say "I'm not on Instagram can you give us another link?" so we ended up  
218 doing it a different way. So you know there's a bit of...in a way that was quiet  
219 encouraging that people came back and said, "I can't read it". Do it on another  
220 medium. I had people come back to me um about other things, about type scripts  
221 we used in some of our printed stuff, and all using social media to come back, so  
222 from that point of view um as I say, it was a work in progress.

223

224 15:45 Matthew: Yeah, so you found people were more willing to contact you via  
225 social media than in previous campaigns...

226

227 15:51 Peter: Absolutely.

228

229 15:51 Matthew: Where if they had issues with the printed material they wouldn't  
230 call you

231

232 15:55 Peter: Yeah

233

234 15:55 Matthew: But they would just jump on twitter?

235

236 15:57 Peter: Yup, yup, yup.

237

238 15:58 Matthew: Um, so would you describe your social media campaign over all,  
239 and particularly twitter, as more proactive or reactive?

240

241 16:03 Peter: We hoped it was proactive; I certainly tried to make it that way.  
242 What I really wanted to do there was not so much cease an issue, but just to say  
243 something or do something or have people say "what was all that about?" then  
244 have them go looking. So it was proactive in that sense. Some of it was designed  
245 to be a little bit provocative and ah I guess a sort of pretty blatant cry for  
246 attention, given that attention was hard to come by.

247

248 16:39 Matthew: Yeah, um so was it. Most of your twitter campaign was focused  
249 around your personal account, as opposed to the united future account, just  
250 because you've got the following,

251

252 16:51 Peter: I don't run the United Future account, um but it was focused around  
253 my account cause I have the following, the united future account certainly  
254 piggybacked off that. Um...and um...I don't know what it's following is at the  
255 moment, would be a few hundred.

256

257 17:08 Matthew: And yours is somewhere north of 5 off memory?

258

259 17:15 Peter: Its north of 6 now, and individual candidates ran their own variants  
260 of that, and there one or two sort of, they weren't fake accounts, but they were

261 others set up by people supporting us, who we didn't know about

262

263 17:29 Matthew: Yup

264

265 17:29 Peter: But they were doing a genuine thing, so there was a whole lot of  
266 retweeting and stuff going on.

267

268 17:36 Matthew: And was there any structure in place with in the wider campaign,  
269 to help those candidates want to give them a bit of a crash course in how to use  
270 it?

271

272 17:46 Peter: We tried to offer that, but most of them, those that wanted to use it  
273 knew about it, and sort of knew what to do, and sort of did their own thing.

274

275 17:53 Matthew: Mhmm

276

277 17:53 Peter: And I was quite relaxed about that frankly, cause I thought that it  
278 was important, it is important at one level for people to build up their own  
279 identities, and at another level, if we could have people out there who were  
280 linked to us but not overtly so, saying nice things about us, that's got more  
281 credibility than sort of party labelled people.

282

283 18:15 Matthew: Um and,

284

285 18:17 Peter: There's a classic this morning, David Clark's put out a tweet saying  
286 that "Andrew Little's speech this morning was one that everyone should read"  
287 and I felt like going back and saying "your a bit like Mandy Rice Davies, you  
288 would say that wouldn't you?" But that's a bit too blatant.

289

290 18:31 Matthew: Yes.

291

292 18:31 Peter: You know, Joe Bbloggs saying "I went along and heard this speech  
293 and thought it was great" is far more powerful.

294

295 18:36 Matthew: Um, so and you weren't going to make people who didn't want to  
296 get on twitter get on it for the sake of it.

297

298 18:41 Peter: No, there's still I think amongst some, a fear um that they might be,  
299 as to what they are letting themselves in for, that they might be deluged or that  
300 they you know they hear all of the nasty stories and think "I don't want to be part  
301 of that"

302

303 18:59 Matthew: Um, so what was the aim of the twitter campaign, was it just to  
304 reach as many people as possible,

305

306 19:03 Peter: Yeah

307

308 19:04 Matthew: Or to actually engage with the voters

309

310 19:05 Peter: Yup, basically, and to get our name out there, and ah, and get a sense  
311 in their minds that we were credible.

312

313 19:15 Matthew: And ah what was the measure of that success, was it a news  
314 story, or?

315

316 19:21 Peter: Hard to say really, it was, we didn't do a formal evaluation of it, or a  
317 ah, to some extent it was the number of people that were responding, to some  
318 extent it was the number of people we picked up through subsequent  
319 conversations who said "oh I saw your piece on twitter about such and such"  
320 which they would never sort of tell us but when your talking to them face to face,  
321 it was also just um, the reaction we got. You know, the number of people who  
322 said please add me to mailing lists or can you make sure I get whatever is coming  
323 out, or also, this was media particularly, but not solely, 'I missed that thing you  
324 did, can you send it to me again' or 'have you said something on this today?' so it

325 was really, I guess all of that shows what it was really about was trying to get to a  
326 point where we are in a pretty tight campaign, where we were strapped for  
327 resources that we were being noticed.

328

329 20:19 Matthew: Um, you guys didn't really have a hashtag did you?

330

331 20:22 Peter: We did, and I'm trying to think what the devil it was, we did have a  
332 hashtag, ah.... fairness and choice.

333

334 20:28 Matthew: And how did you, does that match a message you are trying to  
335 get across, and that's how you came up with it?

336

337 20:34 Peter: Yeah, yeah, yeah, and I don't, I mean we posted stuff to it in the main,  
338 I don't think there was much interaction with it, and since the election I haven't  
339 looked at it.

340

341 20:51 Matthew: Was there a planning process in a tweet, or was it just kind of an  
342 idea sparked and you just did it?

343

344 20:57 Peter: More of that, and it was more trying to think of...we had sort of  
345 sessions where we sat down and tried to talk about the sort of thing we might do,  
346 but I felt that spontaneity was was um probably going to be the key to success.  
347 Um and we did all sorts of things that were that were really trying to spark  
348 interest. Some of it was um completely irrelevant to politics, um... not this  
349 election, but the one before hand, I had done the infamous YouTube thing about  
350 my hair, and so we...that had I forgot how many thousands, tens of thousands...

351

352 21:39 Matthew: And you also did the how to tie a bow tie one...early last year?

353

354 21:43 Peter: That was really, that was almost to be the 2014 variant, um it had a,  
355 it got a few thousand views, it was actually taken far more seriously, sort of  
356 people use it as

357

358 21:58 Matthew: As an actual how to?

359

360 21:58 Peter: As a resource, and it was in one sense, I thought this a bit gimmicky,  
361 its a bit quirky, maybe that will take off, um.

362

363 22:08 Matthew: Um and so that process of just being spontaneous existed  
364 throughout the whole campaign?

365

366 22:11 Peter: Yeah

367

368 22:11 Matthew: Um, we have already covered that you controlled your account.  
369 Did any of your campaign staffers or anything tweet anything, or was it all pretty  
370 much exclusively you on your personal account.

371

372 22:21 Peter: On my account? Me, and the reason for that is quite simply, in 2011 I  
373 had one or two campaign related people who did have access to my account, and  
374 while there were, there was nothing wrong happened, gaffors(?) or anything like  
375 that, what I found became a problem was when people would say to me "oh I saw  
376 your tweet about the Newlands shopping centre for instance", and I find myself  
377 saying "what"?

378

379 22:51 Matthew: Yeah

380

381 22:51 Peter: No? Or being caught out a bit by someone when saying, "I didn't  
382 send that?" "But yes you did" so I decided then that I would control my own  
383 account. It was for that sort of reason, rather than there was anything malicious  
384 happening, and I just thought it was much better, because I didn't want to get  
385 caught out with someone saying you know "I thought that was great what you  
386 said" and then saying "I never said that?"

387

388 23:18 Matthew: Yup, so it was that kind of keeping control of the messaging not  
389 so much on twitter itself, but in the real world..

390

391 23:27 Peter: Just so. But but. You not, I think the advantage of these things is  
392 immense, but I think the disadvantage is if they look like fronts for something. So  
393 um, you know we've seen a bit of that this week with John Key, and the Gwynn  
394 Compton stuff, I just don't think that's a good look.

395  
396 23:44 Matthew: Um and... That was the same sort of approach that your  
397 candidates took, it was them controlling their accounts?

398  
399 23:48 Peter: We might have suggested to them things to say, and they did pick up  
400 some of the stuff id said, but I kept saying to people, say it in their own words.

401  
402 23:59 Matthew: Yeah,

403  
404 24:00 Peter: Rather than just quote it directly, put it in your own words, put the  
405 same thing, but put your own, I don't mind, its got more credibility that way.

406  
407 24:09 Matthew: Um, we've covered that, covered that, ah...so did you have  
408 someone keeping an eye.... keeping an eye or monitoring what other parties,  
409 other parties or people were saying on twitter?

410  
411 24:26 Peter: We had two or three people who did that.

412  
413 24:29 Matthew: So they were feeding back information, kind of about the mood  
414 of what was going on? And things that you could react to?

415  
416 24:31 Peter: Yeah yeah, and some of it we just ignored. As you do, some of it we  
417 did react to, some of it we tried to almost create a situation where we might lead  
418 them on for a little while, so we could dunk them, that was a bit patchy. But yeah,  
419 so we were keeping an eye on what others were doing. Our impression was that  
420 others were generally being much more straight up and down. Than we were.  
421 We weren't trying to be sort of um oddball or anything like that, but felt we were  
422 trying to be a bit more adventurous, and others were playing pretty straight. And  
423 I think part of the issue there, which we haven't touched on, was the electoral

424 commission, and this whole question of what constitutes and election  
425 advertisement, and if whether you have to have promoter statements and all that  
426 sort of nonsense. Um and the electoral commission I think is still sort of in the  
427 later 20th century on most things, and it hasn't really got much of idea. And had a  
428 very conservative view point and I kept saying to people "make sure your your  
429 profile page carries and authorisation statement" even though I don't think,  
430 personally, ones necessary. But we had to do that, and therefore be very careful  
431 how you promote your tweets. So by trying to put them out as almost  
432 conversation pieces from an individual, we accepted that the policy of the day  
433 stuff was different, but you know if it was sort of like an official party statement  
434 we weren't too sure where that might sit in terms of the electoral commission  
435 and their guidance was pretty vague. So we decided lets try and keep this stuff as  
436 personal as we can, so its just you as an individual, or me as an individual,  
437 expressing an opinion. Um, yeah, we didn't get into any trouble.... we had one  
438 issue with the electoral commission, I'm trying to think what it was, and then  
439 they backed off very quickly, as they realised this was opening up a big can of  
440 worms.

441

442 26:29 Matthew: But that's one thing you'd like to see looked at, is a way that they  
443 would be less of a curb on things?

444

445 26:39 Peter: Yeah, yeah, I mean, the best way for me would be for them to butt  
446 right out and just let social media take its course.

447

448 26:45 Matthew: Um. From what I have looked at, I haven't seen any major  
449 examples of where something did go wrong, with you, or one of your candidates.

450

451 26:54 Peter: No

452

453 26:54 Matthew: Did you have a plan in place in case something did, or was it  
454 going to be a bit of a on the fly?

455

456 26:59 Peter: It would depend on very much what could go wrong, and I guess our  
457 plan would range from...you know in the extreme would be cut someone off.  
458 Um...but we never got any where near that...um I thought that the sort of thing  
459 that was likely to happen was more likely to be an innocent mistake, um or  
460 someone sort of flying off you know, at something. I didn't really see them in um  
461 as likely to cause major damage. Cause we weren't in the position to really, we  
462 were a small player in this and um if someone said something that was really  
463 wacky you know if someone said "send all Asians back to Asia", um well we  
464 probably wouldn't have had them in the first place. We were watching it; um we  
465 didn't really have any um incidents.

466

467 27:53 Matthew: Having gone through all of your candidate's tweets, I haven't  
468 seen anything that really jumped out at me

469

470 27:58 Peter: It was all pretty safe stuff.

471

472 28:01 Matthew: So the vision that you had for your campaign, at the start, do you  
473 think that's what actually eventuated? Obviously...looking more at how you saw  
474 it playing out, rather than the actual success.

475

476 28:11 Peter: More or less yes. The success wasn't there clearly, but I think there  
477 were some things we did that with a bit more development, and a bit  
478 more...sophistication, you know would lay platforms for the future I think. What I  
479 wanted to do with the policies of the day, as I say, was to communicate directly  
480 with people, here's something relevant to you. I think, with the caveat that we  
481 probably did too many, that worked. Because a lot of people did see them, that  
482 they didn't absorb them or agree with them is another thing, but they did see  
483 them. And we know that just form feedback. And we know that um we did get  
484 some credit for the fact that we actually had our focus on policy. The problem  
485 was this is an election where voters weren't focusing on policy. So in a way, it  
486 was the right outcome for the wrong, for the wrong season. So yeah, ah.

487

488 29:11 Matthew: So through my research I've found, having reread the election  
489 books, there is a series of common themes that have come out about issues that  
490 parties face. Which is media pick up, um...three-year campaigns, just like that  
491 continuing campaign, resources, which we have touched on, um...and the  
492 presidentialisation of politics in NZ in general. Do you think that social media,  
493 and in particular twitter, offers a chance for small parties to overcome some of  
494 those barriers, such as the media pick up.

495

496 29:38 Peter: To some extent, I was reminded of...we had working for us in 2002  
497 an American media consultant who did just a short term attachment with us, he  
498 made the point then, so this is going back nearly 15 years now, so was relevant in  
499 that context, but not today, was that in US campaigns, forget the major networks,  
500 because their bulletins are so short that the levels of stories that they are going  
501 to cover are going to be way up here. And similarly with the major news papers,  
502 but the real powerhouse were the community newspapers and the local radio  
503 and TV channels, and so in those campaigns we focused a lot of emphasis at that  
504 level, and forgot the national level. Anything we go there was a bonus. I think  
505 that social media are the modern iteration of that, and um, and that we ah um  
506 we've been playing around in this space for some time, um because it sort of  
507 suits us, and we think that's were we might get a bit of pick up. Um, it hasn't quite  
508 come to pass. But we looked at one stage, this would have been. I cant remember  
509 if it was the last election, or the one before, not 2014, but 2011 or 2008, Segolene  
510 Royale, when she ran for president of France, ran a massive campaign which all  
511 her publicity, her newspaper advertising, her TV advertising, her billboards, her  
512 painted busses, pamphlets, were all the same, a photograph of her, with a  
513 website address, nothing else, so you drove people immediately to her website,  
514 which had all her polices and all her stuff, and how you could get involved, and  
515 we sort of toyed around with running a campaign like that, a couple of elections  
516 ago, we weren't brave enough in the end, cause we thought...you know and that's  
517 part of the reason why we did the manifesto this time, because people still say  
518 "yeah, yeah, that's all very well, BUT WHATS YOUR STAND ON?"

519

520 31:42 Matthew: Yup

521

522 31:42 Peter: But I think its that...I'm really interested in that sort of, not novelty,  
523 but its something akin to that, do something that's a bit different, and therefore  
524 by being um out there on twitter, and by occasionally rarking people up and  
525 annoying them, and all that sort of stuff, it was a bit of trying to be a bit different.  
526 Just to have people stop and think, "we we probably in the normal course of  
527 events, wouldn't give united future a second thought, but hey wait a minute?" we  
528 really felt, if we could get people to wait a minute, and look at what we had to  
529 offer, we could gain support.

530

531 32:21 Matthew: Um, just out of interest, your manifesto, do you think that  
532 provides the opportunity that, you know, if someone comes up to you in two  
533 years time and goes "that's not what you said you stood for in the campaign", its  
534 easy for you to go back to a physical, printed document, that is not changeable,  
535 and go "actually have a look, here it is"

536

537 32:41 Peter: Yeah, its two things, its a point of reference in terms of issues arise.  
538 At the moment we are in this rather interesting environment, "how do you  
539 decide what your stand is on various issues?" um, my position, previously, in the  
540 previous parliament, was to start with, is it covered by our confidence and  
541 supply agreement, if it is, then there's your answer, well the confidence and  
542 supply agreements don't cover policy issues, so you knock that one out. So  
543 um...my second point then was if it isn't covered by a confidence and supply  
544 agreement, is it in our party policy? And if the answer is yes, well therefore  
545 there's your answer, and so the important point now, and perhaps more  
546 important than ever, about having a manifesto, ah that's in sufficient detail, was  
547 it gives us that point of reference. And I've still have a copy on my desk. Not quite  
548 like Norman Kirk who thumbed his to the point of extinction, um, I do consult it  
549 regularly when issues arise, to think, "Now hang on, what do we say about this?"  
550 Now the third point really is, if none of the previous two apply, you know what  
551 do you address? And there we've got, on our website, set out in pretty clear  
552 detail, our party principals. Because that then becomes.... well if its not covered

553 by either of the above, lets see how it sits with these. And we do that exercise um,  
554 pretty constantly actually.

555

556 34:02 Matthew: And I assume that manifesto kind of sits underneath.... it came  
557 out of those party principles...

558

559 34:09 Peter: Yeah, oh yeah, hopefully \*laughs\* hopefully its consistent with  
560 them.... but it gives us. It's it's it's purpose is primarily to inform people what we  
561 are on about, but secondly its a quite good internal point of reference, um when  
562 issues come up. For the point you raise, cause there are always people out there  
563 who say, "hey, you said at page 93..."

564

565 34:29 Matthew: Particularly with things like twitter, where you get people  
566 trawling back through stuff to try and...

567

568 34:31 Peter: Yup, yup.

569

570 34:33 Matthew: Get a gotcha moment.

571

572 34:35 Peter: Yeah, yeah,

573

574 34:35 Matthew: Is there anything that we haven't covered that you think is  
575 relevant?

576

577 34:41 Peter: Um...I think in a way that that last point is the interesting one. Its um  
578 its the extent you know that politicians are using twitter to go out there and  
579 communicate a message, I think the other side of the coin is the number of  
580 people who are lying in wait for us, either to preform the gotcha moment, or to  
581 engage you in a debate in such a way that you end up um destroying your  
582 credibility by the way you respond. And I think that's quite a challenge, and one  
583 of the things I have learned, um in some cases the hard way, is that twitter  
584 doesn't have a sense of humour...you know...I've done a few things um actually  
585 not around the election, but um where I have been a bit tongue in cheek, and

586 suddenly there's this massive firestorms erupted, um, some times its not been a  
587 problem, other times you think "hey I didn't actually intend that to be the  
588 outcome..." so its that, this a quite unforgiving, humourless media, and I think  
589 while we can use it to promote our messages we've just got to be mindful that  
590 there are others out there lying in wait. U boats waiting to torpedo the convoy.

591

592 35:52 Matthew: Yup, um, yeah, I think, just personal reflection, I think twitter  
593 does have a sense of humour, but it is a very particular, very extreme, overt  
594 sense of humour,

595

596 36:02 Peter: Yes, yes, it's not subtle,

597

598 36:04 Matthew: Subtle doesn't work on twitter,

599

600 36:04 Peter: No, no, no.

601

602 36:06 Matthew: Um, thank you for your time, um and, once I've gone through  
603 transcribing this, ill send you a copy, for you to check, but also I may with my  
604 other interviews and stuff, I may come back with some written questions for you.

605

606 36:23 Peter: That's fine

607

608 36:23 Matthew: But ill go through {Staffer's name redacted} whose...

609

610 36:26 Peter: That's fine.

611

612 36:26 Matthew: So thank you for your time, and its greatly appreciated.

613

614 36:28 Peter: Thank you Matthew.

615

616 ENDS

1 *Cameron Cotter, National Party, 13 May 2015, National Party Head office*

2

3 0:05 Matthew: Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research project, um if  
4 you have any questions, or anything that you feel is that is relevant and that we  
5 don't cover please feel free to mention it. Um to start off, could you please state  
6 your name, the organisation you were involved in with between 1 June and 20  
7 September last year, your role within that organisation and if your were a  
8 volunteer, um a paid position or an outside contractor.

9

10 0:27 Cameron: Sure, so my name is Cameron Cotter, I was a...I worked for the  
11 National Party, so my role on the 2014 campaign was as the parties  
12 communications manager, um ah... so does that answer it?

13

14 0:41 Matthew: Um... that was a you were an employee of the party?

15

16 0:42 Cameron: Professional position. Yup

17

18 0:46 Matthew: Ok, cool. Um how did you end up in that? Just to give us a bit of  
19 background, how did you end up in that position, and your experience, both  
20 work and previous campaigns.

21

22 0:54 Cameron: Sure. So I was a volunteer for the party before I was a staff  
23 member, on the 2008 campaign, as you'll recall, and ah, after that, finished uni,  
24 volunteered on the Mt Albert by-election, and at that point in time, there was a  
25 role coming up at the party HQ, which was regional co-ordinator role, which was  
26 like a field officer/admin role, so I got that part time while I was studying, did  
27 that for just over a year. Then got the chance to work on the mana by-election  
28 campaign full time, and from that went on to the general election full time in  
29 2011. As the campaign co-ordinator, which is basically the operations manager  
30 of the campaign. So out of that, finished that in 2011, at the end of that campaign,  
31 decided I wanted to stay on as a staff, so I became a communications advisor, um  
32 full time, which is a new position, um with 20, so basically 50/50 position ah

33 between the leaders office and the party, um and that ah that was a really  
34 interesting role because it enabled us to kinda just bridge the gap and work on  
35 projects which had had, which both of those sides of the organisation had an  
36 interest in. in particular that ended up um taking me into the social media space.  
37 At that point in time, we didn't have a full time social media advisor, um so in fact  
38 when I took on the role, we essentially had ah very little social media presence at  
39 all. We had a prime ministers page, which was pretty bland, um just ah usually  
40 posting of photos and various activities, and there wasn't any great degree of I  
41 guess strategy behind our social media at that point. So it was really interesting  
42 through last term, to see it um build. To be a part of building a strategy that took  
43 us from from a pretty embryonic state to um being, I think competitive online? I  
44 don't want to pick a winner, um I think labour did some things really well. The  
45 greens do somethings or did some things really well, and I think there are some  
46 things we did well. um..But at least, I know that we were competitive.

47

48 3:18 Matthew: Cool, thanks for that. As a starting point, can you, I just want to  
49 develop and understanding of the campaign leadership team, and how social  
50 media, in particular twitter, fitted in with that. Can you describe how that  
51 structure was laid out? During the campaign, so manly looking between 1 June  
52 and 20 Sept. last year.

53

54 3:35 Cameron: One of the key things I guess was um, in terms of twitter anyway,  
55 was that we saw it as a real time medium, and um it was important, if it is to be a  
56 real time medium, that we had really dynamic and quite minimalistic sign off  
57 process, so by the end of the campaign um, there was a fairly high degree of trust  
58 around what was put up on twitter. That's not to say we had no sign off at all. But  
59 um we certainly had a pretty high level of discretion.

60

61 4:09 Matthew: Um, so that changed during the campaign, from being quite ah  
62 stringent, and maybe not so free flowing, to moving towards that as you got  
63 closer to e-day?

64

65 4:22 Cameron: Ah, I guess it did, there wasn't a single turning point, but we just  
66 as the level of content steadily increased over the course of the campaign, it just  
67 was a necessary um that it at the same pace our sign off processes were changed.  
68 And we um, you know if it was not... it was left to our judgement I guess, if we  
69 had we saw no risk ah then we were able to create and post content internally  
70 and quickly.

71 4:53 Matthew: Yup, um so there was a social media presence kind of close to the  
72 top table when over all campaign was being planned, like it was part of the  
73 planning process? Or was it just seen as kind of a well that's something someone  
74 further down the chain sorts out?

75

76 5:10 Cameron: I think there was a ah um a presence of social media at a high  
77 level in two senses. One in terms of paid spend, and the other in terms of um I  
78 guess a structural question around how we actually resourced it. And I know  
79 those were given consideration, and were important, um I guess they had a...once  
80 once one of the reasons my role was created, ah we also had another guy  
81 working on it from Auckland, we had a level of resourcing that could support a  
82 moderately robust social media campaign.

83

84 5:45 Matthew: Um, when did the social media team kinda start moving form just  
85 a maintenance kind of position into more of a campaign mode before the  
86 election? So just kind of referencing that whole 3 year campaign element that's  
87 come...

88

89 6:01 Cameron: For us it was a steady evolution, cause you got to remember we  
90 were coming into it um from you know probably a 2012 from you know pretty  
91 close to a zero base, we had very small followings on um the national page in  
92 particular, um so I think early in election year we really started to lift our focus  
93 ah we did build a strategy that was um gave us a great sense of clarity or purpose  
94 around each page, types of content we wanted to serve out, ah how we thought  
95 we could grow the pages. And roughly what sort of targets we wanted to set.

96

97 6:39 Matthew: So you weren't necessarily in a campaign mode, but more in a  
98 preparing for a campaign mode building that base?

99

100 6:48 Cameron: I think there was a big lift in intensity from the beginning of  
101 election year and then it just steadily increased from there.

102

103 6:55 Matthew: Cool

104

105 6:58 Cameron: We saw our page, well you're more interested in twitter, but we  
106 saw the engagement on our pages lift a lot. Our primary focus was Facebook. Um,  
107 twitter was secondary for us, and I think that reflects the audience that twitter is.  
108 Its not a conservative audience, our voters are on Facebook and we put a lot of  
109 effort into um getting them to like our page.

110

111 7:21 Matthew: I am looking at how Twitter fits into the wider, so this is still  
112 relevant, that you realise there's a difference in the audience. Um...so going  
113 further out to the overall campaign, can you give us an idea of kind of what the  
114 general direction and structure of that was? What the goals, other than getting as  
115 many votes as you can, what that was, and what the target audience, or market,  
116 for the over all campaign was?

117

118 7:48 Cameron: For social media, or?

119

120 7:49 Matthew: No, for the whole campaign, the campaign as a whole?

121

122 7:52 Cameron: Oh, right, well I mean look we are the absolute, essential broad  
123 based party, aren't we? So look our, everyone was an audience for us in many  
124 ways, ah...we got what, 1.1million votes? Nearly 50% of the vote. Everyone's a  
125 target for us.

126

127 8:14 Matthew: Um..... So obviously the overall strategy was to try and connect  
128 with as many people and everyone's a possible target, where does.... within social

129 media was that the same approach, or were you looking at a subset of that?

130

131 8:38 Cameron: So, um the, ah...the national pages, we have two main brands  
132 online, so John Key is um a huge brand, in and of himself, ah we've got a lot more  
133 people on his pages than we'll probably ever have on the National Party pages.  
134 But for the national party pages, it was about growing them, and having an  
135 engagement tool for our base. So I guess that was the primary consideration,  
136 again that's more for Facebook. Like, for twitter, we...um. Our base aren't on  
137 twitter so we need to use twitter as a framing device, or a rapid response device.

138

139 9:28 Matthew: Um.... so it is reasonably widely understood that that political  
140 parties have databases that use for tracking and targeting voters, did you use  
141 that information to try and target your social media efforts?

142

143 9:46 Cameron: The issue at this point in time is that it is extremely difficult to  
144 match any sort of social media accounts to real people, um and we are not  
145 working on massive budgets and things where we can you know pursue those  
146 sorts of ideas necessarily. So um for us there wasn't a high degree of integration  
147 with any other data that we had.

148

149 10:10 Matthew: And so you also weren't kind of feeding what you had gained  
150 form twitter back into that database, either, because it's just that difficulty of...

151

152 10:20 Cameron: I mean most people on twitter don't use their real name.

153

154 10:24 Matthew: Yeah, um so were the different social media channels seen just  
155 multiple ways to get the same message out? Or were the messages kind of  
156 tailored to each individual platform.

157

158 10:33 Cameron: Ah, no I think they were a means to get particular messages or  
159 calls to action out, ah, there is a degree to which it differs on Facebook and  
160 twitter, you don't want your twitter to just be a replication of your Facebook  
161 account. You know, Facebook is a general audience, very mainstream audience,

162 um twitter is an audience of influencers, typically, so you do target your content  
163 in that regard. I guess the other thing is that twitter can handle a much greater  
164 volume of content, so you know, whereas Facebook if you start posting an hour  
165 apart, your engagement is going to plummet, um on twitter, you could post 10,  
166 15 times in an hour and that's absolutely fine. So during a debate, for example, it  
167 was really useful because we could have a running commentary, or during major  
168 speeches or announcements, we could have a running commentary. I think that  
169 was really the big difference between Facebook and twitter for us. If you look  
170 back at our twitter account around conferences, and things like that, you will see  
171 a big spike in the output as we had had a live tweet opportunity.

172

173 11:44 Matthew: That's definitely, was noticeable. Um...would you describe the  
174 social media campaign, with particular reference to twitter, as more proactive or  
175 reactive?

176

177 11:52 Cameron: What do you mean by that?

178

179 11:53 Matthew: Um..so..were you actually reacting to content, cause one thing  
180 that was noticeable particularly with um the PMs account, and definitely the  
181 national account, there is a lack replies to content.

182

183 12:17 Cameron: Right, I see what you are saying. It was very much a protest, ah  
184 not a protest, um a proactive platform for us. Um getting down to one on one  
185 level engagement is pretty resource intensive, um and the nature of New Zealand  
186 elections is that they are pretty small teams. Um, and we had to do a number of  
187 others things, as well as run a twitter account, so there was...there is only so  
188 much attention that you can commit to engagement. I mean that said we do try to  
189 um acknowledge, as best as possible, um questions and quires as they come  
190 through.

191

192 13:00 Matthew: Um...so was the aim of twitter to reach as many people as  
193 possible, or to engage with users? And I think you've kind of answered that, with

194 that previous one, that you...just for resource issues its nice to engage but...

195

196 13:15 Cameron: I think it's more about um...It's more about contributing to a live  
197 debate isn't it? Cause that's what twitter is, its just a continuing, ongoing real  
198 time debate. And ah you can be...it gives you the chance as a party to be at  
199 that...part of that debate at that table. That's how I saw it anyway.

200

201 13:34 Matthew: What was the measure of success for the campaign? Both over  
202 all and on a tweet-by-tweet basis? Like what did you see as the ultimate success?

203

204 13:43 Cameron: Um, I think for a start, growing the platform was a really  
205 important thing, so and that was both for Facebook and for twitter, um, we all  
206 have small accounts and small followings and we needed to grow that base of  
207 people who were interacting with the core account. So that was probably the  
208 first thing. The second was um..I guess giving us a tool to react, as I say, quickly  
209 to to debate as it was being formed.

210

211 14:20 Matthew: Um, so the national party hash tag of teamkey, was I'm pretty  
212 sure the first one that came out,

213

214 14:31 Cameron: Yeah

215

216 14:31 Matthew: And did generate a number of news stories, both here and  
217 overseas.

218

219 14:36 Cameron: It did

220

221 14:36 Matthew: If I remember correctly. Can you give us a bit of an insight into  
222 the decision-making around that hash tag?

223

224 14:44 Cameron: I reckon, if you are interviewing Jo de Joux, that is probably  
225 more a question for Jo.

226

227 14:47 Matthew: Ok, cool. Um, I've kind of covered that...so its safe, well its widely,  
228 I assume its quite widely known that the um PM doesn't control his own account,  
229 does he?

230

231 15:10 Cameron: Find me a world leader that does? \*laughs\*

232

233 15:12 Matthew: Well, Rudd signed off some of his tweets with KRudd and...um

234

235 15:17 Cameron: True, true,

236

237 15:17 Matthew: Was the same approach used by senior MPs and candidates?

238 Um...so did like most, were they controlling their own accounts, or was it a bit of  
239 a staffer issue as well?

240

241 15:30 Cameron: Um...I think there's quite a bit of divergence around how each  
242 MP manages their accounts. Um..and it also depends on the type of content being  
243 posted. You know, if its simply sharing content off the national party's pages etc.,  
244 then that's probably perfectly appropriate, you know that someone else is doing  
245 that on their behalf. Um...ah... a number of MPs were very active, particularly on  
246 twitter. And really had a high understanding of the platform..ah Judith Collins,  
247 Steven Joyce, Chris bishop now, Jami-lee Ross, a couple of examples, um, they  
248 were very active, and really understand the mechanism.

249

250 16:10 Matthew: Um, so were candidates, particularly new candidates coming  
251 through who weren't already MPs, were they encouraged to use twitter, or was it  
252 kind of left up to their own decision?

253

254 16:21 Cameron: I think it was largely left up to their own decision. That said, my  
255 view is that twitter is um, as I say its a live debate that's going on, and debate  
256 requires critical mass, so when your running an electorate campaign, um I'm not  
257 convinced that twitter has the same potential value that it does as when your  
258 dealing with national level issues. Um, and particularly, a lot of our candidates  
259 were in rural seats, um, I just I don't think we saw any evidence that there was,

260 um that any of their support base, that twitter was relevant to their support base.  
261 There were some candidates were it was, so in those instances, we certainly  
262 encouraged them, seats like Auckland central and um, and wellington central,  
263 your sort of inner city, urban seats, um, you've got to be on it.

264

265 17:11 Matthew: And I guess, once an MP gets to a kind of certain level of  
266 seniority, where they are kind of discussing those national issues, as well, is  
267 when it starts to become, as opposed to a fresh candidate, like Andrew Bayly,  
268 who was in a rural seat, and is a newbie.

269

270 17:28 Cameron: Yeah, so like all of us he's got limited time and resource, and its  
271 about what he focuses on, and I don't think for him, focusing on twitter um  
272 offered a huge amount of opportunity for him to engage with voters in hunuai.

273

274 17:40 Matthew: So would you...did the party suggest to people like that where it  
275 isn't necessarily useful that it was better to not be on there, as opposed to be on  
276 there and not actually use it.

277

278 17:51 Cameron: Ah, not really, we would. We encouraged all our candidates to be  
279 on Facebook, no exceptions your on Facebook. Um, twitter was really left up to  
280 them. Because it depends on the confidence of that particular person with the  
281 digital platform, and some of our MPs just, or candidates should I say sorry, came  
282 on with a high degree of confidence around um what using those platforms  
283 meant, what the risks were, what the opportunities were. You know, Chris  
284 bishop is probably the best example of that, and we were very happy to let them  
285 go for it.

286

287 18:20 Matthew: Oh, yeah, but what I mean is more the ones like Ian Mckelvie,  
288 who has an account but doesn't use it.

289

290 18:26 Cameron: We didn't actively encourage them to go on, or discourage them  
291 not to be on there.

292

293 18:29 Matthew: Oh, ok yup. What sort of support, training, information was  
294 given to candidates, particularly those who were new to twitter, who maybe,  
295 understood the platform, but not how to use it in a political campaign context.  
296 What sort of support was given there, to them to make the most of it?

297  
298 18:47 Cameron: Yeah, so, um, we prepared a basically a written guide that  
299 anyone could, and we had guides on a wide number of campaign areas, including  
300 on social and digital media. Um we encouraged candidates to, particularly if they  
301 were in an urban seat, to basically engage a person who was digitally savvy as  
302 part of their campaign team, and have a local resource that could help. Ah a  
303 number I would say did that, I'm just trying to think, yeah I can think of a couple  
304 off the top of my head who did that.

305  
306 19:21 Matthew: And there was somewhere that they could contact the larger  
307 party structure for a bit of...

308  
309 19:27 Cameron: Yeah, there was, so we have um we have a very robust candidate  
310 management operation, as I'm sure do labour, during an election campaign, it  
311 was a huge focus for us operationally, um so I think the...any candidate would  
312 have a daily, probably multiple times per day, contact with campaign HQ around  
313 any number of topics on which they needed advice or support. And social media  
314 was one amongst all of those which they could ask and interact with us as they  
315 needed too.

316  
317 19:58 Matthew: Um, so that would have included like a messaging plan for the  
318 day...

319  
320 20:04 Cameron: Those sorts of things,

321  
322 20:05 Matthew: Like relevant social media content to share...

323  
324 20:08 Cameron: Ahh...we wouldn't dish out generic content necessarily, ah...But  
325 they definitely receive regular communication about what messaging they need

326 to follow. And that does ultimately does drive making their own decisions about  
327 content on social media. But local candidates made their own content.

328

329 20:30 Matthew: Um did you have someone monitoring social media use by other  
330 parties and/or your own candidates and MPs, to a) know what was being talked  
331 about and b) keep a bit of an eye on your own.

332

333 20:42 Cameron: Ah we would keep an eye on it, they were pretty good to be  
334 honest, um they were they were on the whole showed a high level of discretion,  
335 and um and I was really impressed with pretty much all our candidates in 2014,  
336 they um, I don't recall there being a single, major embarrassment or issue with  
337 any of our candidates last election.

338

339 21:02 Matthew: Yeah, I don't remember seeing any of them either.

340

341 21:08 Cameron: Yeah, I guess that reflects that general approach of a high level  
342 of relationship management and good will between the campaign HQ and the  
343 candidates.

344

345 21:17 Matthew: Yeah, and I guess with the larger party it is easier to get high  
346 quality candidates coming in at the state. As opposed to someone like the greens  
347 who may have some candidates in places that are a bit of a struggle ...

348

349 21:29 Cameron: Yeah, and look the reality is that you know, people, when your  
350 party is doing well, there is a real value proposition to candidacy because you've  
351 got a reasonable prospect of of getting in. of 20...how many candidates did we  
352 have? .... 24 new candidates, something like that, last time I mean about, over half  
353 of them became MPs. If we were in the position that some of the other parties  
354 were in, where we were looking at potentially no new MPs, then...well they  
355 would have needed some very different strategies I imagine.

356

357 22:00 Matthew: Um, so we have covered the fact that nothing really went too  
358 badly wrong online, apart from the um...reaction to the teamkey hashtag, which

359 I'll cover with Jo when I talk to her. Did you have a plan for if one of your  
360 candidates kind of of went off the reservation?

361

362 22:21 Cameron: On, on, on

363

364 22:22 Matthew: On social media.

365

366 22:22 Cameron: On social media? Well I guess the thing with social media is,  
367 once it is out there, you can't really get it down, so for us it more about building  
368 the um supporting the candidates to demonstrate a level of discretion and  
369 understanding of what they were doing, and so that is about supporting them,  
370 and having a relationship from day one, and making sure there is always  
371 someone one the end of a phone for them.

372

373 22:50 Matthew: Um, so do you believe that the vision, ignoring the election result,  
374 um, the vision that you set out for the social media and twitter campaign from  
375 day one, is that what you...do you believe you delivered on that vision...

376

377 23:11 Cameron: In some ways I think we actually exceeded our initial  
378 expectations. I was surprised by, once we started better tailoring content and  
379 improving the quality of our content, how much more engagement we got. It just  
380 exploded. I mean Facebook we went from 5,000 to 40,000 people on the page,  
381 we were getting just a huge lift in engagement. I can't recall any particular stats  
382 um engagement stats off the top of my head, but ah you know. Similarly  
383 increased engagement. I was really happy with how we ended up with the  
384 resource that we had, communicating online last campaign.

385

386 23:53 Matthew: Um, is there anything that you, that we haven't that you think  
387 might be relevant, useful, interesting?

388

389 24:00 Cameron: Ummm...not off the top of my head, I guess the only thing is that  
390 um the pace of change in this environment is just extremely aggressive um... So  
391 um... which I find it interesting to watch, but also challenging, um in that we have

392 to keep evolving our own strategies and our own content and best practice is just  
393 a continuously shifting goal post. So what our campaign will look like in 2017, I  
394 honestly I couldn't tell you right now, because we will be talking about a totally  
395 different environment that doesn't yet exist.

396

397 24:38 Matthew: Yeah, cause its not just the platform itself, its all the ecosystem  
398 things that live around it, like periscope and vine and Instagram and all that sort  
399 of stuff.

400

401 24:47 Cameron: That's right, I mean its going to get harder and harder to break  
402 into the social media market though, I mean its quite well saturated now, I think  
403 we will probably see new applications from time to time but I think Facebook  
404 and twitter aren't going away. They are going to be your dominant platforms for  
405 a long time. And the interesting thing about twitter is that even though it is seen  
406 as the second platform, even though its not the second largest, there are a  
407 number of platforms that have more people on it, um, but twitter has the  
408 reputation, that I find really interesting.

409

410 25:19 Matthew: Um, do you...so there has been, there is some stuff that has come  
411 out in journal articles, and a few other people have mentioned, that twitter gets  
412 better pick up for media stories, did you find that during the campaign? Both  
413 positive and negative stories?

414

415 25:36 Cameron: Yeah, well look, the thing is, one of the big differences between  
416 twitter and Facebook of course is that Facebook algorithm driven, whereas  
417 twitter is chronologically driven, so twitter is...journalist tend to spend a lot of  
418 time on twitter, and they see your content. They don't spend so much time on  
419 Facebook and even if they did, there is no guarantee that they would see your  
420 content, um because algorithmically it's not likely to be served to them. So I think  
421 twitter is um is naturally a medium that lends itself to interacting with the media

422

423 26:07 Matthew: Um and did you kind of use that knowledge a bit to try and seed  
424 stories, or stop stories?

425

426 26:15 Cameron: I didn't see that personally as part of, hugely as part of my role  
427 here. Um I think there is potential for that to be done, and I am sure a number of  
428 our um senior spokes people engaged with it in that way. But I always saw that  
429 as something within their responsibility.

430

431 26:35 Matthew: And as something maybe slightly more suited to a smaller party  
432 that don't have that ability to get media break through. That someone like  
433 national...

434

435 26:43 Cameron: I think it is relevant to us as well, but um I think that if you are  
436 going to be quick off the mark, it is quite difficult for that to be done from  
437 campaign HQ. You really almost need to have your spokesperson directly  
438 engaging with the journalists and I'm, you know, I know that was you know,  
439 depending on the particular spokesperson, how open they were to it, that that  
440 was the case. You know minister Joyce was often on twitter; it's interesting to  
441 even see Bill English becoming more active on twitter last campaign.

442

443 27:14 Matthew: Ok, cool, um. I think that's everything

444

445 27:18 Cameron: Easy

446 ENDS

1 *Hayden Eastmond-Mein, Green Party, 13 May 2015, Bowen House*

2

3

4 0:06 Matthew: Cool, so there we go, um so thank you for agreeing to take part in  
5 this. Um and if you have any questions, or anything that doesn't...that we don't  
6 cover that you think is relevant...

7

8 0:13 Hayden: Yup.

9

10 0:13 Matthew: Please feel free to ask or mention it. Um to start off, can you just  
11 state your name, the organisation you were involved with between 1 June and 20  
12 September, and your role within that organisation? And if you were a volunteer,  
13 a paid staffer or an outside contractor.

14

15 0:27 Hayden: Sure, um my name is Hayden Eastmond-Mein, um I was the Green  
16 Party's ah campaign social media advisor, um and I was paid staff, paid for by the  
17 party obviously.

18

19 0:45 Matthew: Um can you just give bit of background about your experience and  
20 you got into the job? Just to fill that out.

21

22 0:50 Hayden: Sure, um well I was social media advisor at Auckland Transport, for  
23 I think about 2 years. Um and previously did a bunch of coms roles and stuff and  
24 media roles before that. Um but then left that role to do freelancing, and then  
25 that kind of gave me time to ah, slightly more time to get involved in the election  
26 campaign, and so I volunteered in the Epsom electorate um to help with Julie-  
27 Anne Genter's campaign there.

28

29 1:31 Matthew: In 2014?

30

31 1:31 Hayden: In 2014. yeah yeah, and then um a couple of other members, of the  
32 paid campaign them, that was kind of slowly starting to get ah brought together,

33 were in were in that electorate as well

34

35 1:47 Matthew: So this is kind of early 2014?

36

37 1:50 Hayden: Yeah, yeah, um yeah, I guess this was kind of when we were  
38 starting

39

40 1:56 Matthew: Gear up?

41

42 1:56 Hay: Yeah, gear up, and start thinking about campaigning, um...and they  
43 kind of let me know that the campaign was looking for a social media person and  
44 so yeah, that's how I kind of got into it...

45

46 2:14 Matthew: Cool. um, so just to give us, to help me get an idea of the structure  
47 of the leadership...like the campaign leadership team,

48

49 2:22 Hayden: Yup.

50

51 2:22 Matthew: And where social media fitted in that, can you kind of give us an  
52 overview of how that was structured and where you sat, and was social media  
53 kind of at the top table, or was it kind of....

54

55 2:31 Hayden: So it was kind of, I guess it was a relatively small team, um but yeah,  
56 it was a.... it was a relatively flat structure, um which I guess is kind of um part of  
57 the greens kind of more kind of general way of running things. So I reported  
58 directly to the campaign director. um...

59

60 2:59 Matthew: Who was Ben...

61

62 2:58 Hayden: Ben Youden, yeah.

63

64 3:01 Matthew: Um...cool.

65

66 3:05 Hayden: Yeah.

67

68 3:05 Matthew: Ahh. So when did the social team in general move into a campaign  
69 mode, or is it something you kind of do, in mind, year in year out?

70

71 3:20 Hayden: Well, um, so for us, which I think, I'm not sure, but from what I've  
72 seen, um is quite different from other parties, is we actually run our, we have a  
73 clear distinction between parliamentary social media and then party. So during  
74 the term, outside of the regulated period, um all our social media, apart from  
75 some specific things, for example around the co-leadership election.

76

77 3:54 Matthew: Yeah, yeah,

78

79 3:54 Hayden: But pretty much everything is run by the parliamentary team, and  
80 so by parliamentary staffers. And then when...and then that all gets across to the  
81 campaign team during the campaign team. so so my role was always purely  
82 campaigning, there were still, obviously it gets transferred when parliament is  
83 still sitting, and so there is still kind of some more kind of you know reactive um  
84 oppositional type of stuff that you have to do. But yeah, generally my role always  
85 had a kind of campaign frame. Yeah.

86

87 4:38 Matthew: But I guess that work done here (parliament), during the non  
88 regulated period is done to keep momentum, build engagement, and all that sort  
89 of stuff...

90

91 4:49 Hayden: Yeah, yeah

92

93 4:51 Matthew: So that when you do ground on day one of the regulated period,  
94 things are still rolling along.

95

96 4:56 Hayden: Exactly, yeah, so um one of the things I noted, that that is kind of  
97 essential, compared to the other parties, in that we talk to an audience  
98 throughout the term and have an engaged audience, um so we started the um the

99 regulated period I think, or no April 2014 we had 38,000 likes, compared to  
100 labour's 11,000 and national's 8,000. yeah...um.

101

102 5:36 Matthew: Yeah, I pulled those stats in like May or, a couple of times during  
103 the election...and yeah; there was a real...

104

105 5:45 Hayden: And there was a similar difference in twitter, I don't really have  
106 those numbers, yeah a similar difference in twitter and so yeah, definitely that,  
107 you know, throughout the term, keeping up that um communication. Obviously  
108 that cant...that needs to be parliamentary. Um but...its kind of a bit of a grey  
109 distinction anyway, because you win votes through your

110

111 6:05 Matthew: Yeah

112

113 6:05 Hayden: Policy and what you say throughout the term you know. Um its just  
114 that you can't explicitly ask for votes or money. Um...yeah but...

115

116 6:14 Matthew: But with social media it's about building that sense of  
117 engagement...

118

119 6:15 Hayden: Yeah...

120

121 6:15 Matthew: And connection.

122

123 6:16 Hayden: Yeah, its a...its yeah exactly.

124

125 6:19 Matthew: So that when you do and say "give me votes, give me money" it  
126 can happen?

127

128 6:23 Hayden: Exactly and so one of the keys for me was um maintaining cons...a  
129 really strong consistency from um that what had been going on in parliament  
130 and from the parliamentary social media team um because we didn't want it to  
131 be this jarring, like suddenly we are campaigning at you. You know. It needed to

132 have a familiar voice.... um and...Ah so a lot of my job was continuing on the stuff  
133 that you know from a purely campaign perspective maybe wasn't winning votes,  
134 but it was maintaining that voice and that brand and that engagement, yeah. So  
135 sharing news stories for example is something that we do, like, even if they are  
136 not directly related to an election policy, but if they are something we know that  
137 the green audience would be interested in, that is kind of how we have  
138 constructed out social media brand. Yeah.

139

140 7:22 Matthew: Yup...so can you give me a bit of an idea of the overall...other  
141 than...like...the general direction and structure of the overall campaign, like how  
142 that, what, who you were targeting, um as overall campaign and that sort of  
143 information. [Mumbles] sorry, I haven't really worded that really well, but you  
144 kind of know what I mean.

145

146 7:46 Hayden: Well the thing I guess that I think with social media is that it is  
147 most effective in engaging your supporters and kind of getting them talking  
148 about what you want.

149

150 8:01 Matthew: Oh yeah, sorry, what I mean was like over...the overarching green  
151 campaign...

152

153 8:04 Hayden: Oh. Right.

154

155 8:04 Matthew: And kind of like what the main messaging was, and who that was  
156 targeting,

157

158 8:12 Hayden: Right...

159

160 8:12 Matthew: Cause I kind of want to drill down to then how you differentiated  
161 that for twitter.

162

163 8:15 Hayden: Yeah...right. Um...

164

165 8:19 Matthew: And you can say that is more of a question to ask ben.

166

167 8:23 Hayden: Yeah, it probably is more of a question for ben. Um...cause I was a  
168 lot more focused on I guess the social media side of it, there were definitely kind  
169 of like some specific kind of demographics who we were targeting. I guess in a  
170 broad sense, kind of like, ah...young people who are in tertiary education is kind  
171 of an obvious one, I think there a few other kind of like other out lying ones, out  
172 lying kind of demographics that we were kind of targeting, that maybe weren't  
173 kind of what who you'd think we could target, but kind of the data suggested that  
174 we could go there. But yeah I think it's probably best to ask Ben that that broader  
175 targeting question.

176

177 9:21 Matthew: Yup, um so you were kind of targ... on twitter you were kind of  
178 more targeting those young and in tertiary education people?

179

180 9:24 Hayden: Definitely on twitter, yeah, so um.... yeah, and twitter, even outside  
181 of the campaign, is such a kind of a bubble, and generally kind of like relatively  
182 skewed left any way, that it was more in my eyes at least, a kind of a device to um  
183 get...to give those people our messages, then they kind of amplified them  
184 themselves, or have conversations with other people.... yeah...I couldn't really see  
185 our...aside from maybe people who were maybe floating between us and labour, I  
186 couldn't really see our social media, especially on twitter, I couldn't really see  
187 that winning any kind of ideological arguments, yeah.

188

189 10:23 Matthew: So it was more of a way to get your messaging out there and  
190 then get those people to...

191

192 10:26 Hayden: Yeah...

193

194 10:26 Matthew: Share it with their friends, who maybe aren't necessarily as  
195 politically engaged, or talk with people in real life...

196

197 10:34 Hayden: Yeah, in in in some ways...yeah...  
198  
199 10:40 Matthew: And kind of a way to keep the base motivated and interested?  
200  
201 10:41 Hayden: That's, yeah, I think, that would be the primary um aim.  
202 Ah...thinking about it more now, I guess there was also that kind of you know, the  
203 available left voters who are in that space, there is some kind of room to kind of  
204 convince and win votes there as well. Um yeah.  
205  
206 11:10 Matthew: Um, so just moving along, um so its... its understood that political  
207 parties have databases for targeting, or for recording voter interactions and stuff  
208 like that. Was that used to target any of your social.... or to influence any of your  
209 social media campaign? And conversely, did you also draw on anything you, any  
210 information you gained from twitter to feed back into building up those profiles  
211 in your database?  
212  
213 11:37 Hayden: Um...a little...ahhum, not so much with twitter...  
214  
215 11:52 Matthew: More with Facebook?  
216  
217 11:52 Hayden: More with Facebook yeah...  
218  
219 11:53 Matthew: Because Facebook is more real identity driven?  
220  
221 11:55 Hayden: Yeah... and its better integrated with tools like nation builder as  
222 well. Um...yeah. Yeah, there is definitely an issue with um...as you say with twitter  
223 not being as kind of real identity driven, and then being able to kind of um, ah  
224 couple you know um match peoples twitter profiles with other information  
225 you've got with them. So its kind of...its quite messy data in that sense. Um, we  
226 did use it a bit to kind of like...so where we could make those matches we did use  
227 it to then find out who in our data base had the most influence on twitter, um so  
228 we did do a little bit of that.  
229

230 12:54 Matthew: Um...so...you differentiated between your different channels?

231

232 13:00 Hayden: Mhmm

233

234 13:00 Matthew: So Facebook you were running you know a different kind of  
235 style and targeting on Facebook, compared to twitter?

236

237 13:09 Hayden: Yeah, we defiantly um put much more effort into Facebook,  
238 because basically just the difference in reach is huge, and so when you've got  
239 limited resources, I guess you kind of prioritise. So, um, and and, especially  
240 because at that stage at least, um Facebook's um advertising tools, and kind of  
241 paid tools were much more advanced, and kind of more targeted than twitters.

242

243 13:42 Matthew: And that reach is not just in pure numbers, but also the fact that  
244 there is more reach to...persuadable voters, as opposed to?

245

246 13:51 Hayden: Totally.

247

248 13:53 Matthew: Twitter being more...dyed in the wool?

249

250 13:57 Hayden: Yeah. Absolutely. Yeah, so I think. I'm not sure what their  
251 percentage is now, just the the ah the fact that almost all NZers are on Facebook  
252 is...

253

254 14:13 Matthew: Yeah, I think its just shy of 4 times as many... [Company  
255 redacted] have got some polling I have seen, that's 22% twitter and 78%  
256 Facebook?

257

258 14:22 Hayden: Yeah

259

260 14:22 Matthew: Um, don't know how reliable that 22% is...um that's something I  
261 am trying to dig up. Um, so was your social media campaign, particularly twitter,  
262 was it more of a proactive or reactive...sorry, their not the best words, was it

263 more of a kind of broadcast or engagement model I think is a better way to go  
264 with it.

265

266 14:42 Hayden: Yeah, well, so and this is where the differentiation was primarily,  
267 was that Facebook was defiantly, we did kind of a lot more proactive stuff on  
268 there. Um, we did try to engage as much as possible on Facebook as well,  
269 because, I don't know that is one of the challenges is that you your like, you put  
270 something out and you can kind of see this big number of people that have seen  
271 it, and that's kind of the attraction of it. But there are also kind of hundreds of  
272 people wanting to kind of talk about this as well. And so like you know you've got  
273 to address that side of it, you can't just be kind of like putting stuff out. And so  
274 that was definitely something we got much better at throughout the campaign,  
275 was that was anticipating what people would be asking about. Especially around  
276 policy. And that was um that was actually kind of some of the easier stuff to do,  
277 because obviously when you kind of when you write policy, its got to be detailed,  
278 its got to be backed up by quite a bit of you know material, and so that would  
279 kind of form like a basis of like how we would respond to inevitable questions.  
280 And actually I think part of, I wasn't kind of obviously part of the parliamentary  
281 team developing this stuff, but I think part of that... part of the policy  
282 development process is a kind of... picking it to pieces, and kind of you know,  
283 thinking about like all the different pitfalls and questions that might come up  
284 about it. Yeah...

285

286 16:19 Matthew: Um...

287

288 16:19 Hayden: Whereas twitter was much more kind of reacting to events of the  
289 Day. You kind of had the whole dirty politics and a whole bunch of um...I think  
290 that there was some spying scandal stuff happening at the time as well. I think  
291 maybe what was actually going on...it was a crazy election

292

293 16:44 Matthew: I think almost got to the point where I gave up trying to keep up  
294 with what was happening, cause there was no way you can stay on top of

295 everything.

296

297 16:50 Hayden: Yeah, um...yeah so I think um...yeah with twitter, we used  
298 primarily for that reactive stuff, and staying in conversations. Especially because  
299 there's a much more heightened...I mean...there is that kind of political twitter  
300 bubble that goes on all the time any how, but then in election time, that's really  
301 heightened and much more people are engaged, and particularly in that space,  
302 and so feeding that and being involved in that is definitely important. But then on  
303 the proactive we used it for.... we released a hell of a lot of policy [laughs] in the  
304 election so we used it to do that as well, and to kind of like live tweet those....

305

306 17:56 Matthew: I did notice going through um your tweets, across candidates  
307 and the party, that you seemed to front load a lot of the policy announcements in  
308 the election campaign period. So you would announce he stuff a lot earlier than  
309 everybody else. Was that to try and get around the fact that later on it is harder  
310 for minor parties...I know your not a.... ok medium sized parties as the electoral  
311 commission defines you....

312

313 18:22 Hayden: [laughs]

314

315 18:23 Matthew: Smaller parties find it harder to get media pick up as the election  
316 goes on

317

318 18:27 Hayden: Yeah...I'm not sure, I wasn't really part of the conversation in  
319 terms of like timing around the policy launches, and Ben might be able to give  
320 you some more insight into that.

321

322 18:40 Matthew: So your input on was more like, if we are going to do something  
323 on twitter, this is a better time of the day to do it, as opposed to this is when we  
324 should do it, day wise?

325

326 18:48 Hayden: Yeah...I mean to be honest, we...the campaign team was kind of..

327

328 18:58 Matthew: We are doing this?

329

330 18:58 Hayden: Um...well yeah, we were lead by...I mean...the campaign can be a  
331 quite [laughs] chaotic environment, and so while while everyone kind of had an  
332 appreciation of the importance of social media, that kind of did come second to  
333 um potential for media pick up, which is sound, because obviously you are going  
334 to reach far more people, and far more kind of undecideds and people outside of  
335 your bubble. Um so yeah, in terms of actually front loading, I haven't really gone  
336 back and seen the timing on that, but that would be interesting to look at.

337

338 19:40 Matthew: Cause I just remember there was some things...that some was  
339 being announced like early to mid June, and I figured it may be to try and get  
340 around that. But they were also policies that were really well suited to the social  
341 media bubble...cause they were like the game development one that Gareth did?

342

343 20:00 Hayden: I think that was...

344

345 20:00 Matthew: And the 3d printing stuff?

346

347 20:02 Hayden: I think that was relatively late that one? But yeah, there were kind  
348 of like a few kind of smaller ones that worked well on social, and worked for like  
349 really niche audiences um...yeah.

350

351 20:14 Matthew: So did you guys set out to actually try and engage on twitter.

352 Cause I know the green account and the green MPs have quite high reply rates, in  
353 general. Compared to other parties, is that a conscious decision?

354

355 20:30 Hayden: Yeah, I mean, its a tough one, because as a kind of a non kind of  
356 individual entity your...its hard to kind of decide what kind of voice you want to  
357 have, and how you can engage. So my kind of like feeling around twitter, and this  
358 has kind of flowed on to my work here as well, is that its always much better if an  
359 MP, like a spokesperson can engage. Because that is what it is about, it's about  
360 real people. Brands float around twitter, but they genn...I don't think many

361 brands have really been able to work that well. I mean a prime example is if you  
362 ever look at um...big issues of the day, if Russel's commenting on it, he'll get way  
363 more engagement than the green party account. And I think that's just because a)  
364 he can be a bit more kind of personable and have a kind of casual voice, but also  
365 just because, yeah, people want to, are more drawn to a person saying something.  
366 Yeah, and so I have...

367

368 21:49 Matthew: And they can match it up with what he's saying in the media, or  
369 in parliament, or when they see him on a street, so it kind of all links together?

370

371 22:00 Hayden: Yeah, yeah, I guess, I've...rather than trying to make the green  
372 party voice more casual, or like try to be more like that, I think I've just accepted  
373 that, especially because we are lucky enough, most brands don't have these 14  
374 kind of like actual people who can be out there talking about specific aspects of  
375 what your doing. Like most organisations or entities just have their own account.  
376 So they have to try and do that, but just with this kind of you know brand. So  
377 wave actually got the luxury of splitting that out.

378

379 22:34 Matthew: And that's kind of amplified during the election, when have not  
380 just 14, but 40 something? I think was the number I have got.

381

382 22:40 Hayden: Yeah, all your candidates

383

384 22:42 Matthew: From all your candidates.

385

386 22:44 Hayden: Totally, and so yeah, for me, I know that a lot of other kind of  
387 social media brands try and do it, but for I've like accepted that the green party  
388 can be relatively serious and doesn't have to you know...it can be humorous, but  
389 it doesn't have to try and be a person.

390

391 23:09 Matthew: Um, what was the.... how did you measure success during the  
392 campaign on twitter, both over all and on a you know, this tweet did really

393 amazingly, what defined...

394

395 23:19 Hayden: Um.... I guess...yeah...

396

397 23:22 Matthew: Was it reach alone or was it engagement, or a bit of both?

398

399 23:25 Hayden: Its kind of a bit of both, so, for me, um, reach is kind of the easiest  
400 one to report back, and reach is generally a good indication of engagement as  
401 well. Um,

402

403 23:45 Matthew: Particularly relative reach between different tweets, cause it  
404 kind of includes that retweeting aspect?

405

406 23:49 Hayden: Yeah...and so.... I mean, in an election context, and a campaign  
407 context, I think reach is...reach takes on an importance that you maybe....you may  
408 focus more on engagement outside of an election context, or give it a bit more  
409 weight, but in terms of election and basically you are in this kind of crazy  
410 pressure cooker of trying to get your um name out there as much as possible.  
411 Reach was defiantly the primary measure. Always with a caveat of this is a very  
412 blunt measure, but I guess that is one of the other problems with twitter is that  
413 their...

414

415 24:45 Matthew: I guess you also checked to make sure that those retweets  
416 weren't "ha-ha look at this" as opposed to a "hey look at this, this is really  
417 important."

418

419 24:55 Hayden: Yeah...

420

421 24:54 Matthew: So it's that qualitative and qunatitvatie measures.

422

423 24:57 Hayden: Yeah, and that's kind of again its like relatively hard, and nuanced,  
424 to report back.

425

426 25:02 Matthew: Yeah

427

428 25:03 Hayden: Which is why reach is a lot easier. Um. Yeah.

429

430 25:08 Matthew: And why so much of it comes down to the higher ups trusting  
431 your judgement on what's working and what's not?

432

433 25:14 Hayden: Yeah, totally, and yeah. I think. Number of retweets is always a  
434 pretty good indication...unless you've like screwed up majorly, and that's why  
435 your getting 100s of retweets [laughs]

436

437 25:27 Matthew: Um, I assume, moving on to the selection of the hashtag, that's  
438 probably more of a ben question, as to why those choices were made?

439

440 25:34 Hayden: Um.... yeah, although, yeah, so I mean.

441

442 25:38 Matthew: Cause, loveNZ was it?

443

444 25:41 Hayden: Yeah, yeah, so we basically just, loveNZ was our kind of like our  
445 campaign slogan, which um...

446

447 25:47 Matthew: Morphed into a hashtag?

448

449 25:47 Hayden: Well, yeah, which basically, I don't like, I'm kind of, I've got a bit of  
450 an aversion to hashtags making their way into the real world. Particularly for  
451 something as broad as an election campaign. Um...so the hashtag, loveNZ, was a  
452 way to bring our broader real world kind of slogan and branding into twitter  
453 basically. And it actually worked quite well; it was actually quite handy um to  
454 have. It was quite short, as opposed to "forabetternz" which is quite long,

455

456 26:36 Matthew: Yeah, and not very memorable.

457

458 26:37 Hayden: Not that memorable. Um, although loveNZ is quite a broad  
459 comment as well. But I think we did repeat it so much, that it did become like  
460 very, kind of attached to our campaign.

461

462 26:50 Matthew: Um...can you give an overview of the process involved in  
463 planning a typical tweet during the campaign?

464

465 26:55 Hayden: Sure.... ahh.

466

467 26:58 Matthew: Like how controlled was it?

468

469 26:58 Hayden: So, generally, um, it really helps that we have really good  
470 messaging processes and so um...for a... for any kind of policy that was  
471 announced, there was generally like kind of a...a real kind of basic messaging  
472 guide, of like this is the top line message, and these are kind of like the three  
473 other points. And so that's gold for anyone doing social media, cause basically a  
474 social media persons job is generally like most of their job is trying to condense  
475 information down, and trying to find like the nugget that you can then put out.  
476 That isn't dumbing stuff down....

477

478 27:49 Matthew: To encourage people to click on the click and go and find out  
479 more?

480

481 27:51 Hayden: Yeah, yeah, but...mostly trying to get across as much information  
482 as possible. I generally didn't try and do too much click baity stuff. Because I  
483 wanted to... I wanted people to just be able kind of see. If it reached their  
484 timeline somehow, I wanted them to be able to get the entire message, hopefully.  
485 Um so the process...I guess. It was kind of different for each type of  
486 communication. Definitely the policy launches were the kind of...had the most  
487 controlled process...so um generally we would construct a graphic that had our  
488 top line message about the policy. Um and then complimented by whatever the  
489 text would be...which might kind of um say it in a slightly different way. And then  
490 generally we would pick out the top 5 kind of key lines from the speech that was

491 give on the policy, and then that would kind of form our tweet sheet for the  
492 policy launch. And then we would kind mostly like live tweet it as it was  
493 happening. Um, with a bit of flexibility. I was given quite a lot autonomy. Like it  
494 was...there were definitely.... I've been in like work situations where there's kind  
495 of like...where the sign off process and kind of the beaucracy is kind of crippling  
496 and this definitely wasn't that.

497

498 29:41 Matthew: And also there were different levels for different kinds of levels  
499 of importance for tweets...so policy was more stringent, whereas replies to a  
500 question going "hey where can I find your policy on..."

501

502 29:51 Hayden: Exactly

503

504 29:52 Matthew: Was just "hey check out our website, here's the link"

505

506 29:54 Hayden: Exactly, yeah, yeah yeah,

507

508 29:57 Matthew: So it was rigid but fluid at the same time...almost....

509

510 29:59 Hayden: Yeah. Definitely, and it was nessecarily fluid as well, as it was  
511 incredibly busy and incredibly compact campaign.

512

513 30:16 Matthew: And this kind of stayed reasonably similar throughout the  
514 campaign period?

515

516 30:22 Hayden: Yeah, yeah, um...yeah definitely, I think...usually...like...it was  
517 generally like our judgement was trusted and then it was trusted that we would  
518 elevate that like "this might be a bit controversial" or um just checking that this  
519 is in line. You know. The campaign team was all in one room. So that was a really  
520 easy process of like what do you think of this?

521

522 30:58 Matthew: Um...I think the answer to the next one is pretty obvious...all of  
523 your MPs and um leaders control their own accounts pretty much? With the odd

524 staff dropping something in occasionally?

525

526 31:11 Hayden: Yeah, I think I'm not sure what it was like during.... I'm pretty sure  
527 during the election they all controlled their accounts, like sometimes like...

528

529 31:23 Matthew: In the main they were controlled.... each MP in the main was  
530 controlled by themselves with the odd little bit thrown in here and there by a  
531 staffer or a volunteer or whatever.

532

533 31:31 Hayden: Yeah, maybe like an EA {Executive Assistant} tweeting something  
534 here and there. But yeah, generally they aren't centrally controlled. Yeah.

535

536 31:40 Matthew: Were candidates encouraged to user twitter, or was it left up to  
537 them to decide.

538

539 31:43 Hayden: Um. It was kind of left up to them, we did encourage it, but I think  
540 the thing with candidates, especially when you've got like a huge pool, and  
541 obviously like really varied, um.is that you don't want a situation where you are  
542 forcing people who don't.... cant use or don't know how to use it well, on to  
543 twitter, cause that's going to cause more harm than good, mostly. [Laughs] um  
544 yeah, so we generally left it up to people, but we definitely encouraged the  
545 people who were there to do more. Um and we um yeah, we disseminated  
546 information to the candidates and the MPs pretty regularly yeah.

547

548 32:29 Matthew: Um and so you gave them support and training before the  
549 campaign was...

550

551 32:36 Hayden: Yeah, not heaps of training, and maybe that's something we could  
552 have done more of. But definitely in terms of encouraging messaging, like in  
553 terms of um content and um yeah. and and making sure that people were on  
554 message.

555

556 33:06 Matthew: So that was like a messaging plan circulated  
557  
558 33:09 Hayden: Yeah.  
559  
560 33:09 Matthew: And content  
561  
562 33:11 Hayden: Yeah, particularly around  
563  
564 33:17 Matthew: Here's stuff to retweet, or we are going to be doing something at  
565 this time.  
566  
567 33:16 Hayden: Yeah, yeah, totally. So that, particularly around the policy  
568 launches that was defiantly the most rigid. So that kind of messaging around  
569 polices would get distributed before hand, so that all the candidates knew...knew  
570 about the policy [laughs] in great detail obviously, and then knew what we were  
571 going to be saying about it.  
572  
573 33:44 Matthew: Did you have someone monitoring both your own candidates,  
574 and what other people were doing on social media? So that you knew and you  
575 could catch someone doing something silly.  
576  
577 33:50 Hayden: Yeah, that was generally my job.  
578  
579 33:57 Matthew: But I don't recall anyone from the greens doing anything too  
580 bad...  
581  
582 34:03 Hayden: No, it was generally a um, pretty...we got to the end of the  
583 campaign and thought like we [laughs] came out of it... because you are doing so  
584 much, and not just on social media, just like everything, your doing so much on  
585 the fly, there's so many people, with like such...its such a diverse range of people,  
586 that yeah. We came out pretty unscathed.  
587

588 34:24 Matthew: Did you have a bit of plan in case something did go horrifically  
589 badly?

590

591 34:33 Hayden: Not a specific plan as such around social. But we had people who  
592 were kind of experienced in coms and crisis communications and stuff and so, it  
593 wasn't like we would have been found lacking in that, I don't think. Um, yeah. It  
594 was actually something I got asked in my job interview, like how would I deal  
595 with it... [Laughs] if it happened [laughs].

596

597 35:09 Matthew: Um 2011 proves, I think, that you guys do crisis coms reasonably  
598 well.

599

600 35:16 Hayden: [laughs] yeah.

601

602 35:16 Matthew: Um, do you believe the vision you had for the twitter campaign,  
603 before it started, so not looking at the result of the election, but this is how I want  
604 the twitter campaign to go, this is how it went. Did you meet your.... did you  
605 deliver.... was your vision realised?

606

607 35:37 Hayden: Um, largely yes, I think I.... now having been through a campaign, I  
608 would.... I would definitely be a lot more realistic about what you are able to  
609 achieve, and yeah, I think um, yeah, obviously having kind of not done a  
610 campaign or known how...what...the extent of how kind of crazy it would be, um I  
611 was maybe a bit ambitious in terms [laughs] of what I thought I thought we could  
612 do. But actually we ended up doing a hell of a lot.

613

614 36:40 Matthew: And that being over ambitious probably comes down to  
615 resourcing issues again.

616

617 36:48 Hayden: Exactly, yeah, and so

618

619 36:46 Matthew: Because you are relying on other people to provide

620

621 36:50 Hayden: And you are relying on a lot of volunteer resource um so actually  
622 in the end um the flip side of that is we got a fair amount of... our video stuff um  
623 that we did um, I wasn't really expecting to be able to do to the standard that we  
624 did, um but we had volunteers who were amazing, so yeah. I think on the whole  
625 it was realised but I guess the more optimistic and fanciful kind of parts, which  
626 maybe I never really thought we would...could achieve, maybe didn't happen. But  
627 I think also just as I was kind of saying earlier, I think throughout the campaign I  
628 became more realistic in terms of what twitters effect on the electorate actually  
629 would be as well.

630

631 37:56 Matthew: Cool. Um is there anything else you feel we haven't covered that  
632 might be relevant?

633

634 38:03 Hayden: Um....

635

636 38:07 Hayden: Not really. I guess we haven't talked about the green room kind of  
637 live stream thing. Which I guess...

638

639 38:18 Matthew: Its sort of outside of the scope, but I may come back with some  
640 written questions around that, and also um your use of gifs, something else that I  
641 want to talk about, but haven't quite nailed down what questions I want to ask  
642 on that yet.

643

644 38:32 Hayden: That was relatively experimental just cause it was fun.... I think it  
645 was actually during the campaign that Twitter rolled them out. And so...I had a  
646 friend who was kind of an animator, so just kind of said, can you make us  
647 some...which is generally.... I guess that is another aspect is that the great thing  
648 about social media is there is a lot...there is still that room for experimentation,  
649 that like in other aspects of the campaign you wouldn't dare experiment too  
650 much, cause its an election campaign, where as.... that's what I really enjoy about  
651 working in social media is that you still.

652

653 39:15 Matthew: It gives that flexibility?

654

655 39:15 Hayden: Yeah, exactly.... there aren't many parts of politics or political  
656 coms where you can kind of experiment too wildly. Yeah.

657

658 39:26 Matthew: Um, well thank you for your time and um yeah that's all.

659 ENDS

1 *Andrew Burns, Labour Party, 12 June 2015, Willis Street*

2

3 0:07 MATTHEW: Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research project. It is  
4 greatly appreciated, um if you feel, if at any point you've got anything that you  
5 think that we haven't covered that you think is relevant feel free to yell out, or if  
6 you have any questions. Um to start off could you state your name, the  
7 organisation you were involved in, during the election campaign, so 1 June to 20  
8 September last year, and your role within that organisation, and if it was a  
9 volunteer, paid or contract position.

10

11 0:31 ANDREW: My name is Andrew Burns I work for...New Zealand Lab...Work  
12 and worked for the New Zealand Labour party, and I was the digital marketing  
13 manager during the election campaign.

14

15 0:45 MATTHEW: Can you give us a bit of a background how you ended up in that  
16 position?

17

18 0:47 ANDREW: Um I'd worked for the party for a number of years, and I  
19 had...oh...two and a bit years, and I had um just finished managing the asset sales  
20 referendum campaign, um and then also, I also go into the digital marketing  
21 because of my involvement in leading the digital side of the campaign for  
22 marriage equality, as well as some of the political management for that.

23

24 1:08 MATTHEW: Cool, um can you give us a bit of an understanding of the  
25 structure of the campaign leadership campaign team, and how social media fitted  
26 into structure.

27

28 1:20 ANDREW: Um so, it was quite a small campaign team, and as a result, um it  
29 was like a direct line to the campaign manager obviously, cause we worked very  
30 closely together on digital elements. So there was a campaign advisory group,  
31 which included leadership etc. I can't remember what the exact name of that

32 was; it was quite a while ago now, a whole year ago. Um, Jesus, um

33

34 1:47 MATTHEW: Time does fly, doesn't it?

35

36 1:48 ANDREW: Time doe fly. Um, yeah, so it was all very tight, in terms of  
37 personal and decisions, how decisions were made.

38

39 1:56 MATTHEW: Um, when did you...when did the...cause obviously social media  
40 runs kind of year round now, particularly for the larger parties, at what point did  
41 you kind of move from a maintenance, talking about what was happening in  
42 parliament, to more of a campaign focus?

43

44 2:12 ANDREW: That's an interesting question? I think it kind of depends what  
45 you define to be campaign? So when I started, our social media um went through  
46 kind of a transformation, from being um, quite, not very frequently used, if I am  
47 honest, or not frequently used enough, um to being used all the time, like a  
48 couple of info graphics a day, that sort of thing. Um, and I think that is when the  
49 first change was. And then I think it it...

50

51 2:45 MATTHEW: And roughly when was that sorry?

52

53 2:46 ANDREW: Sorry, that was in...The start of February? The end of January?  
54 Start of February, yeah. Then in, I think at our congress in...Can't remember when  
55 that was?

56

57 2:58 MATTHEW: Ah...Early July?

58

59 3:02 ANDREW: Maybe early July...

60

61 3:02 MATTHEW: That was down here at Wellington High school?

62

63 3:04 ANDREW: Yeah, Wellington High, then Michael Fowler.

64

65 3:06 MATTHEW: I think that was early...

66

67 3:09 ANDREW: Might have been the first weekend of July?

68

69 3:09 MATTHEW: Yeah.

70

71 3:10 ANDREW: Um and then is sort of when we rolled out vote positive and our  
72 campaign branding. So that's when it was a significant change in what we did. So  
73 that...but at the same time we were announcing...cause we announced so much  
74 policy in the election campaign, there was policy announcements. Lots of policy  
75 announcements/campaign style info graphics, the last 6 weeks of the election  
76 campaign, we were quite supported by a an outside agency, um for better or for  
77 worse...and they did provide use with a level of content that was...helpful I guess?

78

79 3:43 MATTHEW: Um, so looking at the overall campaign, so not the social media  
80 one, but kind of the wider campaign that you fitted in with, um, what was the  
81 general direction, so like what were the main messages you were trying to get  
82 across?

83

84 4:01 ANDREW: So obviously the top line messaging was obviously vote positive.  
85 [coughs] excuse me. And then um, work homes and family. Well, sorry, then  
86 people matter most, then work, homes and family.

87

88 4:10 MATTHEW: Um, cool, and so what was the...I know you are a broad based  
89 party, so this maybe doesn't apply as much as it does to smaller parties. What  
90 were kind of the target audience and market for the over all campaign?

91

92 4:26 ANDREW: On social? The over all campaign

93

94 4:26 MATTHEW: Overall campaign, yeah.

95

96 4:29 ANDREW: I...I...I don't know.

97

98 4:32 MATTHEW: Ok, cool. So that's a question for David...?

99

100 4:36 ANDREW: David Talbot, yeah.

101

102 4:37 MATTHEW: Yup, who I have been talking to...and I wanted to get this over  
103 and done with so I knew what questions to ask him. Um, so, when you were  
104 looking at the social media campaign, what were your target audiences for the  
105 social media campaign?

106

107 4:59 ANDREW: Um...we kind of looked at who was engaging with our content  
108 and then tailored it to fit that. So if an issue was particularly strong on social  
109 media we might go stronger on social media on that issue than we would in the  
110 main stream media because we knew that it was engaging people, and was  
111 relevant to the people who were engaging with us on online.

112

113 5:21 MATTHEW: Um, so was that...so you were very kind of responsive to  
114 the...what was happening on social media, what was being engaged with?

115

116 5:32 ANDREW: Yeah, so that doesn't necessarily mean that it it...it wouldn't  
117 necessarily look like if you were analysing our content, it might not look like we  
118 were being responsive I guess, we were under...we didn't have enough resources  
119 to be constantly replying to Facebook comments, because we had such a huge  
120 volume of them. Tweets on the other hand. Surprisingly a lot of people seem to  
121 assume that um...you know political parties are not replying to tweets, its  
122 because there isn't actually that many to respond too. Um, like obviously there  
123 are some...

124

125 5:57 MATTHEW: Is that because most of the ones...when you do get a reply to a  
126 tweet, a lot of them are kind of things that are not...don't illicit and immediate,  
127 reasonable response? So things like abuse, or generic that's an n... like that's a  
128 great policy kind of thing. As opposed to a question you can directly respond to?

129

130 6:21 ANDREW: Yeah, so we tried to...whenever there was, like eighty...this is  
131 entirely a guess, but eighty to ninety per cent, maybe, of direct questions, what is  
132 labours position on this...particularly in the like later half of the campaign, we  
133 were able to respond to, and we did respond to on twitter. Um, stuff abuse, we  
134 didn't even get that much abuse, but obviously we aren't going to reply to that.  
135 Um, and same with, it is really difficult to respond to criticism on twitter...um...

136

137 6:47 MATTHEW: 140 characters don't give you much room.

138

139 6:48 ANDREW: In 140 characters, and cause you can't argue with people either  
140 really, cause it is your brand, and its a bit harder, so when you know politics is  
141 about the contest of ideas, so if someone doesn't agree with you and they are  
142 going to troll you, or put a hell of a lot of effort into criticising you, your not going  
143 to convince them to vote for you, so why would you go to the effort I wonder.

144

145 7:08 MATTHEW: Yeah, um, were the people you were targeting on twitter the  
146 same sort of people that you were targeting on Facebook, or were they kind of  
147 different? And how were they different.

148

149 7:22 ANDREW: No, they were different because of the different demographics, or  
150 different type of people which use both platforms. You know there are so many  
151 millions, 70...well my figure is 70 per cent of NZers over 18 are on Facebook.

152

153 7:34 MATTHEW: Yeah, something like that.

154

155 7:34 ANDREW: Something like, are on Facebook. But only a really small number,  
156 comparative to that, are on twitter, and an even smaller number of those are  
157 even engaging in politics. I mean you look at, John Key's twitter account is the  
158 definite outlier, um, with over 100,000 followers, but you know the labour party  
159 has 13,000 followers, um I think is it correct to say the Greens have fewer, or do  
160 they have way more...I cant remember.

161

162 8:00 MATTHEW: I think they're about 15-18; I can't remember the figure off the  
163 top of my head.

164

165 8:04 ANDREW: I can't remember, I think there was a time when they were less  
166 than us, in the past year, um and the National Party have a few more than us. Um,  
167 but just using that as a sample size of the people that...I mean obviously your  
168 tweet is going to go way further than that, just that follower. But there aren't  
169 that...there aren't a HUGE number of people engaging. It is sort of commentators,  
170 politicos, journalists, activists, so the twitter sphere is a much better to engage  
171 with that particular audience rather than sort of every day New Zealanders.

172

173 8:33 MATTHEW: Yup, um so is part of that also because there is a...there is a view  
174 out there, which I don't think anyone has ever proven conclusively, other than  
175 anecdotally, that twitter is more left leaning in NZ, is part of the drive behind  
176 your twitter campaign to kind of help keep the base motivated. People that are  
177 probably leaning towards voting for you anyhow, and keeping them motivated  
178 and interested and getting information to them?

179

180 9:01 ANDREW: Um...

181

182 9:05 MATTHEW: That was a really long-winded question, sorry.

183

184 9:05 ANDREW: No, that's alright, I understand, um...not sure, um...what we did is  
185 we obviously; it depended on the resources available. But often we would take  
186 the graphics we designed and we'd redesign them for twitter, um, or we would  
187 just cross post them from Facebook to twitter. There wasn't...I can't recall any  
188 specific content we did specifically to motivate the base. There were a few times  
189 we would ask for volunteers for really specific purposes...

190

191 9:32 MATTHEW: Yeah.

192

193 9:32 ANDREW: Um, people who were likely to be on twitter, like graphic  
194 designers, and you know that sort of thing. Which is really interesting cause we

195 got this tweet response, or someone responded to us saying "you know, you  
196 should be paying your graphic designers" and we were like, "yeah, we do pay  
197 some graphic designers at the moment, but our entire campaign infrastructure is  
198 based on volunteers." its like...yeah,

199

200 9:56 MATTHEW: Um, so it is understood that political parties have databases for  
201 tracking voters and voter information, was that used, and by the sounds of it I am  
202 picking the answer is probably going to be no, to target people on twitter at all,  
203 or social media?

204

205 10:14 ANDREW: Um, it was used to...it was used to target people on...we used our  
206 email list to target people on Facebook, um; we did not target anyone on twitter.  
207 No.

208

209 10:26 MATTHEW: So that was to either target ads at people, or to exclude them  
210 based on the fact they already support you?

211

212 10:31 ANDREW: It was create um, audiences...

213

214 10:36 MATTHEW: For paid promotion?

215

216 10:36 ANDREW: Like look alike audiences. So we take a good guess at what we  
217 know people look like. Yeah, we used our membership base.

218

219 10:44 MATTHEW: And was there the converse flow? Did you use any  
220 information that you gained on social media to feedback into database at all?  
221 Like, I know it's really hard to identify...particularly on twitter accounts, against a  
222 real person, um, but just...

223

224 10:59 ANDREW: Um, we didn't use any information that our system did gather in  
225 any particular way. Um, we could, the twitter accounts we were able to match,  
226 um that was um, we looked at how many twitter followers we could match. But

227 that was just for information, like look we can do this.  
228  
229 11:22 MATTHEW: Um, and its still really hard to do that with a twitter account  
230 isn't it, cause there's a lot less...  
231  
232 11:24 ANDREW: A lot less information.  
233  
234 11:26 MATTHEW: Information than there is with a Facebook account.  
235  
236 11:31 ANDREW: Yup, you can do some stuff, there is some linking stuff, if you  
237 click on um, like, if you go to a twitter account from our website then can work  
238 things out...but  
239  
240 11:42 MATTHEW: Its still a pretty inexact science?  
241  
242 11:41 ANDREW: It's a very inexact science.  
243  
244 11:44 MATTHEW: Yup, um.  
245  
246 11:45 ANDREW: Rather it gives us a better indication of that you might be that  
247 person.  
248  
249 11:49 MATTHEW: Yup. Um,  
250  
251 11:52 ANDREW: But at the same time we didn't ever set out to, at no point in the  
252 campaign did we set out to gather peoples social media info...like scrape social  
253 media.  
254  
255 12:00 MATTHEW: Yeah. Um, would you describe your social media as more  
256 broadcast or engagement based? Or a combination?  
257  
258 12:08 ANDREW: A combination, I think, if we consider the digital um, broader  
259 than just social media for a min, um we ran this quite large Ask David

260 Cunliffe...this is not the Ask Labour thing, this is Ask David Cunliffe which was  
261 part of the construction of the closing address, and so there were quite a number  
262 of thousand, I cant remember how many, questions to David Cunliffe which we  
263 answered in response to that. Um, and...

264

265 12:39 MATTHEW: And that was trying to find common themes that people were  
266 wanting?

267

268 12:42 ANDREW: So then we invited a representative sample of a broad range of  
269 questions to Auckland for the filming...the closing the address, which we, they  
270 then broadcast on the night before election. Um we also ran the Ask Labour  
271 twitter campaign, um, that was successful in some cases, but it wasn't as widely  
272 picked up as would have been liked. Um, there was some MPs and candidates  
273 who used that really successfully to engage with voters in their electorates, and  
274 also nationally.

275

276 13:11 MATTHEW: So they would be people like, just off the top of my head, Clare  
277 Curran down in Dunedin South, and I think I saw Trevor doing it...

278

279 13:17 ANDREW: Trevor, Grant, Richard Hills, um,

280

281 13:21 MATTHEW: They're the ones that I can think...Jacinda, to a point?

282

283 13:23 ANDREW: Yeah, well cause Jacinda started Ask Jacinda and that was really  
284 a roll out of her campaign across all candidates. Well, most candidates.

285

286 13:31 MATTHEW: And she took it offline as well, didn't she? With little posters?

287

288 13:36 ANDREW: Posters.

289

290 13:38 MATTHEW: And little post card type things? That she left around for  
291 people who weren't on.

292

293 13:42 ANDREW: And she did it on the radio as well.

294

295 13:42 MATTHEW: Yup. Um, I still love the...was it her billboard that got painted  
296 up...

297

298 13:51 ANDREW: As the Pirate?

299

300 13:51 MATTHEW: Batwoman?

301

302 13:52 ANDREW: Ah, yeah, yeah.

303

304 13:54 MATTHEW: There was a Labour billboard that got painted up as  
305 batwoman, and yeah. Um, so was the aim of the twitter campaign just to reach as  
306 many people as possible? Or was it to engage with them, or again a bit of both?

307

308 14:07 ANDREW: Um, so it was to get um, messaging in front of twitter users, and  
309 because of the demographic of twitter users, um, being more politically engaged,  
310 we were kind of pitching at a slightly different angle at times, than we would on  
311 Facebook. So we weren't afraid to be more intellectual, particularly during the  
312 debates, um, and we live tweeted the debates. I think we did...our social media  
313 was the best out of all the political parties during the debates, I mean obviously I  
314 have a bias, but um, like what I think we did, and being in the room, we did one of  
315 them in Auckland, we did the rest in wellington, and the level of production that  
316 we were doing was quite astonishing, if I remove myself from the situation. We  
317 were producing on the fly infographics, individually for Facebook and twitter, at  
318 a rate of we would do 10 or 15 during a debate.

319

320 14:59 MATTHEW: That's, that's quite

321

322 15:01 ANDREW: And that was, that was done with a really small team of people,  
323 that was done with a designer, well two designers really cause I was half a  
324 designer, um, a person who was live tweeting it, a person who was signing it off,  
325 and we did it through Google docs, as well, there were people all around the

326 country. Well not all around the country, there was people in Auckland and  
327 people in wellington who were posting up, and we also had our research teams,  
328 like putting up content ideas all the time, and we would either say yay or nay to  
329 something, and if something came up great, we would turn it into an info graphic,  
330 or a quote info graphic, or we would do a fact check on the prime minister, and  
331 we would, before the first debate actually we had, because we have an indication  
332 of what what's going to be discussed, um we did a whole lot of, I think we did 12  
333 or 18 fact check um site pages which we released as the questions came out, um  
334 we only released like 4 or 5 of them cause those were the only relevant ones. I  
335 think that was primarily directed at twitter, and getting that in front of people  
336 who...like opinion leaders, so there was not just...there wasn't just the truthiness  
337 of the prime ministers statements, but there was actually hard evidence to refute  
338 that, or back up claims we were making. Its that two screening factor that's  
339 particularly true during debates, which I think is...um for politically engaged  
340 people, the ability to click on a link and say "oh, like here is all the actual facts" of  
341 a point that has just been made is incredibly powerful.

342

343 16:28 MATTHEW: Um, so there's been some talk, in the academic literature,  
344 mainly from similar interviews, but with actual...MPs and stuff, that they find it is  
345 easier to get stories picked up by the media from twitter, than it is other social  
346 media, that was part of what you were trying to do with that...like that stuff  
347 during the debates in particular, when you talk about opinion leaders, it is  
348 getting it also in front of people like members of the media who are online...

349

350 16:59 ANDREW: Yup

351

352 16:59 MATTHEW: To try and

353

354 17:00 ANDREW: And I don't...I'm guessing the next question is going to be how  
355 successful that was...

356

357 17:05 MATTHEW: No...Because I realise it is one of those things that it's not  
358 really...

359

360 17:10 ANDREW: It's not quantifiable,

361

362 17:10 MATTHEW: It's really hard to measure without going and talking to  
363 journalists, about them actually picking stories up.

364

365 17:17 ANDREW: Yeah, that was an objective of it, but I can't say how effective it  
366 was

367

368 17:19 MATTHEW: Yeah, its one of those things that it would be nice, but there is  
369 no way to actually prove whether it happened or not.

370

371 17:25 ANDREW: Yeah, unless you did a analysis of all the media during the  
372 election.

373

374 17:27 MATTHEW: Which there is someone at Canterbury who is doing that.

375

376 17:31 ANDREW: God that's going to be fun...

377

378 17:33 MATTHEW: Yeah...um...what was the measure of success for a  
379 tweet...during the campaign, for both a tweet and a kind of the over all campaign.

380

381 17:48 ANDREW: Um...for twitter...hmm...I suppose we didn't put um as much  
382 focus on twitter...and the objectives were rather qualitative, rather than  
383 quantitative, because of the...other than getting in front of opinion leaders, who  
384 obviously, might have a much broader reach than just twitter, I guess its just like  
385 the number of retweets, I mean it comes down to that, number of retweets  
386 favourites and replies. And like I would say a really successful tweet would have  
387 over 50 retweets, um, and I would be really happy with that. I would be happy  
388 with fewer retweets than that as well, I would be happy with 20 retweets, but...

389

390 18:32 MATTHEW: But that would be really like an outlier? Highly successful?

391

392 18:33 ANDREW: Yeah, I mean we got tweets with over 100 retweets and stuff  
393 over the course of the campaign, and we trended in New Zealand a couple of  
394 times, as well so...which is always exciting cause...we kind of never expect to  
395 trend because you know we're just a lowly political party.

396

397 18:48 MATTHEW: Having said that, with the smaller size of twitter in NZ, it does  
398 make it a bit easier

399

400 18:55 ANDREW: Yeah, it makes it a bit easier

401

402 18:55 MATTHEW: Like you know to get trending in the states during a debate  
403 would be a lot harder...

404

405 19:02 ANDREW: Well I guess you have a much bigger audience then as well.

406

407 19:02 MATTHEW: Um, can you explain the decision making process about...no  
408 we will skip that one actually. Um. Can you give me an overview of the process  
409 involved in signing off, or planning and signing off a typical tweet during the  
410 campaign?

411

412 19:25 ANDREW: Um, I would...normally me, but also with contribution of lots of  
413 other people, so anyone in the team could come up with the idea for a tweet,  
414 normally they would pitch it to me, um, then I would do the graphic design, or  
415 one of our other designers would do the graphic design, if necessary, um, then  
416 we would take it to the...and it would be in discussion with the director of  
417 communications and the campaign manager, um and then we would go and do it.  
418 And like if they approved it we would put it out. It's very simple, it's not like you  
419 know the Romney campaign were 19 people signed off a different tweet. It was  
420 like 1 or 2 people signing it off.

421

422 20:02 MATTHEW: Because of that collaborative, you know referential process as  
423 you going along, was it quite rare for something to get to that final stage just  
424 before you are about to hit tweet,

425

426 20:10 ANDREW: Yeah, for the stuff.

427

428 20:11 MATTHEW: And then go, actually no.

429

430 20:14 ANDREW: That was pretty rare, um, all the stuff we did internally,  
431 certainly it was pretty rare, when we contracted stuff out to an agency, it was a  
432 lot more common for them to bring stuff us, and be like no, because they were  
433 political people, they didn't have a political judgement.

434

435 20:26 MATTHEW: And that process kind of was the same from that early stage of  
436 the campaign around the start of June through...that process didn't really evolve  
437 a lot?

438

439 20:36 ANDREW: By the time we...cause I was really the first actual social media  
440 manager that the labour party has had. Once we finally established what the  
441 process was going to be, um, there was one incident, earlier on in the year, when  
442 we had to pull something down. Um because it hadn't gone through the right sign  
443 off process, and then we established a sign off process, and from there it was  
444 followed. It was definitely followed the time of...your study.

445

446 21:06 MATTHEW: Um...if we are looking at David Cunliffe's account was  
447 that...how much of that was run by him, and how much was run by...

448

449 21:20 ANDREW: His twitter account?

450

451 21:20 MATTHEW: Yeah.

452

453 21:20 ANDREW: Um well,

454

455 21:22 MATTHEW: Cause he followed the Kevin Rudd approach, with the DC sign  
456 off? For some of his tweets, didn't he? On...like at the end of the tweet?

457

458 21:30 ANDREW: Ah. No.

459

460 21:32 MATTHEW: I thought I saw a couple like that...

461

462 21:35 ANDREW: Ah, not that I remember.

463

464 21:35 MATTHEW: Ok

465

466 21:35 ANDREW: Um, then was a couple of tweets for when he would...tweet...no  
467 actually, I can't remember if there was the case. After the incident in the  
468 Christchurch east by-election it was very public that David Cunliffe no longer  
469 tweeted for himself. So. No all of his tweets were generated by staff...often with  
470 his input.

471

472 21:58 MATTHEW: Yup

473

474 21:58 ANDREW: But the actual process...and he would like text someone and be  
475 like "hey can you tweet this" and then it would be tweeted. It was just one layer  
476 away.

477

478 22:07 MATTHEW: Yup, just that protection so that he...you could think through  
479 any implications

480

481 22:12 ANDREW: Yeah, because obviously

482

483 22:13 MATTHEW: Because he has obviously got a lot of other things going on his  
484 mind

485

486 22:15 ANDREW: And it's very easy to go and just tweet something without  
487 thinking

488

489 22:24 MATTHEW: Um where as when you look at most of the senior MPs and  
490 candidates, so I am thinking, particularly like, Grant, Jacinda, Clare, Trevor, they  
491 all ran their own accounts in the main right? Obviously with a bit of..

492

493 22:34 ANDREW: Yeah, I mean I don't know, I believe that some of the ones you  
494 mentioned had support and...Um some of them certainly had social...quite good  
495 social media support, um but they also tweeted I imagine.

496

497 22:49 MATTHEW: Where as some of the other candidates may have just been  
498 solely um supporters running their accounts?

499

500 22:58 ANDREW: I don't think...I'm not aware of anyone that was that way, I mean,  
501 if anything candidates, particularly new ones that were on twitter, were very  
502 anxious about handing off to volunteers or to campaign...members of their  
503 campaign team. Um, because of the obvious risk risk.

504

505 23:16 MATTHEW: Yup, um, which is interesting where some candidates see the  
506 risk of handing over to other people, whereas at the other end of the spectrum  
507 you are handing it over because of risks that have already materialised, which is  
508 an interesting, just an observation.

509

510 23:36 ANDREW: Yup, no it is, and I think it's the difference between having a  
511 campaign volunteer and having a office, a professional staff.

512

513 23:45 MATTHEW: Were candidates encouraged to use twitter, or was it  
514 something that was kind of left up to them/

515

516 23:48 ANDREW: Candidates were basically all but forced to use twitter.

517

518 23:51 MATTHEW: [laughs] Ok, and was that because you were going to be  
519 doing...to help make the Ask insert candidate name campaign run?

520

521 24:01 ANDREW: Um, that was part of it, that was kind of one of the reasons we  
522 forced as many people on to twitter as we can. There was a number of candidate  
523 who we did not, and there was a number of candidates who didn't...even though  
524 they had that, and had twitter, there was some that didn't respond to those  
525 tweets, cause they didn't know how, even though we gave them extensive  
526 guidance in how, and kept an eye on it. Um, and that was because maybe they  
527 hadn't bought into the idea, or they didn't see the value in it? Um, but the thing is,  
528 the public engagement with that campaign was quite low any way. Um, there  
529 was...it was metropolitan areas, with highly politically engaged people tweeting  
530 MPs who were already active on twitter.

531

532 24:39 MATTHEW: So its kind of successful in places you expected it to be  
533 successful...

534

535 24:43 ANDREW: But like in a rural where like there is one twitter user per 100  
536 square km, you know...its like...the point of having a hoarding with Ask Labour X  
537 um on it, in the middle of nowhere, with no cell phone reception is kind of like a  
538 bit obsolete.

539

540 24:58 MATTHEW: Yup, um, so you have touched on it a bit, so there was some  
541 support given to candidates for like how to...particularly the new ones who  
542 hadn't used it,

543

544 25:08 ANDREW: So we produced a couple of documents outlining how they  
545 could use it, and we offered support, direct support if they needed it, and  
546 often...because of the campaign resourcing like I was paid for 2 days a week, but  
547 I... obviously I was working a lot more than that, um just cause of the demands of  
548 the job. But other than that there were very few people who were able to help  
549 candidates on this. Um because of the resourcing, we would often just direct  
550 them to the help site pages on twitters website, which are also really informative

551 cause, and well made. So why not?

552

553 25:37 MATTHEW: But its that knowledge of where to find the held which they  
554 kind of...

555

556 25:40 ANDREW: Yeah, exactly so we would send them links, basically.

557

558 25:43 MATTHEW: Um where there any kind of protocols or policies about what  
559 they were allowed to do and no do? Or did you kind of just trust the candidates  
560 to be smart?

561

562 25:52 ANDREW: We advised them on things they should and shouldn't tweet,  
563 and post on Facebook, and it was all the common sense sort of stuff, you know,  
564 we kept them within campaign messaging and all that sort of thing. Um,  
565 obviously there was a couple of instances, well-publicised instances where that  
566 didn't happen. But those were primarily before the campaign, I don't think.

567

568 26:12 MATTHEW: The one in Timaru,

569

570 26:13 ANDREW: Rangitata.

571

572 26:13 MATTHEW: The one in Tmaru I'm pretty sure a) quite early, and b) I have  
573 a feeling the Facebook comment might have been up there for quite a while  
574 before it was actually found.

575

576 26:23 ANDREW: Yeah, the comment, I believe that comment, about the Prime  
577 Minister, was made before the person was selected to be a candidate. Um, but,  
578 and obviously they had forgotten about it. Um, and...Yeah, that came back the  
579 haunt them.

580

581 26:39 MATTHEW: Did you have a plan of how to deal with when someone did  
582 something stupid?

583

584 26:45 ANDREW: Well, we didn't have a plan, as such, because each incident like  
585 that, any time an incident like that happens, you kind of have to be responsive to  
586 the situation, um, and so having been bound by a process or protocol can be  
587 limiting. Um, and it depends what the comment is. There was, for example um  
588 when one of our candidates had a photo of John Key on their twitter account, like  
589 them with John Key, um, and also another with the same candidate, making a  
590 tweet, like years and years and years ago about Trevor Mallard, um, those  
591 weren't appropriate to take down, because they were, they weren't like the  
592 offensive tweet, sorry, offensive Facebook comment like the Rangitata candidate,  
593 so that was interesting, cause I was on the phone to Steve as that story was  
594 breaking, and he didn't know how to delete his Facebook comment. Um,

595

596 27:41 MATTHEW: Yup, um, yeah, that's cool. Did you have someone dedicated to  
597 monitoring what other parties were doing on social media, and also your  
598 candidates, to a) try and catch those comments, like if someone did something  
599 silly, one of our own candidates, before it became a story, or try and trip the  
600 other side up?

601

602 28:06 ANDREW: Um, no, in all honesty, we had, I mean I would look at, I had a  
603 list on Facebook, all the candidates Facebook pages, and similar on twitter, um,  
604 but I certainly, I never did any opposition research, if something would've come  
605 up, because of time restraints...

606

607 28:31 MATTHEW: There's not a lot to be gained?

608

609 28:31 ANDREW: There's not necessarily a lot to be gained, and I don't, and  
610 people make mistakes on social media, and I'm like, at the same time like I  
611 understand people make mistakes on social media, why should we necessarily,  
612 and particularly stupid stuff, like people get all prissy about, like typos and stuff  
613 like that. And its like there's no point in like pointing out that someone, you know  
614 an MP or a candidate's made a typo, when you know we all do it. And its...it  
615 doesn't matter. You know obviously if someone's going to say something rude  
616 and offensive, you know we'd do something with that, but um, I would always, I

617 would never hold the other side to more account on like making mistakes on  
618 social media, than I would hold my own, candidates and MPs to. If that make  
619 sense. Obviously I am going to hold the other side to account, but I am going to  
620 apply a similar standard of what's...what's understandably a mistake and what  
621 we can make hay out of.

622

623 29:26 MATTHEW: Yeah, um, do you believe that the vision you had for the  
624 twitter campaign at the start is what you delivered, or was it better, or not as  
625 good, or a bit of both?

626

627 29:39 ANDREW: I think we learnt as we went along with twitter, um because, we  
628 didn't, cause we didn't have resourcing that we would have liked, just because  
629 that wasn't possible, um, yeah, I think we did some stuff really well, like the  
630 debates, a definite high point, like a definite highpoint of our campaign on twitter,  
631 in particular, and I think I would have loved to be more responsive to people  
632 than we were, um, and capturing those other people who had policy questions  
633 that we weren't able to answer, that sort of thing, but that just comes down to  
634 resourcing, so I think yeah, there are some things we could have done better, and  
635 I think there's some things that we did really well.

636

637 30:23 MATTHEW: There wasn't anything you think you did badly? It was more a  
638 cause of we did it ok, but it could have been better?

639

640 30:31 ANDREW: I can't think of anything, now any way, that I was like, if you had  
641 asked me in October I might have been able to say something, but um there was  
642 nothing where imp like we did poorly on that, um, oh, but its just a twitter  
643 mistake, like its the time I accidently tweeted hash tag labour 2041

644

645 30:48 MATTHEW: Yup

646

647 30:48 ANDREW: Which I'm sure you'll remember.

648

649 30:49 MATTHEW: Yup.

650

651 30:50 ANDREW: Um, and that was just done on my phone, showed it to someone  
652 else to check, no one noticed, and

653

654 30:59 MATTHEW: Um is there anything that you...that we haven't covered that  
655 you think is relevant, or...

656

657 31:06 ANDREW: What's the question of your thesis?

658

659 31:08 MATTHEW: So I am basically looking at how political parties used twitter,  
660 and how it fitted into that wider campaign. Both party and candidate accounts.

661

662 31:21 ANDREW: Um,

663

664 31:24 MATTHEW: and once I go through and read the transcript, I might come  
665 back with some written questions.

666

667 31:27 ANDREW: Yup, cool. Um. I think that twitter is really important in politics,  
668 but I think that its, it is primarily about engaged people in politics. So in terms of  
669 winning votes, I'm still unsure of the value of it, I'm definitely sure of the value of  
670 it, in getting in front of the opinion leaders and journalists, and stuff like that.

671 There is infinite value in that, um, and having the first mover advantage to frame  
672 stories, and things like that, is really strong on twitter, um but, the ability to  
673 reach every day New Zealanders, is, I think really low.

674

675 32:09 MATTHEW: So it is more of a strategic tool than a tactical tool?

676

677 32:12 ANDREW: Yeah,

678

679 32:14 MATTHEW: Your trying to, as you say, frame issues and.

680

681 32:19 ANDREW: And respond to things as they happen, and um, get our message  
682 out there. Its another tool for communicating with ordinarily New Zealanders  
683 too, there's a hell of a lot of ordinarily New Zealanders on twitter, but primarily  
684 its most useful to getting through to secondary networks of people who are  
685 engaged with twitter. So whether that's just journalists secondary network is all  
686 their readers, or viewers, or a blog readers from a blogger, or just someone who  
687 happens to be on twitter because they like the footy, and they like to tweet about  
688 the footy, cause sports is one of the biggest demographics of twitter users. Um,

689  
690 32:51 MATTHEW: So is that why you did the get...got peripherally involved in the  
691 get the ABs to Samoa, there was a couple of tweets about that?

692  
693 33:00 ANDREW: Um, yes, there was. I wasn't involved with that.

694  
695 33:03 MATTHEW: Ok. Sweet, thank you very much for you time.

696  
697 33:08 ANDREW: No worries, thank you.

698 ENDS

1 *Callum Valentine, Internet Party, 1 July 2015, Molesworth Street*

2 (with reference to Mana as well)

3

4 0:01 MATTHEW: Cool, um, thank you for agreeing to take part in this research  
5 project, if you have any questions, or anything you feel that we...the is relevant  
6 but we don't cover, shout out at any point. Um, to start out could you state your  
7 name, the organisation you were involved with during the election campaign, so  
8 between 1 June and 19...20 September, your role within that organisation, and if  
9 it was a paid position, volunteer, or contract position

10

11 0:27 CALLUM: Yup, Callum Valentine, involved with the Internet Party, um, my  
12 job title was, ah digital engagement manager, ah, and it was a paid position.

13

14 0:39 MATTHEW: Cool, and you were also a candidate as well, weren't you?

15

16 0:42 CALLUM: Yes, as of our um candidate process I put my hand up to become a  
17 candidate, and ah, was selected for central wellington.

18

19 0:52 MATTHEW: But you were already involved in the party before that  
20 happened?

21

22 0:55 CALLUM: Yes.

23

24 0:55 MATTHEW: Ok, cool. Can you just give us a bit of background about how  
25 you ended up in that position? Um, kind of both of the position that you held, as I  
26 think you were the only person that I have spoken to so far that does.have...

27

28 1:07 CALLUM: I would imagine so.

29

30 1:07 MATTHEW: Have that kind of dual role. Um. Which, is kind  
31 of...emblematic...emblematic? Of the Internet party, that you did quite different

32 set up to other parties.

33

34 1:19 CALLUM: Yeah, I think it speaks to the start up sort of nature of the party, to  
35 a certain extent. Um, so I got involved through um, my former boss, Jim Tucker,  
36 who was a policy writer for the Internet Party. He used to manage the journalism  
37 program I was employed on, at um, Whitireia, and he gave me a call and said they  
38 were looking for someone who could manage the social media launch, and  
39 subsequent election campaign, and also recognise that it was a political area I  
40 was really interested in, um sort of internet governance and rights being one of  
41 the core things about the internet party.

42

43 2:03 MATTHEW: And how did you get into social media, kind of um,

44

45 2:08 CALLUM: Social media generally, so I undertook journalism training in 2011,  
46 through Whitireia, after finishing my undergrad degree, and was kind of offered  
47 three days a week developing their multi media program after doing that. Ah, so I  
48 taught classes on how journalists are using social media these days, um, what  
49 kind of...started to develop some work on professional ethics through social  
50 media, how that plays out in the modern media scape, that sort of stuff, and also  
51 taught a web editing elective on that program.

52

53 2:47 MATTHEW: Um, so, as we discussed before this recording started, um, I am  
54 kind of looking at...because Mana had that quite small footprint on twitter, if we  
55 can kind of cover that area as well, as we are going through. Um, and, so can you  
56 give us a kind of overview of the campaign leadership team structure, and just  
57 how the organisation was fitted together. Cause you obviously had the internet  
58 party, Internet Mana, and the Mana party, that kind of all co-existed at the same  
59 time, doing different parts of the election campaign. Which is what I kind of  
60 really want to get my head around how it was set up. =

61

62 3:29 CALLUM: We had very sort of distinct phases, the Internet party launched  
63 as an entirely independent body. You know, we managed to get the 500 people  
64 on day one through our ap, and sort of the publicity that came along with it.

65 Hindered or helped by the whole Brook Sabin, Hitler attack piece that he had the  
66 night before the launch. Um, so that was sort of phase one of the party, and  
67 ah...Graeme Edgeler is the better person to ask about this, but the sort of  
68 legalities were that Internet Mana existed again as a separate...sort of umbrella  
69 party, so we had to make sure that we had members for that organisation. So we  
70 got a certain number of our members to set up and sign for that. So that was sort  
71 of established as an entity...I believe how it worked is that Internet Mana  
72 submitted a list, the Internet party and Mana didn't submitted a list.

73

74 4:41 MATTHEW: You just had your individual electorate candidates?

75

76 4:42 CALLUM: Yeah, but in terms of sort of how the relationship worked, it was a  
77 matter of us, as teams, being quite closely in touch with our opposite numbers, so  
78 I got to know the two people who were doing the most social media on the Mana  
79 side, um, and you know we worked together mostly on Facebook, because that is  
80 where Mana are much stronger, and you know, I was let into their page as an  
81 editor, and had a bit of...not oversight, but you know...I could see all the...

82

83 5:21 MATTHEW: Mentoring kind of?

84

85 5:22 CALLUM: Analytics and stats mainly, you know we...the internet party had  
86 um one full time, and one part time, data analyst, so they were um allowed onto  
87 the Mana Facebook page to more closely monitor how we were doing with the  
88 kind of Mana voting base.

89

90 5:43 MATTHEW: Yup

91

92 5:44 CALLUM: And to integrate that into our general sort of door knocking  
93 campaigns. You know, we were using mesh blocks to try and identify areas that it  
94 would be good to go and door knock in. you know the relationship actually  
95 worked a lot better than it would look like from the outside. It was a situation  
96 where we had a lot of expertise, and we had a very professional, almost  
97 corporate team, and Mana had all the stuff that we didn't. Which was volunteers

98 on the ground, local knowledge in the areas that they were strongest, and they  
99 were able to provide a lot of the willing volunteers. So, in terms of more  
100 structure than that. I think there was a monthly sort of all...the executive  
101 committee meeting, um so Hone and Kim and Laila and Vikram, and Mikey our  
102 campaign director, would all be there. Um as well as Annette Sykes would  
103 generally come along, John Minto, sort of the Auckland based members of the  
104 Mana leadership team.

105

106 7:01 MATTHEW: Um, and so you reported to the campaign manager for Internet  
107 Party...

108

109 7:07 CALLUM: Yup.

110

111 7:07 MATTHEW: Who reported to the CE, or General Manager, or whatever the  
112 title was?

113

114 7:12 CALLUM: Yeah, I think Vikram was Chief Executive. Something like that.

115

116 7:14 MATTHEW: Yeah, um, every party seems to name the same position ever so  
117 slightly differently. Um, so were you part of that leadership team that meet every  
118 month? Or were you kind of on the outskirts.

119

120 7:27 CALLUM: I went to most meetings.

121

122 7:30 MATTHEW: Um, cool...and you obviously treated each part, each kind of  
123 different platform, because you were on Facebook, and Twitter, and did you  
124 have...you had an Instagram account I vaguely remember.

125

126 7:43 CALLUM: Yeah, we had Instagram, Instagram was

127

128 7:45 MATTHEW: Mainly from you following me

129

130 7:45 CALLUM: Instagram was actually run by our overall brand manager, who  
131 was much more sort of in the Instagram world than I am.

132

133 7:57 MATTHEW: And Instagram is pretty much imagery driven.

134

135 8:02 CALLUM: Yup

136

137 8:02 MATTHEW: Um, so, when did you move into campaign mode, social media  
138 wise? Like when did you shift from that kind of actually just getting the party  
139 going and getting a presence going online, to actually kind of actively  
140 campaigning? This question is more framed around longer-term parties and the  
141 three-year campaign, so it maybe doesn't quite apply...

142

143 8:23 CALLUM: I think from our perspective we were always pretty much in  
144 campaign mode, I mean we launched on the 27th of march um and it was pretty  
145 much a straight line to the election from there for us. But I guess, what you could  
146 demarcate as being a real campaign launch, um was switching over to the  
147 Internet Mana brand, and there was a lot of conversations about well how do we  
148 communicate this quite insider thing that we are doing, and how do we not  
149 confuse voters.

150

151 8:55 MATTHEW: So do you remember, roughly, when you shifted over to the  
152 Internet Mana branding?

153

154 8:58 CALLUM: Um, I couldn't recall, but it will all be in the public record. So if you  
155 look through our Facebook page, you will be able to see the date at which we  
156 changed our branding to the black Internet Mana branding. Um, but it would  
157 have been well before the launch event, with Pam Corkery's outburst...

158

159 9:21 MATTHEW: Yeah, but it was after you did your candidate idol thing...

160

161 9:27 CALLUM: Yes, it was after that. So that was branded as Internet Party,  
162 because it was to determine the Internet party candidates.

163

164 9:35 MATTHEW: Who would obviously help influence...um so what was the  
165 overall direction of the campaign? Who were you kind of...so not just looking at  
166 social media, but the campaign as a whole. Who were you targeting as your key  
167 demographics?

168

169 9:50 CALLUM: Um, young people between sort of 18 and 34, was our big push,  
170 we were I think, the vision changed a lot being internet Mana, than it was just the  
171 internet party. I think a lot of people saw the Internet party as much more  
172 centrists, and able to go after blue green voters a lot more. But more specifically  
173 voters, tech savvy voters who didn't agree with particular aspects with how  
174 National, and the right more generally, perhaps excepting certain parts of Act,  
175 have dealt with internet governance.

176

177 10:34 MATTHEW: Um, so that, and that, you used that same sort of demographic  
178 for your social media campaign? Because obviously they kind of fit into your  
179 generic social media use?

180

181 10:48 CALLUM: Yeah. Definitely, all our kind of paid boosting and advertising  
182 was largely aimed at that audience. We had um; certain subsets of the final  
183 Internet Mana campaign were shifted slightly differently. So um, we had our  
184 school lunches campaign, which was more targeted at what we could identify as  
185 low decile parents, and you know certain aspects of the more sort of social  
186 justice orientated policies that Mana brought in were aimed a little bit differently,  
187 um and...

188

189 11:22 MATTHEW: But a lot of those were still aimed at that kind of age group,  
190 just maybe not the tech savvy section of that age group?

191

192 11:26 CALLUM: Yeah, mainly aimed around that age group.

193

194 11:29 MATTHEW: Um, so did...you guys kind of looked after the online bit of the  
195 campaign, like the targeting and stuff, whereas Mana, or the people coming from  
196 Mana were more focused on on the ground...getting out door knocking, and doing  
197 what they have done traditionally.

198

199 11:45 CALLUM: I think to a large extent that is true. Its...you know we had fewer  
200 volunteers, we had um, our expertise, and the money we were able to provide,  
201 was much more suited to digital stuff, um so we tried to combine forces as much  
202 as possible, I think that's where the campaign could have been better. Is actually  
203 managing the processes and flows of information from us to volunteers.

204

205 12:21 MATTHEW: Um, do you think if you were to do it all again, from scratch,  
206 you would take more of an Alliance approach, where it is that single brand, as  
207 opposed to being the three different parties that exist at once? Which even I can't  
208 fully get my head around the whole, how it actually...

209

210 12:41 CALLUM: I think that that's one of the biggest barriers that we actually had  
211 on election day, was that the internet party was a new brand, let alone the new  
212 brand we had since introduced, and tried to communicate to the public. So I  
213 think that was definitely one of our bigger issues when it came to winning  
214 peoples confidence in the ballot box. You know, as well as you know that well  
215 known fact that people do get much more conservative when it comes to actually  
216 being on their own and looking at a voting form.

217

218 13:13 MATTHEW: Um, was the target for your twitter campaign different to the  
219 target for your...for like Facebook and things like that. Because they obviously  
220 have different demographics online.

221

222 13:24 CALLUM: Yeah, I think...and it kind of speaks to small war that Patrick  
223 Gower started the other day, with the Twitterarti, it's kind of, it is that audience  
224 that we were going for to a certain extent...

225

226 13:42 MATTHEW: So those opinion leaders who are on there.

227

228 13:45 CALLUM: Well our, yeah, our tweets um, designed to raise awareness and  
229 be possibly a little bit more insider than Facebook was.

230

231 13:58 MATTHEW: To get people talking about it off twitter, to friends, family,  
232 people on Facebook?

233

234 14:04 CALLUM: Yeah.

235

236 14:05 MATTHEW: Um, did you use...so most existing political parties who are in  
237 parliament get um partial parliamentary funding for their databases, and it is  
238 known that most political parties have that, I assume the internet party and  
239 internet Mana had a similar thing that you created from scratch, obviously  
240 without the parliamentary funding, was that used to target people for social  
241 media, and also did you use what you on social media to feeding back into that  
242 database?

243

244 14:39 CALLUM: We didn't have a sort of unified, well established database, and I  
245 think, looking back, one of the things that would have helped immensely with  
246 our volunteer drives, and all sorts of things. So we had, I mean we took a very  
247 nimble approach, I think, and a lot of the surrounding tech for the app um, gave  
248 us our members database, which I think was around 2,000, by the time of sort of  
249 about halfway through the campaign, and sort of slowly growing throughout that.  
250 But I think what we needed was a second tier system which actually identified  
251 allies and volunteers, that weren't willing to be full members, um.

252

253 15:26 MATTHEW: Or people who want to find out what you are doing?

254

255 15:29 CALLUM: Yeah, so I mean I know a lot of political parties use Nation  
256 Builder which is a...in some parts annoyingly basic, or underdeveloped tool, but it  
257 is really geared for purpose there. And that was one of Liala's big pushes, to  
258 establish and email data base, so the petitions we started to do at one point,

259 there was a marijuana one, there was one about reversing the MMP rules that  
260 would allow us to ever get into parliament. Was another one that was at the  
261 time pretty good strategy, but was met with largely confused reaction? But you  
262 know, we were able to build a bigger email list from that. But sort of you know,  
263 Mana didn't have any of those sorts of systems really, apart from their members.

264

265 16:23 MATTHEW: And that goes back to the theme that keeps coming up from  
266 pretty much everybody, that resourcing is an issue in politics in NZ. So Mana just  
267 never had the resources, be it human or money, to build that sort of database.

268

269 16:37 CALLUM: Yeah, and you have the reverse case with the internet party,  
270 where we are, not necessarily staff rich, I mean we had a much bigger team than  
271 a comparable size political parties, in terms of any polling, but um, we were very  
272 time poor, and everything was done in a big rush. From my point of view.

273

274 17:00 MATTHEW: Yeah, and were also, those staff, like yourself, your first time  
275 doing...running a political...a high profile political campaign? So you don't have  
276 that institutional knowledge that even Mana might have, from lessons learned.

277

278 17:16 CALLUM: Yeah, just about every body was, and um, I think that was, sort of  
279 the cause of some conflict within the party. So when Laila came in ah, looking for  
280 particular areas of expertise that weren't actually filled, and there were a few  
281 clashes there, but also quite a few opportunities. So I mean these were a really  
282 disparate group of people. I mean our campaign director, has run music labels, in  
283 the past and still does actually, but has also organised TedX Auckland, he does  
284 every year, and you know a wide range of events. He has been quite involved in  
285 Greenpeace, and those activism campaigns. Ah, and you know our brand manager,  
286 Andy used to run, started up Remix magazine, and has a lot of experience with  
287 connecting with younger people, and um, brought in contacts from all over the  
288 place. Um, so, I think it was a case of there not being a really firm political hand  
289 on the rudder for the first while, um, but it was also an opportunity.

290

291 18:33 MATTHEW: Yup, um, so we have kind of covered it, the individual  
292 platforms were seen as different ways to get different messages out to different  
293 audiences, to target that...

294

295 18:47 CALLUM: Yeah

296

297 18:47 MATTHEW: Um, would you describe your overall social media campaign  
298 as um, more engagement based or broadcast based, or a combination there of. I  
299 really think it was a mix of the two. Um, we were starting from complete scratch,  
300 so there was a lot of a broadcast element; of you know we're here. Particularly  
301 on the road show. We did a lot of broadcast advertising to let people know of  
302 those events. And you know we would attribute social media hugely to the fact  
303 that we were able to pack out so many halls, as well as the you know media  
304 coverage good or bad, but there was also targeted messaging. I mean we were  
305 looking to secure the vote of those who were worried about um govt overreach  
306 when it comes to spying and the five eyes alliance, um, we were looking to be a  
307 fresh voice on those issues. I mean you have the greens in parliament who have  
308 spoken out quite strongly about...but we were looking to target the people who  
309 might agree with the greens on those issues, but not on other issues nescerrily.

310

311 20:08 MATTHEW: Um, so your aim on twitter was to try and engage with people  
312 as well as actually answering questions, as well as getting the message out there.

313

314 20:24 CALLUM: Yeah, yeah, I think, um, I would say that, as well as to promote  
315 particular events and in person stuff. Um, the candidate event, I mean that, both  
316 that candidate event, and the moment of truth were live streamed. So twitter was  
317 a really good one for that. And we used, I think for moment of truth we used  
318 thunderclap to get that live stream link on everyone's feed.

319

320 20:53 MATTHEW: Um, and, you did quite a lot of retweeting of people's um, dirty  
321 politics selfies that you started. But I think, I haven't done the analysis based on  
322 this, but I think from memory you probably retweeted more random followers  
323 tweets than any other party. Because most of their retweets were news, or

324 candidate stuff. Where as you did a lot of retweeting of Joe Blow out there.

325

326 21:20 CALLUM: Yeah, and that was a concerted effort, and it was because we  
327 were pretty much constantly combating the Internet party equals Kim Dotcom  
328 narrative. So you know, we were looking to illustrate that "hey there are a lot of  
329 people out there who identify with the issues that we are talking about" and this  
330 is who they are and what they think. Um, was a big part of twitter stuff? Um, you  
331 know, once we had candidates in place they were other voices to be identified  
332 with the Internet Party, as well as just being Kim Dotcom. You know, we saw, and  
333 were combating a very strong, and it turns out persuasive, argument, from the  
334 Nat's that Internet Party equals Kim Dotcom. and we didn't see that argued from  
335 any other parties. So when, during the leadership debates, when it was Cunliffe  
336 vs. Key, it was sort of, I think Key came up with the premise the Kim Dotcom  
337 party, and that was never disputed. That was an important thing to factor into  
338 our campaign.

339

340 22:37 MATTHEW: Yup, um, and so you obviously made a planned, conscious  
341 decision to engage with people. Unlike other parties that are just pretty much  
342 broadcasting from their accounts.

343

344 22:49 CALLUM: Yeah.

345

346 22:49 MATTHEW: Um, what was the measure of success, um, for the twitter  
347 campaign, both overall and on a tweet-by-tweet basis. Like what made you go,  
348 this type of tweet is a...really good and successful.

349 23:02 CALLUM: I think numbers, um, number of retweets, number of  
350 engagements, or sort of my own, because I was so immersed in this stuff, I think  
351 it was my own sense of whether we have generated discussion that was  
352 meaningful. More thinking about Facebook here, the sort of whether we were  
353 changing perception through the comments. So you would have a thread emerge,  
354 I mean there were themes along the way, very early on we attached a lot of the  
355 sort of slightly nutty conspiracy theorists who coalesce around any new political  
356 entity, because they don't know yet whether or not they have an Agenda 21

357 policy or anything like that. So you know, sort of measuring those people start to  
358 drop off, and others start to emerge. And sort of the changing cultural shift. And  
359 the increased sort of bi-cultural diversity that came with the Mana alliance.

360

361 24:07 MATTHEW: Can you give me an overview of the process in planning a  
362 typical tweet.

363

364 24:10 CALLUM: Ah, me waking up at 7 in the morning reading the news and  
365 figuring out what we should tweet...basically, it was very much, I mean, you know  
366 there was input from other people, and there was direction, I mean I worked  
367 quite closely with Kim on particular things. As well as our campaign director. But  
368 it was largely I, self-managing, you know, looking at the worldwide news cycle.  
369 So what's mashable posting about security issues, or what's happening over here,  
370 and what's interesting content that can leverage, and create a lens for our  
371 supporters to look through?

372

373 24:53 MATTHEW: So there was a lot of trust place in you, basically you know  
374 what you are doing?

375

376 24:59 CALLUM: Yeah, hugely.

377

378 24:59 MATTHEW: Yeah, um, and that stayed the same, pretty much right from  
379 day one? Or was there kind of that process of building up trust as you got going?

380

381 25:10 CALLUM: There was, you know coming into an organisation fresh, never  
382 having done anything like this before, I think there was a learning curve. And I  
383 was probably given more direction early on, but it only took a few weeks to have  
384 won the trust of key members of the party, in terms of what I was doing, and that  
385 I could mange my own...um...output and react when necessary to fix anything.

386

387 25:35 MATTHEW: Was liala's account run by, mainly by herself, or by staffers?  
388 Or a bit of both?

389

390 25:40 CALLUM: She. She tweeted a lot herself. We looked after a lot of the initial  
391 following, building up her account. Because she did have one. Ah, we looked after  
392 a lot of making sure she was following the key twitters players, that she was less  
393 aware of before she started. Um, but I would manage the sort of retweets to her  
394 account, quite often, I mean I had her on tweet deck, and just regularly  
395 amplaphying anything we needed. So I mean we had the 3 audiences, we had  
396 Kim's audience which is global and huge, we had the Internet party audience  
397 which is much more niche and then liala's audience, which is again slightly  
398 different to...more alliance really.

399

400 26:30 MATTHEW: Um, and so was there a similar approach with the candidate  
401 accounts, that you...it was a bit of both, a combination of them running it mainly,  
402 but some help from.

403

404 26:41 CALLUM: Yeah, I had access, but I didn't have them permanently logged in  
405 or anything, so basically with that, it was self-managing. We had a staffer who  
406 was sort of nominally in charge of overseeing; you know are they posting  
407 appropriate content, that sort of stuff. And I had overall management of that.

408

409 27:04 MATTHEW: And a case of are they posting content full stop?

410

411 27:06 CALLUM: It was more; don't interfere unless you need to take something  
412 down.

413

414 27:12 MATTHEW: And pretty much all of the candidates had a...for the Internet  
415 party, had a twitter account?

416

417 27:17 CALLUM: Yes, yeah, all of them.

418

419 27:18 MATTHEW: Um, and what sort of train and support did you give? Or was  
420 their skill in using it one of the things that was involved in picking them as well?

421

422 27:25 CALLUM: Ah, we did run a train day, it was kind of after the candidates had  
423 been selected, and before they were finally signed off, we all had a day at Kim's  
424 and went through a lot of things. You know, he gave us an overview on his  
425 personal history, on how he came to fund the Internet party; I talked every one  
426 through social media and how it was going to work, and what was expected of  
427 them through that. And from then on we had a private Facebook group to discuss  
428 issue, or highlight anything that they should be retweeting that was particularly  
429 import. That sort of thing.

430

431 28:08 MATTHEW: Um, so you had someone dedicated to monitoring your own  
432 candidates, and also were they doing a bit of looking at what other people's  
433 candidates were up to online?

434

435 28:18 CALLUM: Yeah, we had less, I think we had less direct monitoring of um,  
436 other candidates. It was more a case of me knowing the general field, knowing  
437 what was up to, spending my day on twitter, so picking up everything, and  
438 passing that on as appropriate.

439

440 28:36 MATTHEW: Um, how did deal with things when they went wrong? So, you  
441 know, I guess there is the Clark Kent tweet from Kim Dotcom, and I would also  
442 like to touch on how you deal with that cause, deal with the Kim Dotcom twitter  
443 presence in general, because you were the only party where there was a high  
444 profile person who wasn't a candidate, but obviously involved in the party, doing  
445 stuff on twitter. So how did you manage that aspect? Because obviously there is  
446 all sorts of internal party politics about that because he is the key figure.

447

448 29:17 CALLUM: Kim is really important to any success that we had, but also our  
449 biggest kryptonite in a lot of ways, I mean you know the superman tweet  
450 (motorbike drives past can't hear) kryptonite, to continue the superman  
451 metaphor, was kind of a big risk that we had to manage in the best way that we  
452 could. So I think you know it's a case of, and because of the immediacy of twitter,  
453 and Kim's personality, he will just do stuff. It is reactionary by necessity. I think

454 that was probably the worst incident.

455

456 29:56 MATTHEW: Yeah, cause his tweet after he took it down also wasn't the  
457 greatest, was it?

458

459 30:04 CALLUM: Yeah, it was probably the worst, semi faux apology I've ever seen.  
460 Yeah, so managing that was a huge challenge we had to deal with.

461

462 30:16 MATTHEW: But I can't remember any of your other candidates having any  
463 real brain farts.

464

465 30:19 CALLUM: No, there wasn't anything.

466

467 30:21 MATTHEW: The only other one was the

468

469 30:22 both together: Guernica

470

471 30:22 CALLUM: Thing. Yeah. And, ah that was entirely I really, um, and I think  
472 like a lot of things with the Internet party, just...it was the pile on effect. Had that  
473 been an isolated thing, without the whole, owns Mein Kampf...thing...it would  
474 have been a bit different. Um,

475

476 30:47 MATTHEW: And is that also maybe come back to that lack of political  
477 campaign knowledge, a little bit?

478

479 30:53 CALLUM: Yeah, I think it does a little bit, but I also think that that really  
480 speaks to twitter vs. Facebook. Because what I don't know if anyone picked is  
481 that I had posted that image twice, on the Facebook events for the party party,  
482 and you know, there was a few likes, a few comments, it didn't get ANY kind of  
483 historical reaction what so ever. So when I actually tweeted it, it was the best  
484 illustration of the sort of...liberal twitter sphere, much more sort of intelligency  
485 kind of focus. Who are like, "wait, oh, he is trashing Picasso's vision of war" or  
486 whatever. And you know that's just an image I have always liked and thought

487 was kind of...speaks a lot to the Friday, Saturday night devastation that happens  
488 in rave clubs. But you know, apparently gigantically offensive image, and yeah, I  
489 think it really does speak to a lack of, or a certain political naivety, on our team's  
490 part.

491

492 32:11 MATTHEW: Um, do you believe the vision you had for the twitter  
493 campaign at the start was fulfilled at the end.

494

495 32:18 CALLUM: I don't think we really knew what to expect, if I'm honest. I mean  
496 we wrote all sorts of strategy documents, but like I suspect many people working  
497 day to day in a field like that, you tend not to refer back to the strategy when  
498 you're making decisions, you just do what is in front of you and seems, from the  
499 sort of social cues you are getting from the team around you, that's the way you  
500 develop things. So hard to say I think.

501

502 32:45 MATTHEW: Fair enough. Um, is there anything that we haven't covered  
503 that you think is relevant.

504

505 32:52 CALLUM: No, I think that pretty much does it.

506

507 32:55 MATTHEW: I may come back with some written questions, once I go  
508 through and try and tease out some stuff.

509

510 32:58 CALLUM: Yeah, that's fine, the only other thing I would mention, and it is  
511 more Facebook than twitter, so it may be less relevant to your research, but  
512 something that really surprised me is peoples adverse reaction to seeing ads. So  
513 we would advertise the road show events regionally, and I mean it would come  
514 up as a clearly sponsored post, but we got a lot of blow back, particularly from  
515 the small towns, where it was quite clear people didn't know how that worked,  
516 or why they were getting ads, or something. So that kind of surprised me. But  
517 yeah.

518

519 33:36 MATTHEW: Cool, thank you for your time.

520

521 33:38 CALLUM: Yeah, no problem.

522 ENDS



### **Appendix III Coding Parameters**

**Party Website:** Any domain belonging to the party to which the account or candidate belonged.

**Media Website:** Any news websiteA link was defined as a media website on a number of possible grounds. These included membership of the press gallery,

**YouTube/Vimeo:** Anylink to a website intended to be a stand along host of video content.

**Facebook:** A direct link to content posted on a Facebook account of any kind.

**Other Social Media:** Any social media platform (not including Facebook or Twitter). A non-exhaustive includes Instagram, Google Plus, LinkedIn, Vine, and Foursquare.

**Twitter:** A link to other content on Twitter, including a direct link to a tweet (as opposed to a retweet), to a users profile, or a Twitter list.

**Photo:** Any photo that had no text or graphic overlay added in Photoshop (excluded watermarks added by photographers). This Included screen grabs of online content, including emailed press statements, or deleted tweets.

**Party graphic:** Any constructed image containing branding of the party the account was associated with (imitations of other party's graphics were included).

**Non-Party graphic:** Any constructed image that did not fall within Party Graphic. This included cartoons, third party graphics produced by lobby groups.

Blogs: Websites that were updated with periodic content that did not fit within the media category. A non-exhaustive list includes Whale Oil, Kiwi Blog, The Standard, The Daily Blog, Gareth Morgan's website, and The Intercept.

Other: all links that did not fit within any of the other categories.

## Appendix IV Party Twitter Account Totals

	National	Labour	Māori Party	United Future	ACT	Greens	NZF	Internet Party
New tweets	265	502	52	131	303	1022	82	1005
Reply tweets	3	83	30	51	141	269	6	199
Retweeted tweets	222	150	153	111	115	1339	1	1076
Total tweets	490	735	235	293	559	2630	89	2280
Retweets gained	1998	4944	97	304	555	11467	39	10594
Average retweets gained	7.46	8.45	1.18	1.67	1.25	8.88	0.44	8.80
Favourites gained	1806	4846	152	76	386	10876	23	9843
Average favourites gained	6.74	8.28	1.85	0.42	0.87	8.42	0.26	8.18
Contains link	408	450	99	184	320	1680	85	1563
Total links	524	500	102	190	328	1836	85	1613
Party website	180	228	42	47	211	329	85	127
Media website	7	9	13	28	30	288	0	237
Youtube/Vimeo	9	25	1	27	10	48	0	79
Facebook	3	3	3	8	6	56	0	42
Twitter	0	7	3	4	0	15	0	9
Other social media	0	0	0	2	1	5	0	2
Photo	169	116	26	44	26	755	0	82
Party graphic	133	104	3	4	20	134	0	87
Other graphic	3	1	2	6	0	41	0	9
Blog	0	1	4	2	13	12	0	83
Other	20	6	5	18	11	153	0	106

## Appendix V Party Leader Twitter Account Totals

	John Key	David Cunliffe	Te Ururoa Flavell	Peter Dunne	Jamie Whyte	Russel Norman	Metiria Turei	Winston Peters	Colin Craig	Hone Harawera	Laila Harré
New tweets	288	419	247	373	85	448	415	119	12	15	445
Reply tweets	2	23	215	571	0	297	513	56	0	0	567
Retweeted tweets	61	31	174	233	6	1150	1302	17	0	0	722
Total tweets	351	473	636	1177	91	1895	2230	192	12	15	1734
Retweets gained	3725	3607	581	684	336	6345	2912	1682	13	25	6217
Average retweets gained	12.84	8.16	1.26	0.72	3.95	8.52	3.14	9.61	1.08	1.67	6.14
Favourites gained	6481	6906	1510	816	285	7090	4858	2231	27	25	7785
Average favourites gained	22.35	15.62	3.27	0.86	3.35	9.52	5.23	12.75	2.25	1.67	7.69
Contains link	292	297	208	305	74	1028	816	58	11	15	630
Total links	351	337	211	327	74	1127	867	59	11	15	669
Party website	64	75	16	42	62	121	48	8	0	15	51
Media website	6	6	28	95	6	253	102	15	0	0	169
Youtube/Vimeo	11	14	8	35	2	22	14	1	0	0	48
Facebook	1	4	5	6	2	22	310	4	11	0	24
Twitter	1	1	2	16	0	6	6	0	0	0	1
Other social media	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
Photo	189	175	108	77	0	460	251	29	0	0	171
Party graphic	74	50	14	3	0	46	20	0	0	0	44
Other graphic	0	1	8	4	0	66	38	0	0	0	36
Blog	0	3	11	5	1	26	12	0	0	0	35
Other	5	8	11	43	1	105	65	2	0	0	88

## Appendix VI Candidate Twitter Account Totals by Party

	National	Labour	Māori Party	United Future	ACT	Greens	NZF	Conservatives	Internet Party	Mana
# of candidates on twitter <sup>51</sup>	56	67	11	5	14	43	9	4	13	4
New tweets	4409	7035	758	490	635	6412	568	1148	3926	1148
Reply tweets	2240	7644	972	489	475	7453	389	347	3100	347
Retweeted tweets	2826	6311	1362	992	302	12538	144	662	4885	662
Total tweets	9475	20990	3092	1971	1412	26403	1101	2157	11911	2157
Retweets gained	5425	17040	2232	496	275	19674	233	49	5056	147
Average retweets gained	0.82	1.16	1.29	0.51	0.25	1.42	0.24	0.03	1.04	0.32
Favourites gained	10297	29288	3572	408	403	31535	399	140	10380	268
Average favourites gained	1.55	2.00	2.06	0.42	0.36	2.27	0.42	0.07	1.48	0.59
Contains link	4980	6721	851	757	576	11302	514	1378	5056	305
Total links	5383	7106	890	798	582	12448	520	1481	5370	306
Party website	406	658	35	91	91	1099	20	3	309	1
Media website	579	1368	214	168	58	2427	195	285	1003	3
Youtube/Vimeo	68	187	42	74	11	240	20	19	354	3
Facebook	746	850	55	49	197	605	158	687	219	230
Twitter	304	92	5	11	1	133	5	7	49	2
Other social media	3	17	0	4	0	44	0	1	18	0
Photo	2267	2692	357	202	147	4073	68	154	1529	34
Party graphic	317	297	34	19	9	504	0	1	299	23
Other graphic	176	254	26	45	25	968	12	67	529	6
Blog	33	151	28	38	17	448	12	28	206	0
Other	484	540	94	97	26	1907	30	229	855	4

<sup>51</sup> Excluding Party Leaders

## Appendix VII Individual Candidate Twitter Account Totals

### National

	Boris Sokratov	Lewis Holden	Paul Foster- Bell	Nikki Kaye	Simon O'Connor	Christopher Bishop	Jo Goodhew	John Key	Jamie-Lee Ross	Steven Joyce
New tweets	583	281	171	220	189	120	182	288	169	224
Reply tweets	364	301	190	140	182	164	20	2	95	68
Retweeted tweets	828	303	91	59	59	128	179	61	81	14
Total tweets	1775	885	452	419	430	412	381	351	345	306
Retweets gained	218	137	110	571	163	167	283	3725	216	925
Average retweets gained	0.23	0.24	0.30	1.59	0.44	0.59	1.40	12.84	0.82	3.17
Favourites gained	568	441	386	1095	478	616	156	6481	538	926
Average favourites gained	0.60	0.76	1.07	3.04	1.29	2.17	0.77	22.35	2.04	3.17
Contains link	662	411	177	253	192	116	261	292	185	177
Total links	719	462	185	257	204	124	303	351	203	183
Party website	9	70	7	3	18	5	49	64	26	10
Media website	198	77	8	4	6	4	26	6	28	10
Youtube/Vimeo	26	10	2	1	1	0	3	11	3	1
Facebook	29	5	1	158	1	2	4	1	1	0
Twitter	13	1	103	9	1	0	3	1	0	0
Other social media	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Photo	219	186	47	52	143	89	127	189	113	114
Party graphic	3	32	8	5	19	7	33	74	23	1
Other graphic	113	15	3	6	3	4	6	0	3	2
Blog	9	1	3	0	1	2	0	0	3	0
Other	99	64	3	19	11	11	52	5	3	45

	Melissa Lee	Paula Bennett	Louise Upston	Tim Macindoe	Karl Varley	Brett Hudson	Scott Simpson	Nicky Wagner	Judith Collins	Jonathan Young
New tweets	123	70	127	145	246	112	150	188	87	142
Reply tweets	66	99	49	72	7	75	49	2	47	14
Retweeted tweets	113	118	103	36	26	48	29	14	64	10
Total tweets	302	287	279	253	279	235	228	204	198	166
Retweets gained	38	185	63	64	19	17	419	72	478	26
Average retweets gained	0.20	1.09	0.36	0.29	0.08	0.09	2.11	0.38	3.57	0.17
Favourites gained	132	536	226	193	43	89	592	99	917	49
Average favourites gained	0.70	3.17	1.28	0.89	0.17	0.48	2.97	0.52	6.84	0.31
Contains link	155	107	138	135	253	138	135	143	96	138
Total links	162	118	151	141	259	149	138	147	110	138
Party website	3	14	14	7	7	14	6	0	7	3
Media website	6	9	5	3	16	3	48	58	19	0
Youtube/Vimeo	2	0	2	0	2	1	1	0	4	0
Facebook	0	3	3	3	187	107	1	0	1	112
Twitter	72	0	30	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Other social media	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Photo	53	77	74	119	33	8	74	47	60	20
Party graphic	6	10	10	6	7	12	4	1	7	1
Other graphic	5	0	4	1	2	0	0	1	1	0
Blog	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	3	1
Other	13	5	9	2	4	1	3	40	8	1

	Amy Adams	Mark Mitchell	Peseta Sam Lotu-liga	Jonathan Coleman	Nathan Guy	Simon Bridges	Barbara Kuriger	Michael Woodhouse	Alfred Ngaro	Chester Borrows
New tweets	81	46	83	81	74	39	12	36	35	31
Reply tweets	3	27	24	15	0	9	7	34	20	19
Retweeted tweets	53	56	16	19	19	45	66	18	26	24
Total tweets	137	129	123	115	93	93	85	88	81	74
Retweets gained	162	82	28	175	191	33	7	60	27	26
Average retweets gained	1.93	1.12	0.26	1.82	2.58	0.69	0.37	0.86	0.49	0.52
Favourites gained	244	121	99	193	220	73	33	158	138	45
Average favourites gained	2.90	1.66	0.93	2.01	2.97	1.52	1.74	2.26	2.51	0.90
Contains link	98	60	97	82	64	58	69	46	48	50
Total links	117	72	99	90	65	60	107	46	50	57
Party website	16	16	1	5	0	1	37	0	2	15
Media website	8	4	2	0	5	8	1	0	0	1
Youtube/Vimeo	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	3
Facebook	0	0	71	5	0	0	0	0	1	0
Twitter	0	0	0	0	0	28	0	9	1	0
Other social media	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Photo	64	31	21	67	54	20	21	33	42	24
Party graphic	12	13	1	6	0	1	42	1	3	9
Other graphic	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Blog	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	14	8	2	7	5	2	4	2	1	4

	Craig Foss	Maggie Barry	Kanwaljit Bakshi	Jono Naylor	Christopher Penk	Anne Tolley	Wayne Walford	Chris Finlayson	Todd Muller	Sarah Dowie
New tweets	49	20	25	16	0	33	6	23	22	12
Reply tweets	3	6	1	12	0	1	1	5	1	9
Retweeted tweets	17	33	18	16	0	9	31	7	10	11
Total tweets	69	59	44	44	0	43	38	35	33	32
Retweets gained	59	55	0	36	0	35	2	154	13	7
Average retweets gained	1.13	2.12	0.00	1.29	0.00	1.03	0.29	5.50	0.57	0.33
Favourites gained	62	81	6	71	0	92	10	282	39	44
Average favourites gained	1.19	3.12	0.23	2.54	0.00	2.71	1.43	10.07	1.70	2.10
Contains link	54	39	34	26	0	35	33	26	25	20
Total links										
Party website	2	5	2	0	0	0	14	0	5	2
Media website	6	2	1	2	0	0	2	0	3	0
Youtube/Vimeo	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Facebook	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Twitter	0	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other social media	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Photo	24	27	22	23	0	32	11	22	17	17
Party graphic	1	6	2	1	0	0	16	1	5	0
Other graphic	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Blog	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	20	0	3	0	0	3	2	3	0	0

	Parata	Hekia Hayes	Joanne O'Fallon	Carolyn O'Fallon	Matthew Evetts	Paul Goldsmith	Bill English	Hamish Walker	O'Dwyer	Letitia Williamson	Maurice Brown	Simeon Brown
New tweets	22	29	14	18	25	15	14	11	1	5		
Reply tweets	0	1	11	5	0	4	2	0	8	4		
Retweeted tweets	8	1	2	0	0	0	2	3	2	2		
Total tweets	30	31	27	23	25	19	18	14	11	11		
Retweets gained	36	1	2	0	5	25	16	0	16	0		
Average retweets gained	1.64	0.03	0.08	0.00	0.20	1.32	1.00	0.00	1.78	0.00		
Favourites gained	49	1	8	1	26	55	38	0	22	4		
Average favourites gained	2.23	0.03	0.32	0.04	1.04	2.89	2.38	0.00	2.44	0.44		
Contains link	19	27	14	15	22	16	11	11	3	3		
Total links	19	27	14	15	22	17	11	13	3	3		
Party website	8	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0		
Media website	1	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Youtube/Vimeo	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Facebook	0	0	0	13	22	13	1	0	0	0		
Twitter	0	24	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0		
Other social media	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Photo	3	3	5	1	0	1	10	9	3	3		
Party graphic	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0		
Other graphic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Blog	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Other	6	0	2	0	0	3	0	0	0	0		

	Linda Cooper	David Bennett MP	David Carter	Ian Mckelvie	Alastair Scott	Jacqui Dean	Marueen Pugh
New tweets	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Reply tweets	1	3	0	0	0	0	0
Retweeted tweets	6	3	0	0	0	0	0
Total tweets	8	7	0	0	0	0	0
Retweets gained	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Average retweets gained	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Favourites gained	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Average favourites gained	0.50	0.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Contains link	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total links	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Party website	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Media website	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Youtube/Vimeo	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Facebook	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Twitter	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other social media	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Photo	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Party graphic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other graphic	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Blog	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

## Labour

	David Cunliffe	Grant Robertson	Michael Wood	Ruth Dyson	Chris Hipkins	James Dann	Clare Curran	Trevor Mallard	Arena Williams	Jacinda Ardern
New tweets	419	285	228	434	304	303	689	599	257	148
Reply tweets	23	375	600	145	308	149	1224	944	103	464
Retweeted tweets	31	252	61	237	149	297	624	739	74	39
Total tweets	473	912	889	816	761	749	2537	2282	434	651
Retweets gained	3607	2144	493	427	1699	674	1449	896	637	933
Average retweets gained	8.16	3.25	0.60	0.74	2.78	1.49	0.76	0.58	1.77	1.52
Favourites gained	6906	3646	855	589	2216	824	2067	1576	2006	3008
Average favourites gained	15.62	5.52	1.03	1.02	3.62	1.82	1.08	1.02	5.57	4.92
Contains link	297	309	140	374	171	291	731	624	176	134
Total links	337	323	149	456	182	299	805	644	185	134
Party website	75	40	21	38	26	63	48	21	13	2
Media website	6	78	49	195	20	40	256	123	4	14
Youtube/Vimeo	14	9	2	2	3	12	11	27	4	3
Facebook	4	7	6	12	1	8	9	161	1	2
Twitter	1	1	0	0	7	2	3	2	0	50
Other social media	0	0	1	0	0	4	4	0	0	0
Photo	175	148	28	137	77	128	253	192	142	53
Party graphic	50	11	6	15	21	9	20	15	11	0
Other graphic	1	9	12	7	5	7	36	32	2	1
Blog	3	6	11	9	0	12	23	12	3	1
Other	8	14	13	41	22	14	142	59	5	8

	Tāmari Coffey	Nanaia Mahuta	Phil Twyford	Richard Hills	Megan Woods	Annette King.	Tony Milne	Jerome Milka	Iain Lees-Galloway	Peeni Henare
New tweets	97	116	140	478	111	50	115	121	171	128
Reply tweets	110	92	147	1270	91	230	102	51	76	96
Retweeted tweets	214	164	72	1418	135	69	106	131	48	223
Total tweets	421	372	359	3166	337	349	323	303	295	447
Retweets gained	627	197	626	2047	304	213	156	110	305	158
Average retweets gained	3.03	0.95	2.18	1.17	1.50	0.76	0.72	0.64	1.23	0.71
Favourites gained	1368	314	615	3881	398	324	276	217	350	391
Average favourites gained	6.61	1.51	2.14	2.22	1.97	1.16	1.27	1.26	1.42	1.75
Contains link	186	73	114	711	99	14	125	131	152	118
Total links	193	75	116	763	102	15	132	137	157	121
Party website	19	2	41	66	6	2	15	9	65	4
Media website	26	13	26	200	10	3	16	15	9	12
Youtube/Vimeo	6	3	5	21	2	0	4	3	28	3
Facebook	14	7	0	11	5	7	1	10	0	9
Twitter	1	2	0	11	0	0	2	3	1	1
Other social media	2	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1
Photo	96	32	19	271	61	3	74	72	35	70
Party graphic	13	4	4	30	9	0	5	10	12	5
Other graphic	11	2	3	49	2	0	2	9	1	10
Blog	1	1	2	29	0	0	5	3	0	1
Other	4	8	16	72	7	0	8	3	6	5

	David Parker	Barry Kirker	Clare Wilson	Greg Milner-White	Moana Mackey	Deborah Russell	Su'a William Sio	Corie Haddock	Janette Walker	Steven Gibson
New tweets	0	1	13	12	43	163	95	15	3	23
Reply tweets	0	1	0	2	119	62	29	38	9	13
Retweeted tweets	0	0	3	7	60	47	72	88	0	1
Total tweets	0	2	16	21	222	272	196	141	12	37
Retweets gained	0	0	2	4	161	206	96	16	0	2
Average retweets gained	0	0.00	0.15	0.29	0.99	0.92	0.77	0.30	0.00	0.06
Favourites gained	0	1	1	8	247	387	171	32	0	7
Average favourites gained	0	0.50	0.08	0.57	1.52	1.72	1.38	0.60	0.00	0.19
Contains link	0	0	5	18	43	91	96	26	3	3
Total links	0	0	5	18	45	91	100	30	3	3
Party website	0	0	0	0	7	23	1	2	0	0
Media website	0	0	0	0	2	15	38	7	3	1
Youtube/Vimeo	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
Facebook	0	0	0	11	0	1	0	0	0	0
Twitter	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Other social media	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Photo	0	0	5	3	27	39	52	9	0	1
Party graphic	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	0
Other graphic	0	0	0	0	4	2	3	4	0	0
Blog	0	0	0	3	0	4	0	2	0	0
Other	0	0	0	1	3	7	3	1	0	0

	Glenda Alexander	Hamish McDouall	Eric Bolt	Kelly Ellis	Kelvin Davis	David Shearer	Phil Goff	Mana Kris Faatoui	Raymond Huo	David Clark
New tweets	15	25	19	16	50	25	15	1	119	75
Reply tweets	13	8	7	14	39	2	11	1	14	150
Retweeted tweets	13	8	30	6	24	19	0	1	103	154
Total tweets	41	41	56	36	113	46	26	3	236	379
Retweets gained	9	11	1	16	136	317	154	1	113	224
Average retweets gained	0.32	0.33	0.04	0.53	1.53	11.74	5.92	0.50	0.85	1.00
Favourites gained	18	4	2	16	314	364	176	9	98	398
Average favourites gained	0.64	0.12	0.08	0.53	3.53	13.48	6.77	4.50	0.74	1.77
Contains link	10	10	31	15	38	18	2	1	168	195
Total links	10	12	38	17	39	18	2	1	180	197
Party website	1	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	21	22
Media website	0	4	9	0	5	9	0	0	12	32
Youtube/Vimeo	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	6	5
Facebook	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	7	1
Twitter	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Other social media	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Photo	8	2	5	5	30	8	0	0	95	106
Party graphic	1	1	7	1	0	0	2	0	14	8
Other graphic	0	0	5	1	1	0	0	0	9	5
Blog	0	0	2	6	0	0	0	0	3	4
Other	0	2	4	1	3	0	0	0	13	13

	Maryan Street	Andrew Little	Anjum Rahman	Anna Lorck	Poto Williams	Damien O'Connor	Adrian Rurawhe	Carol Beaumont	Jenny Salea	Simon Buckingha
New tweets	46	25	138	30	56	26	123	23	144	18
Reply tweets	32	112	37	17	23	24	11	10	26	4
Retweeted tweets	22	4	22	20	84	43	8	15	142	10
Total tweets	100	141	197	67	163	93	142	48	312	32
Retweets gained	105	155	132	13	95	43	25	45	173	1
Average retweets gained	1.35	1.13	0.75	0.28	1.20	0.86	0.19	1.36	1.02	0.05
Favourites gained	142	149	98	18	142	36	88	60	270	7
Average favourites gained	1.82	1.09	0.56	0.38	1.80	0.72	0.66	1.82	1.59	0.32
Contains link	55	21	12	15	83	38	110	20	164	12
Total links	55	21	14	16	87	38	110	20	177	13
Party website	15	2	0	2	5	0	1	1	16	2
Media website	3	1	5	2	14	27	0	5	15	2
Youtube/Vimeo	1	0	0	0	3	3	0	1	3	0
Facebook	0	0	0	1	0	1	105	1	1	1
Twitter	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0
Other social media	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Photo	29	18	5	10	55	2	3	8	106	3
Party graphic	2	0	0	1	6	2	0	1	18	0
Other graphic	2	0	1	0	2	0	0	1	6	1
Blog	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	3	0
Other	3	0	3	0	1	2	1	0	8	4

	Tofik Mamedov	Hermann P. Retzlaff	Korbinian Poschl	Claire Szabo	Penny Gaylor	Rino Tirikatene	Cliff Allen	Carmel Sepuloni	Virginia Andersen	Rob McCann
New tweets	208	72	20	94	1	30	69	49	41	20
Reply tweets	5	9	0	8	1	5	3	21	35	9
Retweeted tweets	0	40	1	1	1	4	10	6	12	10
Total tweets	213	121	21	103	3	39	82	76	88	39
Retweets gained	6	123	2	3	2	29	31	118	37	12
Average retweets gained	0.03	1.52	0.10	0.03	1.00	0.83	0.43	1.69	0.49	0.41
Favourites gained	9	216	2	23	2	58	36	158	62	23
Average favourites gained	0.04	2.67	0.10	0.23	1.00	1.66	0.50	2.26	0.82	0.79
Contains link	181	73	13	89	1	26	37	38	32	18
Total links	181	78	14	89	1	27	37	38	32	20
Party website	0	5	1	0	0	1	7	0	0	2
Media website	1	1	3	0	0	5	3	1	4	4
Youtube/Vimeo	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	1	1	1
Facebook	175	1	0	88	1	12	22	0	14	1
Twitter	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Other social media	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Photo	3	56	3	1	0	2	3	35	11	10
Party graphic	0	8	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Other graphic	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Blog	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Other	1	3	6	0	0	3	1	1	0	1

	Rachel Jones	Shanan Halbert	Rawiri Waititi	Liz Craig	Sunny Kauschal	Sue Moroney	Meka whatiri	Kieran McNulty
New tweets	13	32	8	0	138	86	4	19
Reply tweets	2	9	10	0	0	111	0	11
Retweeted tweets	5	17	16	0	41	75	0	14
Total tweets	20	58	34	0	179	272	4	44
Retweets gained	14	3	28	0	11	261	2	7
Average retweets gained	0.93	0.07	1.56	0.00	0.08	1.32	0.50	0.23
Favourites gained	29	5	51	0	2	397	5	26
Average favourites gained	1.93	0.12	2.83	0.00	0.01	2.02	1.25	0.87
Contains link	6	26	3	0	139	45	4	14
Total links	6	28	3	0	139	47	4	14
Party website	0	1	0	0	3	5	4	1
Media website	1	3	0	0	0	15	0	7
Youtube/Vimeo	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Facebook	0	0	0	0	132	0	0	0
Twitter	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other social media	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Photo	4	14	3	0	0	17	0	5
Party graphic	0	8	0	0	3	5	0	1
Other graphic	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Blog	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Other	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	0

## Māori Party

	Susan Cullen	Marama Fox	Hinurewa te Hau	Caroline Reriti-Tapaka	Aroha Paenga Te Hira	Chris Mckenzie	Tame Iti	Nancy Tuaine	Te Ururoa Flavell	Ngairi Button	Hiria Pakinga	Anaru Kaipō
New tweets	148	445	21	1	0	40	20	70	247	0	0	13
Reply tweets	18	827	0	0	1	118	8	0	215	0	0	0
Retweeted tweets	88	1198	0	0	0	74	0	2	174	0	0	0
Total tweets	254	2470	21	1	1	232	28	72	636	0	0	13
Retweets gained	142	407	0	0	0	126	1499	58	581	0	0	0
Average retweets gained	0.86	0.32	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.80	53.54	0.83	1.26	0.00	0.00	0.00
Favourites gained	312	1103	1	0	1	344	1752	59	1510	0	0	0
Average favourites gained	1.88	0.87	0.05	0.00	1.00	2.18	62.57	0.84	3.27	0.00	0.00	0.00
Contains link	140	630	18	0	0	42	12	9	208	0	0	0
Total links	147	661	18	0	0	43	12	9	211	0	0	0
Party website	17	15	0	0	0	2	1	0	16	0	0	0
Media website	15	192	0	0	0	5	0	2	28	0	0	0
Youtube/Vimeo	18	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0
Facebook	5	29	18	0	0	2	0	1	5	0	0	0
Twitter	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Other social media	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Photo	66	256	0	0	0	23	10	2	108	0	0	0
Party graphic	6	24	0	0	0	1	0	3	14	0	0	0
Other graphic	8	17	0	0	0	1	0	0	8	0	0	0
Blog	0	22	0	0	0	6	0	0	11	0	0	0
Other	12	77	0	0	0	3	1	1	11	0	0	0

## United Future

	Damian Light	Dave Stonyer	Peter Dunne	Quentin Todd	Jason Woolston	James Maxwell
New tweets	87	107	373	22	141	133
Reply tweets	124	79	571	23	208	55
Retweeted tweets	93	633	233	29	144	93
Total tweets	304	819	1177	74	493	281
Retweets gained	124	17	684	2	303	50
Average retweets gained	0.59	0.09	0.72	0.04	0.87	0.27
Favourites gained	89	28	816	6	250	35
Average favourites gained	0.42	0.15	0.86	0.13	0.72	0.19
Contains link	129	342	305	19	164	103
Total links	140	358	327	23	174	103
Party website	23	44	42	4	13	7
Media website	28	88	95	7	29	16
Youtube/Vimeo	16	37	35	1	15	5
Facebook	1	11	6	0	5	32
Twitter	3	5	16	0	3	0
Other social media	0	2	1	0	1	1
Photo	33	64	77	4	78	23
Party graphic	6	6	3	4	1	2
Other graphic	8	27	4	0	4	6
Blog	0	35	5	1	0	2
Other	22	39	43	2	25	9

## ACT

	Dasha Kovalenko	David Seymour	Gareth Veale	Beth Houlbrooke	Paul Hufflett	Jamie Whyte	Stephen Berry	Lyall Russell	Mike Burrow	Phelan Pirrie	Robin Grieve	Sara Muti Ferrusson	Tommy Don Nicolson	Ian Cummings	
New tweets	127	9	2	4	2	85	117	27	0	3	64	67	0	56	157
Reply tweets	85	95	6	0	4	0	131	20	0	0	25	74	0	20	15
Retweeted tweets	98	18	10	6	0	6	51	9	1	0	3	74	0	10	22
Total tweets	310	122	18	10	6	91	299	56	1	3	92	215	0	86	194
Retweets gained	43	34	0	0	0	336	54	4	0	0	15	47	0	61	17
Average retweets gained	0.20	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.95	0.22	0.09	0.00	0.00	0.17	0.33	0.00	0.80	0.10
Favourites gained	86	55	0	0	0	285	87	3	0	0	15	81	0	25	51
Average favourites gained	0.41	0.53	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.35	0.35	0.06	0.00	0.00	0.17	0.57	0.00	0.33	0.30
Contains link	166	22	4	4	0	74	75	12	1	1	40	73	0	54	124
Total links	168	24	4	4	0	74	76	12	1	1	40	74	0	54	124
Party website	36	3	0	1	0	62	8	4	1	0	15	2	0	16	5
Media website	10	4	2	2	0	6	13	0	0	0	21	1	0	2	3
Youtube/Vimeo	6	3	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Facebook	50	1	0	0	0	2	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	30	111
Twitter	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Other social media	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Photo	44	6	0	1	0	0	40	0	0	1	0	53	0	0	2
Party graphic	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	1
Other graphic	5	0	0	0	0	0	4	8	0	0	0	7	0	0	1
Blog	8	0	1	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	1
Other	5	7	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	8	0	3	0

## Greens

	Gareth Hughes	Julie Anne Genter	Jack McDonald	Russel Norman	John Kelcher	Shane Gallagher	Kevin Hague	John Hart	Marama Davidson	James Shaw
New tweets	467	373	211	448	297	139	128	515	753	212
Reply tweets	246	555	432	297	91	171	340	1001	1873	449
Retweeted tweets	863	505	923	1150	633	1599	584	473	537	360
Total tweets	1576	1433	1566	1895	1021	1909	1052	1989	3163	1021
Retweets gained	4410	2161	744	6345	286	182	476	2290	2149	561
Average retweets gained	6.19	2.33	1.16	8.52	0.74	0.59	1.02	1.51	0.82	0.85
Favourites gained	5302	3195	1711	7090	221	401	892	3058	6794	922
Average favourites gained	7.44	3.44	2.66	9.52	0.57	1.29	1.91	2.02	2.59	1.39
Contains link	958	486	506	1028	653	857	345	656	624	447
Total links	1083	526	546	1127	749	946	393	691	641	520
Party website	153	66	56	121	46	52	36	53	40	45
Media website	193	93	98	253	264	212	46	162	56	87
Youtube/Vimeo	23	12	16	22	18	13	13	5	28	6
Facebook	40	15	13	22	18	51	18	16	19	15
Twitter	26	3	6	6	4	8	2	0	1	1
Other social media	2	1	4	0	8	4	0	6	1	1
Photo	335	183	240	460	167	308	148	272	319	137
Party graphic	54	26	46	46	25	28	16	27	16	9
Other graphic	55	47	8	66	50	106	47	34	31	45
Blog	28	21	13	26	22	18	8	26	41	11
Other	174	59	46	105	127	146	59	90	89	163

	Mojo Mathers	Catherine DeLahunty	Dr Sea Rotmann	Susanne Ruthven	David Clendon	Holly Walker	Jan Logie	Reuben Hunt	Richard Leckinger	Metiria Turei
New tweets	90	333	564	52	108	107	93	134	144	415
Reply tweets	147	183	903	31	13	87	166	49	23	513
Retweeted tweets	467	475	1489	106	22	73	134	42	512	1302
Total tweets	704	991	2956	189	143	267	393	225	679	2230
Retweets gained	458	689	1145	89	110	237	387	324	222	2912
Average retweets gained	1.93	1.34	0.78	1.07	0.91	1.22	1.49	1.77	1.33	3.14
Favourites gained	864	979	1392	121	124	641	649	228	239	4858
Average favourites gained	3.65	1.90	0.95	1.46	1.02	3.30	2.51	1.25	1.43	5.23
Contains link	381	373	1431	98	73	82	111	161	423	816
Total links	426	396	1587	114	78	86	123	178	497	867
Party website	56	27	47	16	13	7	17	9	34	48
Media website	70	59	363	14	23	20	10	64	138	102
Youtube/Vimeo	13	4	29	3	0	1	4	3	7	14
Facebook	11	36	98	5	0	5	5	3	13	310
Twitter	5	1	46	2	0	9	0	1	1	6
Other social media	2	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Photo	138	185	364	35	22	24	50	28	95	251
Party graphic	35	15	21	13	4	4	10	6	26	20
Other graphic	25	10	149	5	2	4	6	25	71	38
Blog	16	18	124	1	1	2	2	6	21	12
Other	55	41	341	20	13	10	19	33	91	65

	Daniel Rogers	Dora Langsbury	Trish Tupou	Jeanette Elley	Dave Kennedy	Barry Coates	Denise Roche	Tane Woodley	Eugenie Sage	Kennedy Graham
New tweets	216	112	453	31	105	148	70	69	81	32
Reply tweets	79	20	190	1	27	17	6	221	25	0
Retweeted tweets	813	726	155	327	38	83	129	56	109	22
Total tweets	1108	858	798	359	170	248	205	346	215	54
Retweets gained	156	135	939	26	123	341	201	146	333	40
Average retweets gained	0.53	1.02	1.46	0.81	0.93	2.07	2.64	0.50	3.14	1.25
Favourites gained	208	191	1772	34	132	230	230	281	276	56
Average favourites gained	0.71	1.45	2.76	1.06	1.00	1.39	3.03	0.97	2.60	1.75
Contains link	721	455	347	175	92	182	109	26	76	49
Total links	808	517	354	191	97	191	115	26	88	52
Party website	36	67	8	20	39	17	15	1	11	20
Media website	136	69	27	12	12	102	11	8	12	1
Youtube/Vimeo	10	6	9	2	2	4	1	1	0	0
Facebook	141	38	9	7	0	4	4	0	6	0
Twitter	2	2	12	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Other social media	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Photo	170	194	225	116	26	15	60	12	39	23
Party graphic	17	32	15	10	2	5	9	0	7	6
Other graphic	134	48	19	8	5	10	3	3	6	1
Blog	26	7	7	2	4	9	4	0	0	0
Other	134	52	23	14	7	25	8	1	6	0

	Henare Matua	Richard Wesley	Mark Servian	David Moorhouse	Umesh Perinpanayagam	Anne-Elise Smithson	Teresa Moore	Maddy Drew	Rachael Goldsmith	Brett Stansfield
New tweets	68	37	64	2	34	32	11	25	11	0
Reply tweets	20	0	11	1	15	16	6	3	1	0
Retweeted tweets	109	0	14	4	36	22	36	11	3	0
Total tweets	197	37	89	7	85	70	53	39	15	0
Retweets gained	46	3	47	0	100	5	6	9	7	0
Average retweets gained	0.52	0.08	0.63	0.00	2.04	0.10	0.35	0.32	0.58	0.00
Favourites gained	95	3	56	1	105	16	6	20	7	0
Average favourites gained	1.08	0.08	0.75	0.33	2.14	0.33	0.35	0.71	0.58	0.00
Contains link	95	25	22	5	54	36	28	15	12	0
Total links	100	25	23	5	57	39	32	17	12	0
Party website	24	2	7	3	3	6	7	3	1	0
Media website	27	0	5	1	12	5	4	2	3	0
Youtube/Vimeo	4	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
Facebook	3	0	3	0	1	2	1	1	0	0
Twitter	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other social media	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Photo	21	0	3	0	28	10	14	5	0	0
Party graphic	9	0	0	0	1	3	3	0	0	0
Other graphic	2	0	1	0	4	2	1	0	0	0
Blog	1	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	5	0
Other	7	23	2	1	5	8	2	6	3	0

	Chris Perley	Robert Moore	Paul Bailey	Dave Robinson	Steffan Browning
New tweets	11	0	11	0	69
Reply tweets	0	0	0	2	32
Retweeted tweets	0	0	0	0	48
Total tweets	11	0	11	2	149
Retweets gained	0	0	0	0	91
Average retweets gained	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.90
Favourites gained	1	0	1	1	80
Average favourites gained	0.09	0.00	0.09	0.50	0.79
Contains link	11	0	11	0	91
Total links	11	0	11	0	97
Party website	11	0	10	0	15
Media website	0	0	1	0	5
Youtube/Vimeo	0	0	0	0	1
Facebook	0	0	0	0	4
Twitter	0	0	0	0	0
Other social media	0	0	0	0	1
Photo	0	0	0	0	62
Party graphic	0	0	0	0	4
Other graphic	0	0	0	0	1
Blog	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	4

## New Zealand First

	George Abraham	Mahesh Bindra	Mere Takoko	Anne Delga-Pala	Ria Bond	Richard Prosser	Clayton Mitchell	Tracey Martin	Winston Peters	Fletcher Tabuteau
New tweets	5	3	134	7	6	3	67	339	119	4
Reply tweets	3	1	4	2	3	13	0	363	56	0
Retweeted tweets	0	0	3	1	4	2	0	120	17	14
Total tweets	8	4	141	10	13	18	67	822	192	18
Retweets gained	2	0	7	0	1	5	1	217	1682	0
Average retweets gained	0.25	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.11	0.31	0.01	0.31	9.61	0.00
Favourites gained	1	0	9	1	2	7	2	377	2231	0
Average favourites gained	0.13	0.00	0.07	0.11	0.22	0.44	0.03	0.54	12.75	0.00
Contains link	1	0	124	2	8	2	42	320	58	15
Total links	1	0	124	2	8	2	42	326	59	15
Party website	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	7	8	5
Media website	0	0	2	0	2	1	0	190	15	0
Youtube/Vimeo	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	19	1	1
Facebook	1	0	112	1	0	0	42	2	4	0
Twitter	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	2	0	0
Other social media	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Photo	0	0	1	0	2	1	0	55	29	9
Party graphic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other graphic	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	10	0	0
Blog	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	0	0
Other	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	29	2	0

## Conservatives

	Colin Craig	Edward Saafi	Litia Simpson	Nathaniel Heslop	Christine Rankin
New tweets	12	681	359	108	0
Reply tweets	0	0	55	292	0
Retweeted tweets	0	0	537	125	0
Total tweets	12	681	951	525	0
Retweets gained	13	8	1	40	0
Average retweets gained	1.08	0.01	0.00	0.10	0.00
Favourites gained	27	10	18	76	0
Average favourites gained	2.25	0.01	0.04	0.19	0.00
Contains link	11	679	557	142	0
Total links	11	679	655	147	0
Party website	0	0	3	0	0
Media website	0	0	237	48	0
Youtube/Vimeo	0	0	10	9	0
Facebook	11	679	8	0	0
Twitter	0	0	7	0	0
Other social media	0	0	1	0	0
Photo	0	0	132	22	0
Party graphic	0	0	1	0	0
Other graphic	0	0	50	17	0
Blog	0	0	21	7	0
Other	0	0	185	44	0

## MANA

	Joe Trinder	Hone Harawira	Joe Carolan	Te Hamua Nikora	Annette Sykes
New tweets	291	15	0	67	31
Reply tweets	2	0	0	64	1
Retweeted tweets	5	0	0	33	19
Total tweets	298	15	0	164	51
Retweets gained	27	25	0	42	78
Average retweets gained	0.09	1.67	0	0.32	2.44
Favourites gained	32	25	0	115	121
Average favourites gained	0.11	1.67	0	0.88	3.78
Contains link	229	15	0	47	29
Total links	229	15	0	48	29
Party website	0	15	0	0	1
Media website	0	0	0	2	1
Youtube/Vimeo	0	0	0	1	2
Facebook	221	0	0	9	0
Twitter	0	0	0	2	0
Other social media	0	0	0	0	0
Photo	3	0	0	15	16
Party graphic	5	0	0	11	7
Other graphic	0	0	0	4	2
Blog	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	4	0

## Internet Party

	Pani Farvid	Mihram Pierard	Chris Yong	Robert Stewart	Callum Valentine	Grant Keinzley	Ray Calver	Patrick Salmon	Roshni Sami	Laila Harré	Andrew Lefine	Gil Ho	Beverley Ballantine	David Curn
New tweets	304	304	511	819	428	292	345	166	222	445	271	67	47	150
Reply tweets	88	826	349	496	506	237	135	46	139	567	132	37	3	106
Retweeted tweets	169	618	534	846	504	383	165	169	840	722	351	92	16	198
Total tweets	561	1748	1394	2161	1438	912	645	381	1201	1734	754	196	66	454
Retweets gained	451	1993	1679	555	732	107	386	161	523	6217	267	65	32	358
Average retweets gained	1.15	1.76	1.95	0.42	0.78	0.20	0.80	0.76	1.45	6.14	0.66	0.63	0.64	1.40
Favourites gained	534	3104	2063	1076	1047	201	422	280	685	7785	339	110	79	440
Average favourites gained	1.36	2.75	2.40	0.82	1.12	0.38	0.88	1.32	1.90	7.69	0.84	1.06	1.58	1.72
Contains link	367	565	740	792	377	395	334	225	598	630	312	123	17	211
Total links	380	593	792	828	397	433	353	236	638	669	343	141	17	219
Party website	19	49	42	36	18	43	26	10	34	51	8	10	1	13
Media website	96	120	112	136	64	83	84	31	147	169	71	31	0	28
Youtube/Vimeo	23	37	66	45	34	22	53	10	33	48	11	5	0	15
Facebook	9	21	24	65	9	30	13	17	11	24	5	7	1	7
Twitter	17	5	10	4	5	1	2	3	1	1	0	0	0	1
Other social media	0	1	6	4	2	2	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	1
Photo	85	161	277	260	96	99	52	100	187	171	92	37	8	75
Party graphic	14	17	35	41	21	22	55	23	31	44	22	6	4	8
Other graphic	14	53	73	86	44	30	19	12	80	36	85	11	1	21
Blog	14	31	31	20	14	19	4	3	36	35	8	2	1	23
Other	89	98	116	131	90	82	45	27	77	88	40	32	1	27