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The effect of new media on candidate independence: A comparison of constituency candidates in the United Kingdom and Japan

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DOCTORAL THESIS IN POLITICS

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

SUBMITTED NOVEMBER 2017

Abstract

This thesis examines how constituency candidates are furthering independence from the national party through new media campaigning, by comparing data from general elections in two countries with different styles of campaigning – party-centred campaigning in the United Kingdom (2015) and candidate-centred campaigning Japan (2014). Data collection and analysis has been conducted in a two-stage process. Firstly, candidates' website and social media use (Twitter and Facebook) during election campaigns was examined, establishing the degree to which candidates are using new media to pursue the personal vote, and what form this takes. Findings from candidate new media use were also used to formulate the second stage of research – interviews with candidates and members of parliament in both the UK and Japan.

A secondary research question has also examines whether personal vote seeking behaviour has a positive impact on candidates' electoral performance, or whether party performance factors are a key factor of performance at the constituency level.

This study confirms that that Japanese candidates use new media to run more candidate centred campaigns, replicating traditional campaign styles, but also finds that other factors, namely candidates' levels of experience and the strength of the national party, play a role in how candidates utilise new media. This is broadly confirmed through findings from candidate interviews which also provide a greater understanding of different campaign behaviour not just between Japanese and UK candidates, but also those representing political parties of varying strength.

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Introduction to research

The Internet in Political Campaigning: Party-Centred or Candidate-Centred Politics?

The past twenty years has seen a revolution in technology and communication which has transformed the world. The wide spread diffusion of the Internet throughout the world has changed everyday life for billions. Those with the technology can now do a variety of everyday tasks from their own homes such as online banking or shopping. Entertainment is no longer the proviso of the television broadcasting companies; new mediums of online entertainment are allowing people to tailor their own viewing schedules. Video conferencing across the globe has become virtually free, affording the opportunity for people to build stronger personal and business relationships. Individuals from different corners of the globe have the chance to learn about and communicate with others from different walks of life. The Internet has become a tool used on a daily basis for over three billion people around the world[1].

Over a slightly longer time period there has been an opposite trajectory, one of decline, for political parties. Political parties were envisaged by writers such as Duverger (1964), Lipsett and Rokkan (1967) and Sartori (1976) as being deeply integrated at an individual level with the specific constituents or social cleavages they were founded to represent. Kirchheimer's (1966) thesis of the *catch-all party* redefined party policies and organisation. In order to win elections parties would have to abandon any divisive ideological stance and appeal to the broadest range of voters possible. Panebianco puts forward a model of political party organisation which continues Kirchheimer's theme of weakening party linkage with social groups but goes further with the concept of the *electoral-professional party* (Panebianco, 1988). The "mass membership" parties envisage by Sartori and Duverger have been replaced by professionalised parties and as a result weakened linkages between parties and the public. This in turn has led to the rise of what Katz and Mair (1995) describe as the *cartel party* – parties which replace the resources lost from mass-participation with a tacit agreement to use the resources of the state i.e. state funding for political parties. The weakening of party linkages has contributed the "decline" of political parties in liberal democracies. (Scarrow, 2002). A by-product of this has been what Farrell and Webb described as the "third stage of professional campaigning" (2002). Party political campaigns

[1] Internet World Stats (June 2014) - http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm

have come to be run by professionals who are necessary in the utilisation of modern technology. As a result, central party leadership has become the dominant actor within a party, with control over money and the execution of campaigns, effectively controlling party discourse and the way parties are viewed by the electorate. Identification with parties and elected politicians has become weaker, resulting in falling membership and partisan support.

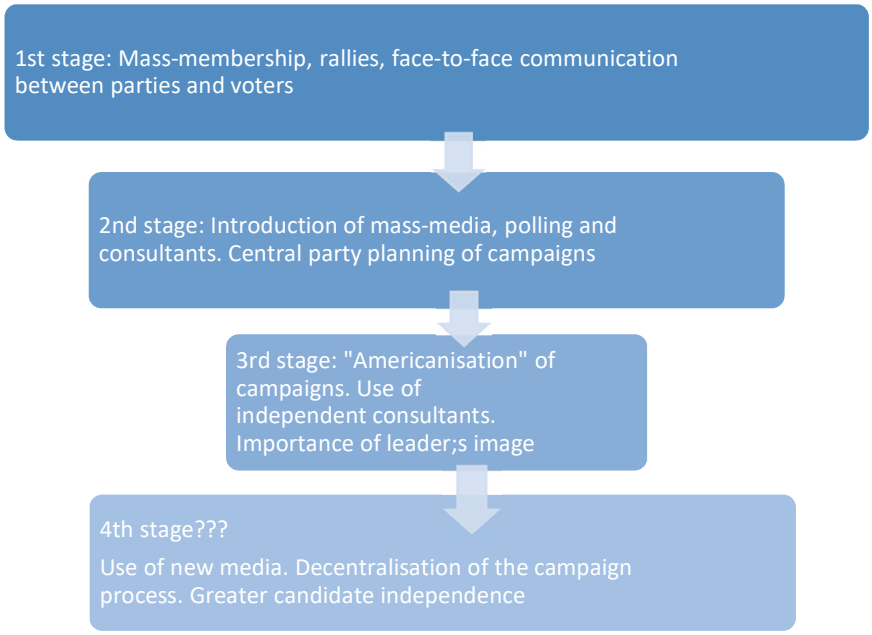
There is not perhaps an immediately obvious connection between the Internet and the professionalisation of political parties. The two are not causally related as mass media and party professionalisation are. However, as the Internet becomes more accessible and easier to use and social media grows as an everyday communication tool the dominance of mass media over political communication is being brought into question. One question which remains open is the effect of the Internet and new media on political campaigning and its potential effect on intra-party relations. New media has the potential to impact on the centralised control of campaigns by party professionals. Modern communication tools are available to anyone and are more cost efficient. Going against the trend of greater party control seen in most established liberal democracies, candidates have the opportunity to exert greater control over both their campaign organisation and the policies they promote. Working under the assumption that politicians are primarily office seeking actors, greater independence in the area of campaigning has serious implications for political parties. Therefore, this study sets out to answer the following core research question:

> How far, and in what ways, is new media increasing candidate independence from parties during elections?

The central research question will be answered by comparing the use of new media in the United Kingdom (UK) and Japan, two liberal democracies with traditionally contrasting patterns of candidate autonomy from parties. It is important to clarify three things about this project from the outset. Firstly, by the term *new media* I refer to Web 2.0 platforms which allow users to create their own content and engage in debate, such as social media, rather than merely being passive consumers of information as well as platforms which have been used consistently since the early days of internet campaigning such as websites, blogs

and emails (O'Reilly, 2005). Thus, the term new media includes websites, blogs, video channels and social media. Secondly, the research question seeks to determine which candidates are using new media in an independent way, how new media is increasing candidate independence, and the underlying causes behind new media campaign strategies. Finally, the concept of candidate independence goes beyond merely analysing candidate campaign messages to look into how new media is affecting campaign organisation at the constituency level. While the study of new media use is an interesting component of this study the most important element is how it affects party candidates. If new media is allowing candidates to be more independent from the national party, and candidates are in fact utilising it in this way, this has serious implications for the future of intra-party organisation and the relationships between the national party and their candidates and constituency level activists.

Figure 0-1: Stages of political campaigning showing growing centralisation of the campaign process, including potential impact of new media



N. B. Stages 1-3 model based on (Ufen, 2009). Stage 4 represents a hypothetical effect of new media

An underlying assumption of electoral politics is that politicians are self-interested actors. They are, as Downs described, “motivated by the desire for power, prestige and

income….they can obtain none of these unless their party is elected to office" (Downs, 1957; p.30). While the benefits of being elected to office are generally greater if a politician is a member of a governing party, there are often benefits for opposition politicians and their constituents as well. These benefits are greater in some countries than others. Thus, while it may be desirable for an elected politician to be part of government, being elected in the first instance must be seen as the priority of every individual candidate. It can be logically argued that for a constituency level politician the chances of being elected will usually be enhanced if s/he can rely on the party for endorsement, support and ideological guidance. This is especially true of countries with party-centred campaigning or those using certain forms of proportional representation. Candidates from these systems are more likely to rely on party branding and party organisational support (Carey & Shugart, 1995). This study aims to determine the effect of modern campaign tools on the party-candidate relationship during election campaigns and does so by comparing two cases which operate in quite different political contexts.

In addition to the central research question this study will also assess the impact that new media is having on winning votes. Implicit in the central research question is the idea that greater independence from the national party can be of benefit to candidates. Independent behaviour of new media will be measured by how candidates are seeking the *personal vote* though new media. Therefore, the sub-research question will investigate whether higher degrees of personal vote seeking behaviour have a positive impact on the percentage of the vote that candidates receive. Greater personalisation, a major feature of internet campaigning, is seen as a way for candidates to develop a stronger connection to voters and as such increase the likelihood of those voters choosing them at the ballot box (Lee & Oh, 2012; Kruikemeier et al, 2013). The natural progression for this study after ascertaining which candidates are more likely to pursue the personal vote, is to judge just how effective this strategy is in increasing candidate vote share. As such the final empirical chapter of this study will investigate the following secondary research question:

> Does use of new media in seeking the personal vote have a positive impact on candidates vote share?

Aims and major findings of this research

The core theme of this study is to ascertain whether or not the use of new media is reshaping the nature of candidate-party relations, with particular reference to the way this relationship effects the way in which constituency level candidates campaign. For professional politicians, being elected is the primary goal of an election campaign. In party-centred campaign systems especially, party affiliation is often the deciding factor in whether or not a candidate is elected (Stanyer, 2008). In short, candidates in a country such as the UK, need the party brand and party resources in order to get elected. However, Japan provides an interesting counterpoint. It is not unusual for independent candidates to run for office, win election and then be courted by political parties. This strategy is one of the explanatory factors behind the Liberal Democratic Party's post-war dominance (Krauss & Pekkanen, 2011). It is also common for party allegiance to change, with many parties being short-term alliances of convenience.[2] If candidates have the ability to get elected on a personal, rather than party vote, the national party has less control over their behaviour during campaigning and, more crucially, how loyal they are to party leadership in parliament (Kam, 2009). By contrasting campaign behaviour of UK and Japanese candidates this study examines the potential that new media has to allow candidates to campaign more independently of the national party, both in terms of campaign content and organisation.

This study provides evidence of significant differences in the way in which candidates campaign at the constituency level and finds that independent focused new media use is, in general, more prevalent amongst and beneficial to candidates from a candidate-centred campaign system (Japan) than a comparatively party-centred campaign system (the UK). This indicates that new media campaigning is not having a transformative effect on the way in which candidates campaign and how much they rely on party affiliation to attract support. Put simply, traditional campaign behaviour has transferred over to online campaigning. The study also provides a valuable insight into campaigning in both countries; how campaigning is conducted both online and offline and what factors influence candidate strategies. Finally, this study shows the growing importance of new media platforms in constituency campaigning and how, on a currently limited scale, it is affecting how

[2] The dissolution of the Democratic Party of Japan and the majority of its lawmakers joining Kibo no Toh, led by Tokyo governor Yoriko Koike shortly before the 2017 general election is the most recent example of this.

candidates run and organise campaigns. A full discussion of key findings can be seen in Chapter 8.

Thesis structure

The first chapter of this study will set out exact hypotheses to be investigated and present an overview of relevant literature on the personal vote, candidate vs party centred campaigning, the evolution of internet campaigning, how new media campaigning is tied to the personal vote and on traditional differences in constituency campaigning in Japan and the UK. Chapter 2 provides a methodological framework and explains the variety of research methods which have been incorporated. Chapters 3 and 4 will present findings from content analysis of candidates new media use from the United Kingdom and Japan respectively, followed by Chapter 5 which will form a direct, country level comparison. Chapter 6 will present findings from in-depth interviews with candidates, corroborating the findings made in Chapters 3-5 and providing a deeper understanding of what drives both candidates pursuit of the personal vote and their use of new media in election campaigns. The final empirical section of this study, Chapter 7, will investigate the sub-research question relating to the effectiveness of pursuing the personal vote through new media and how online campaigning complements existing campaign traditions when it comes to candidate behaviour in both the UK and Japan. Chapter 8 will act as a conclusion to the study and summarise the key findings.

Chapter 1

Literature Review and theoretical framework

Literature Review

The personal vote

In order to measure how candidates are campaigning "independently" of the national party, this study will determine to what degree candidates are pursuing the *personal vote*, through online campaigning. In examining the personal vote, this study adheres to the definition given by Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina (1984, pg. 111): "that portion of a candidate's electoral support which originates in his or her personal qualities, qualifications, activities and record". For candidates, there are a number of reasons why pursuit of the personal vote may pay electoral dividends. Firstly, the electoral system used will affect the degree to which candidates are able to and required to pursue the personal vote. Carey and Shugart's (1995) attempt to provide a model based on electoral systems highlights how district magnitude, single member (SMD) vs proportional representation (PR) factors and party endorsement play a role in how valuable candidates' independence is in comparison to the support they receive from their party. Candidates with the greatest incentive to pursue the personal vote will be those contesting constituencies where votes are non-transferable and have a high district magnitude (for example in Japan before electoral reform in 1993).

The ability for candidates to forge a strong "local" identity may be a necessity in their particular area. Constituents, particularly in rural areas, expect their local representative to be in touch with the local community, making appearances at events and showing support for local community initiatives. Less than being about policy, representatives and electoral candidates must be *visible* to the public (Miller & Stokes, 1966; Fenno, 1978; Evans, 2011). Representatives must also be seen to be working on behalf of their constituents, actively engaged in casework and representing their concerns in the national parliament (Norton & Wood, 1993).

National party performance also effects to what degree candidates are willing to pursue the personal vote. Candidates trying to avoid being dragged down by an unpopular national party brand have an incentive to campaign on their own personal strengths and this is apparent even in countries, such as the UK, where the party brand is traditionally seen as

the key determining factor behind voter choice (Burnham, 1975; Carey & Shugart, 1995; Hellweg, 2011).

The growing trend towards personalisation of political candidates at both the national and constituency level has created a greater need for candidates not just to be more visible but to be more relatable and accessible. Changes in communication technology and the professionalisation of political campaigning have given greater importance to the public image of party leaders as standard bearers of their party (Heffernan & Webb, 2005). This can be particularly relevant to parliamentary systems where party policies are well established and voters may be more interested in the personal characteristics of party leaders (Bean, 1993). There is evidence, albeit limited, that a greater degree of personalisation is evident amongst constituency level candidates both in countries where there is a tradition of candidate centred-voting such as Japan and the US and in party-centred systems like the UK and Australia (Reed, 1994; Herrera & Yawn, 1999; McAllister, 2015).

It is important at this stage to differentiate between personal vote seeking behaviour by candidates, which this study takes as its dependent variable and high levels of campaign intensity, simply put the amount of resources put into a campaign by the national party, in individual constituencies.[3] Existing studies have focused on how campaign intensity has increased voter turnout and vote share in constituencies in the UK and found that, in general, it is beneficial to local campaigns (Denver et al, 2001; Fisher & Denver, 2009; Fisher et al, 2016). It is true to say greater party spending in individual constituencies can allow local campaigns to promote a candidate, enhance local party infrastructure and increase the efficiency of local grassroots activists (Cutts et al, 2012). There is not however a direct, automatic, link between increased activity within a constituency and a conscious pursuit of the personal vote. Greater party resources focused on target seats could be focused on promotion of a popular national leader or attacking an incumbent party's record in office rather than a candidate's own personal brand. Most importantly, extra resource provision most likely comes from the national party and in the long-term does little to allow candidates greater organisational independence i.e. the ability to self-organise campaigns. It

[3] For a full breakdown of campaign intensity variables see: (Fisher et al, 2016)

is this ability, for candidates to strengthen their own local organisation, which is connected to the personal vote and with which this study is concerned.

Party vs candidate centred voting

Carey and Shugart's (1995) study of incentives for candidates to cultivate the personal vote identifies the effect of different electoral systems as a key determining factor, rather than relying on identification with a political party. To summarise, Carey and Shugart concluded that electoral systems which involved purely Single Member District (SMD) and open list PR systems, were likely to feature a higher number of candidates focused on campaigning on their personal appeal. Moreover, much of a candidate's support will stem from their ability to provide benefits to their constituents (Hirano, 2006). Under these systems, the risks of breaking party cohesion by promoting policies at odds with the centre are much less of a factor in candidate behaviour. In turn systems using pure national level PR with closed lists, especially where the central party has control over the nomination process, are more likely to feature candidates fixed on a cohesive campaign strategy, relying on the party "brand" to ensure their election. However, Carey and Shugart's conclusions concerning SMD candidates seem to contradict the trend of professionalisation put forward by writers such as Bowler and Farrell (1992) and Poguntke and Webb (2005). While the central party has become more powerful at the expense of the membership in modern campaigning it can be argued that candidates retain their independence in systems where there is still an element incorporating SMD seats and candidate selection is not tightly controlled by the party. Moreover, candidates contesting marginal seats and incumbents have more of an incentive to engage in more individualistic behaviour, such as producing their own campaign material or seeking localized forms of additional funding (Zittel & Gschwend, 2008, Pekkanen *et al*, 2006, Adams, Brunell, & Grofman, 2010). Candidates can be aided in this by supporter groups which are loyal to them personally rather than the national party. Some, such as the *koenkai* in Japan, have long been a feature of candidate-centred politics, while groups such as Political Action Committees in the US have risen in importance and have financial resources comparable to major parties and candidates (Green, 2002). Changes within the media have also had an effect on candidate-party relations. Mass media has given

candidates the platform to develop their own “brand” at the expense of the national party, be this at the national or constituency level. Indeed, it can be argued that the greater personalisation of politics at the national level could have an influence on how campaigning is conducted at the constituency level, with candidates wishing to replicate party leaders in developing a strong, identifiable personal brand (McAllister, 2015). The individual candidate has become the primary figure that voters look towards in order to identify a party’s policies and ideological position (Fiorina, 1980, Wattenburg, 1982). Such changes in media have had a detrimental effect on smaller party candidates, who can expect much more limited support when compared to candidates from larger parties (Dalton, McAllister & Wattenburg, 2000).

Difference in campaign styles has also been identified within single country studies. The United States can be viewed as the archetypical example of a candidate-centred campaigning system mainly due to its first past the post, SMD system and the ability of incumbents to use their legislative position to provide benefits to their constituents – giving voters a direct impression of exactly what their Congressman is doing for them (Herrera & Yawn, 1999, Primo & Synder, 2010). The sheer size of the country and its diverse political make-up also makes it harder for a central party actor to take full control over the campaign process (Knuckey & Lees-Marshment, 2005). This has similarities to the elections for the European Parliament which see often see national party leaders less involved in campaigning and party leadership is much more hands-off in the campaign. Raunio (2004) surmises that this may be due to a combination of lack of interest and lack of party resources. If the lack of resources is really a contributing factor to greater candidate centred campaigning then this will have a continuing effect on how parties organise and campaign should they continue to see a decline in support at the national level. However, EU elections aside, Western Europe is seen as having a party-centred campaign system, in comparison to the United States for example, where the leader is the figurehead of the party and the central party still maintains control over the message and the party brand (Driessens *et al*, 2010). This may have much to do with the greater prevalence of proportional representation throughout the continent although the UK sits as an interesting example of a pure SMD system where party reputation remains more important than of the candidate (Norton & Wood, 1990). The party also plays an important role in setting campaign

messages and distributing resources, especially to the benefit of candidates ranked highly on PR lists and in target SMD seats. (Karlsen & Skobergo, 2013). However even in a pure SMD system there is still a need for candidates to create a favourable personal image and in all but the safest of seats, to make sure to put in face time with their constituents (Heitshusen, Young, & Wood, 2005).

It can be expected that systemic differences in campaigning will result in differences in online output. In a comparison between lawmakers in the US and UK Stanyer (2008) found that MP's overwhelmingly used their web presence, in this case personal websites, to reaffirm their linkage to the national party, while in the US only a fraction of legislators did the same. Politicians in candidate-centred campaign systems are more likely to use the Internet to reaffirm their personal identity and political strengths to voters while there will be less incentive to do so in party-centred systems. Chen (2010) makes a distinction between candidate websites and social media. While his study of the parliamentary democracies of Australia, Canada and New Zealand finds that content on candidate websites is still largely controlled by central party strategy, this does not apply to the use of social media. Whether this is a case of parties not appreciating the potential impact of social media or not quite being new media savvy at the time Chen's work was published is as yet unknown. Much of the existing literature oversimplifies the functions of new media and fails to take into account the necessity for candidates even in countries such as the UK to pursue greater degrees of candidate-centred campaigning – a necessity caused by a weakness in the national party brand, the level of support the national party is able to give to its candidates, and the ideological preferences of the candidate themselves. The majority of literature on how new media affects the personal vote focuses on how the internet allows candidates to create and expand a personalised image. This is as an advantage for candidates for several reasons. The changes which have occurred due to the professionalisation of campaigns and media technology have also effected how the electorate views political candidates. Voters want to know the person they are voting for, whether it be judging how capable the candidate might be in delivering benefits to their constituency or what that candidate is like as a person (Comer, 2003; Gulati, 2004; Stanyer, 2008). New media has the power to close the gap between the candidate and the voter, in the way that television has helped to make the personality of the party leader such an

important factor in how voters view parties and their decision at election time. The adoption of new media platforms does not inevitably lead to candidates making more of an effort to seek the personal vote but can be an indicator of changing campaign trends. Livak *et al* (2011) conclude that websites offer candidates the potential to express their own opinions, which may even run contrary to the party line, and fund local campaign activities. In the case of their study on Israel, the internet is facilitating a general trend of candidates becoming less reliant on the party and more likely to pursue the personal vote. They conclude that "It seems that adopting personal websites…is another step in the in the disassociation of the individual politician from his party" (p.459).

To summarise new media gives candidates the opportunity to further promote their own qualifications for holding office. This can include personal beliefs and policy priorities, and references to their own work experiences, including professional activities/achievements or those made for incumbents who have already held office and greater levels of personalisation in their campaigns. Theoretically it seems logical that the new channels of communication possible through new media would be of great benefit to candidates, especially those seeking to cultivate a personal vote.

The majority of work in the field of politics and the internet has been of single country studies and while cross-national studies are slowly coming to the fore there has yet to be a direct comparison based on contrasting party vs personal vote centred campaign style and no study which compares European and Asian liberal democracies. Moreover, the vast majority of studies focus solely on one new media platform and ignore the possibility that comparing the use of multiple platforms, being used for different functions, will give a better overall idea of a candidates' campaign strategy. Finally, much of the existing literature focuses on the level of increasing personalisation but pays little attention to how new media facilitates greater candidate independence concerning policy promotion and organisation, both of which are vital for candidates pursuing the personal vote. It is clear that new media provides candidates with the opportunity to pursue the personal vote, whether this is part of their traditional campaign strategy or a major shift in traditionally party-led campaigning. Whether candidates actually use new media in this way is a key focus of this study.

The following section will explain the evolution in literature on the study of the Internet in politics and how more recent research is including studies of individual candidates at the constituency level.

The Internet in Politics: early studies

The Internet was originally seen as a potentially transformational tool in politics which would provide the opportunity for more public involvement in the political process through direct communication with parties and candidates and ideally reaffirm linkages between parties and the public. In addition, the Internet would provide a low cost communication tool for parties to interact with voters and break the stranglehold of the *cartel parties* on politics (Rommele, 2003, Gibson et al 2003, Chadwick, 2006). In sum, the Internet could be a valuable tool in reversing the decline of political parties and growth of public disengagement by offering an alternative form of communication to the mass-media, which neither parties nor citizens have much control over (Hermans & Vergeer, 2013).

Studies into the effect of new media on political parties and voters can be classified into two stages. From the embryonic stages of public Internet use from the mid-1990's until 2004 the Internet was used almost exclusively as a tool for political parties, through party/candidate websites, to augment top-down political interaction with voters. The potential for greater public participation is seen as being one of the great advantages of the Internet but studies by Hooghe and Vissers (2009) on the websites of Belgian political parties showed that party sites were most often visited by members of the public already engaged, or in the least sympathetic to, the party and that people used visits to party websites as a way to reaffirm their existing political views. Stromer (2000) found that candidate websites during the 1996 US Presidential campaign were tightly controlled by the campaigns and only gave the impression of greater candidate-voter interaction. These finding are supported by Sudulich's (2013) comparative study of the UK, Ireland, Spain and Italy which found that until 2007 parties' use of the Internet was based on information distribution rather than the creation of greater citizen engagement. Until the middle of the first decade of the new century the Internet's effect on political parties then was seen as one of *normalization.* Larger parties, due to their financial advantage, were able to exploit new technology more effectively than

smaller parties and used the Internet in the same way they used traditional communication methods – to push their policy platforms (Vaccari, 2009).

Expanding functionality of the Internet in politics

Howard Dean's 2004 campaign to be the Democratic nominee for the US Presidential election was a departure from the established top-down campaign structure which the Internet had previously been used to complement. Lacking the resources of other Democratic candidates the Internet was used as a means to mobilise support for the Dean campaign by completely decentralizing the process and allowing supporters to organize themselves without any regulation from campaign HQ (Chadwick, 2007). The 2004 election also saw newer technologies being utilised by other candidates such as viral videos, campaign blogs and features on party websites which facilitated intra-supporter debate (Sweester, 2011). Dean himself acknowledged the power of his online supporters, often changing parts of his speech based on Internet feedback. The Presidential campaign of 2008 was synonymous with candidate Obama's trademark slogan "Yes We Can". As well as breaking down the race barrier, the Obama campaign was successful in creating a new "hybrid" campaign which took the interactive elements of the Dean campaign but ensured that independent supporters, some of whom were becoming politically engaged for the first time, had guidelines and advice from the central campaign team. Vaccari (2009) states that the technological advances made in the new media field made internet campaigning change from being about *marketing,* focused solely on the promotion of the party/candidate, to *organising,* using online platforms to encourage supporters to become active in a campaign. This development is supported by Greffert's (2013) study of France where the "No" vote for the European constitution referendum in 2005 was seen very much as an online victory over the traditional media favoured "Yes" campaign. Since then politicians and parties in France have used the internet more to encourage activism and create new, supporter networks rather than as merely campaign billboards.

The aforementioned technological changes seen in the middle of the decade can be seen as a result of the development of Web 2.0 – that is online media which allow users to create their own content and engage in debate rather than merely being passive consumers of

information (O'Reilly, 2005). Studies of the Internet in politics have now gone beyond simple examinations of party and candidate websites and now concern other mediums such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube and use of blogs, all of which bring an element of personalisation back into political communication (Sweester 2011). Writers such as Coleman (2005) and Lilleker et al (2013) point out that professional level utilisation of the Internet still requires money and expertise and it is still the big parties which have the advantage. Others such as Gibson et al (2013) and Small (2011) argue that Web 2.0 innovations have had a tangible effect. Internet media are beginning to erode traditional, geographic bases of party grassroots organisation and turn previously passive information consumers into active political participants. In a study at the national level Gibson (2015) also finds that major parties in the UK are using the Internet to outsource campaign tasks, following the US model, and speculates that this decentralisation is borne out of necessity: "…adaption to the online environment, rather than further centralising parties, opens them up to a more networked model of organisation that reduces the need for formal membership and gives grassroots' supporters a stronger decision-making role" (p. 186).

Literature on constituency level candidates and signs of independence

Specific literature on the use of new media by constituency level candidates is certainly not as deep as that on Presidential candidates or the national level party but recent studies have started to throw some light on this area. In perhaps the most relevant study on candidate level Internet campaigning so far Zittel and Gschwend (2008) found that the majority of candidates in SMD seats in Germany still campaigned on a party platform in the 2005 election. While there was evidence that an increasing number of candidates were individualising their campaigns by producing their own campaign material and highlighting issues not raised by the central party, this was found to be much more prevalent in marginal seats and personalised campaigning was utilised much less by PR list candidates. However, Zittel and Gschwend also highlighted that new technology i.e. use of the Internet, pointed to a *potential* change in the party-centred status quo: "A candidate actively seeks personal votes on the basis of candidate-centred local campaign organizations, candidate centred campaign agendas and candidate centred means of online campaigning" (p. 299). In this

sense the Internet provides candidates with a cheaper and more convenient means of promoting their personal campaign, making them less reliant on both the central party and localized interests for resources. Almost three-quarters of candidates ran personal websites outside of the control of the central party. When taking this into account, Zittel and Gschwend concluded that not all SMD candidates were willing to continue to rely on declining party brands in order to win votes.

Other studies have focused on how candidates' Internet use is creating a greater degree of *personalisation* – a term initially used in politics to describe the growing influence of national party leaders but which can now also describe the online behaviour of constituency level candidates (McAllister, 2007). Herman and Veerger's (2013) cross-national study of the personalisation of candidate websites in the 2009 European election assesses how candidates use their websites to appeal to voters – whether they keep their content strictly professional or they use personal information, such as details about their family or personal likes/dislikes to create a bond with the public. As mentioned already, Web 2.0 platforms have opened a whole new area of research in respect of personalisation. In two separate studies Thamm and Bleier (2013) and Kaczmirek *et al* (2014) examine the use of Twitter by legislators and candidates in the German Bundestag. Thamm and Bleier in particular investigate how candidates use Twitter to both promote and engage with followers, with the act of actively replying to a Tweet from another user in particular standing out as a form of personal engagement. The theme of personalisation is taken further by Margaretten and Gaber (2014), and Goldbeck *et al* (2010), looking at Scottish and US legislators respectively, in an attempt to answer the question "What is Twitter used for?". Both find that Twitter is used not just as a platform for professional communication but also offers followers insights into legislators' personal worlds, be it something as simple as what television shows they like or something perhaps more important to voters such as their thoughts on political issues.

Facebook is the other new media platform most commonly used by political candidates but also the most under analysed in the study of politics and the Internet. Facebook's popularity, with over 850 million visitors every day, the ability to upload photos and video and the focus on creating online networks, make it an attractive campaign tool. In a study of candidate Facebook pages in the 2006 and 2008 US congressional elections Williams and

Gulati (2013) analysed content updates from congressional candidates and found that those candidates using Facebook extensively were more likely to be engaged in marginal races, which points at the very least to their perception that it might make a critical impact. Miyawaki's (2014) study of the 2013 Upper House elections in Japan, the first in that country in which candidates were able to use online platforms in their campaigns, went further, by measuring post frequency and how engaged candidates became in their replies to comments posted on their pages. In Germany Kaczmirek (2014) found an increasing level of interaction between politicians and members of the public posting on their page. What these examples demonstrate is that new media acts as an agent for greater interaction between the candidate and voter. This interaction is increasingly direct and personal, which implies a much different relationship between candidates and voters than that seen in traditional, top-down campaigning where communication takes place through speeches, leafleting or broadcasting.

While existing studies are uniform in their assertion that new media has not caused a revolution in political party organisation it is also the case that the role of the Internet in politics is a relatively new area of study and one where neither parties nor candidates are yet taking full advantage of its potential (Utz, 2009). Experienced political campaigners recognise the role which social media is now playing. Lord Tim Bell, who advised Margaret Thatcher for three election campaigns, stated that "the real function of social media is to replace one-on-one contacts with grassroots activists on the doorstep which people have stopped doing now".[4] While this may be overstating the present situation, there can be little doubt that websites and social media give voters the chance to better know their representatives and electoral candidates, both at a professional and personal level and are already replacing some forms of traditional political campaigning.

New media and its effect on vote share

Existing studies have primarily focused on establishing a positive correlation between the use of new media and electoral performance for candidates at both national and

[4] From the Guardian online 14/03/2015: "Spin it to win it. What does the Miliband-Salmond poster tell us about the battle of the political brands?" - http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/mar/13/spin-it-to-win-it-what-does-that-miliband-salmond-poster-tell-us-about-the-battle-of-the-political-brands

constituency level. At the most basic level new media platforms allow candidates to have a greater presence in the public domain, a greater presence leads to greater public awareness of a candidate and greater awareness, in general, leads to a greater number of votes. Voter de-alignment, greater volatility and a general trend of falling voter turnout in many advanced industrial economies (notably in the United Kingdom and Japan[5]) has led to candidates having less of a "hard" vote to rely on. In a study of both 2010 and 2014 congressional races in the United States, DiGrazia et al (2013) found that Twitter use could lead to a positive impact on votes for candidates across the board, although the benefits were greatest amongst incumbent candidates. The adoption of a social media platform by a candidate and its continued use resulted in that candidate having a greater level of interaction with voters and thus creating a form of ripple effect. By interacting, or even merely by being followed by one individual, the potential then exists for candidates to become visible to that individuals online network- in the case of Twitter, people they follow/are followed by. Bond, et al. (2012) found that the influence of these networks, resulting in an "indirect" relationship between a candidate and their followers' online networks had a marginal, but positive effect on offline political behaviour, including voter preference. This potential connection is strengthened by the fact that followers/friends on social media platforms are "trusted others" (Boulianne, 2015). This aspect of trust is becoming more of a factor in how people decide to get their information. People are turning to online sources, in particular social media, for their news in place of traditional news outlets (Mitchell et al, 2014). News and information from "known" information outlets is gradually replacing mass media, the 2016 U.S. election perhaps being the most pertinent example of this. For voters wising to find out information about a candidate, online networks are increasingly the platform to which they turn

Mere presence on the internet has shown only moderate effects on voting. For candidates to capitalise on the potential that online platforms present they need to be seen as active i.e. using new media and engaging with potential voters. Existing studies show that the degree to which new media is used by candidates can have a positive effect on voter preference. In two separate studies Jacobs and Spierings (Jacobs & Spierings, 2014 and 2016) find that Twitter use by electoral candidates in the Dutch elections of 2010 and 2012 produced some

[5] http://www.idea.int/data-tools/question-view/521 - In the UK post-war voter turnout peaked at 83.6% in 1950 and was at 65.8% in 2010. In Japan this was 77% in 1958 and 59.3% in 2012

interesting effects. Firstly, candidates were much more active in making posts in the 2012 election. This implies something of a contagion effect between candidates. Those viewing their political rivals as using social media to a greater degree will themselves be encouraged to use social media, so as not to cede a potential advantage to their rivals. Secondly more posts on Twitter can have a positive relationship on votes, although this effect peaks at a certain level and it is the less followed candidates who potentially receive the greatest benefit: "Twitter will most likely not win you an election, but for candidates who are close to the preference vote threshold, it might be that little extra that gets them a seat and/or may strengthen their appraisal and position within the party" (Jacobs and Spierings, 2016 pg. 13). To a degree, it is possible for candidate to "convince" voters through social media although this relies upon candidates using social media to promote their own image. Kruikemier (2014) finds that candidates who are more interactive, i.e. those who engage with people online through responding to messages, are the ones who stand to gain the most from social media. Use of social media is no garuntee of votes, but it very rarely damages a candidate and can have a positive effect when utilised to strengthen the connection between candidate and voter

If personal image is an important factor in candidates' use of new media to attract votes, what form does this take? In addition to interacting with users, politicians need to promote an appealing image to the electorate. The ability to build a strong narrative can greatly improve the link between candidate and voter. Those candidates able to portray themselves as both accessible and professional can improve public perception although this can be dependent on personal preference and party identification (Hellweg, 2011). The is no magic formula which will make candidates more likable or help create a connection with all voters, indeed some may be adverse to seeing more human characteristics in their political candidates as Lee & Oh's (2012) study of Twitter use in South Korea shows, although the same study also finds that personalised use of new media can have a positive effect not just amongst partisan supporters but also those identifying as independents. The ability of new media to make a difference in vote share is of course dependent on a candidate's reach. Those with existing high profiles, especially those near the top of party lists in countries using a form of proportional representation system and those with high numbers of followers stand to gain the most from new media use. However, personalisation strategies

can have a positive effect regardless of these factors. Personalised use of new media does not just have a positive, direct, effect on vote share, but a greater degree of personalised use can also increase numbers of followers, thereby spreading candidates' messages throughout larger networks and thereby generating a positive indirect effect on voters' preferences (Koc-Michalska et al, 2011). Indeed it can be expected that candidates specifically seeking the personal vote are those who are likely to be using new media to the greatest degree (Zittel, 2015).

To summarise, then, existing literature has shown that new media, in particular new media focused on candidate personalisation, can have a limited, but positive, effect on candidates' vote share. Most studies have focused on either how candidates have adopted new media platforms and how this increases their vote share, or how candidates are attempting to reach out to voters through personalisation. This study's line of enquiry adds to literature on the latter by examining new media use in the UK and Japan but through a new manual coding scheme looks beyond simple adoption of platforms and candidate mentions on social media. By classifying in detail what strategies candidates are adopting to pursue the personal vote and how successful these are, this thesis considers the potential long-term impact which greater candidate independence will have on candidate-party relations and likely strategies for future new media campaigning.

Case selection: United Kingdom and Japan

To answer the research question the proposed thesis will compare candidates' use of new media in political campaigning in two countries with two very distinct traditions of political campaigning – the United Kingdom and Japan. They have been selected as a most similar systems design (MSSD) comparison first conceived of by John Stuart Mill, although the terminology is more directly associated with Przeworski & Teune (1970).[6] The MSSD is a suitable methodology for this study as the research question is examining the two countries primarily at the *system* level. However, this does not preclude the inclusion of sub-levels (seen in this study as the *national, constituency,* and *personal* levels) for making

[6] Known as Mill's Method of Difference (Mill, 1874)

generalisations about candidates using other independent variables (Anckar, 2008). Both the UK and Japan are parliamentary liberal democracies, both contest primarily single member district seats, both societies are affluent and technologically advanced and both can be broadly categorised as two-party systems in that recent history has shown that only the Conservative and Labour parties in the UK and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) are realistically able to form single party or majority coalition governments. However, the two countries traditionally differ markedly in one key political respect: Japan allows for a far greater candidate-centred form of politics than the UK, where the emphasis is on party-centred campaigning. We might therefore expect to find more use of independent new media by candidates in Japan than in the UK, but will we in fact do so?

Campaigning in the United Kingdom

The UK has long had an established two-party system and even in the 2010 election which resulted in the formation of a coalition, there were only two parties which could realistically become the senior member of government. Carey and Shugart (1995) concluded that electoral systems which contest purely single member district seats are likely to feature candidate-centred campaigning; however, this has not generally been the case in the UK. There are several reasons why UK election campaigns have been described as party-centred. Prior to the televisual revolution of the 1960s, party campaigning was much more decentralised and responsibility given to local volunteers and by extension, candidates. However, with television able to reach a mass audience, the party leader's personal image and perceived capabilities became the focus of both party and media attention (Heffernan & Webb, 2005). In order to take advantage of new communication platforms campaigning became more professionalised, with marketing agencies and outside consultants becoming commonplace within political campaigns. Only the national level party had the resources or the expertise to effectively utilise new campaign mediums, effectively giving them control of the parties' message and manifesto production (Farrell & Webb, 2002). Moreover, the leaders of political parties have institutionalised power within their parties concerning candidate selection. Despite recent experimentation in holding primaries in selected

constituencies, Conservative and Liberal Democrat candidates are often chosen through a "central list" over which party leaders have recently aimed to ensure the selection of a more diverse group of candidates.[7] Party leadership has a great deal of discretionary power in the selection process and candidates understand that their chances of selection and their ability to secure resources from the national party relies on them being a team player and keeping their own policies in line with that of the party. In the Labour party also, the central party has the power to draw up approved lists of candidates. While the actual selection process usually remains in the hands of local party members, final ratification of candidates is still the constitutional privilege of the central party. These centrally approved candidates owe their loyalty to the central party leadership for getting them on the ballot in the first place and will often receive PR training – making them the leadership's, rather than the local party's candidate. For the Conservative party especially, from 1997 to 2010, greater centralisation of campaign organisation, led by candidates who could be controlled by central office, was seen as a way to discipline the party's campaigning and make sure candidates campaigned on the party line (Low, 2014). While incumbents may have more independence, new candidates especially, rarely have the power to force their way into being selected and rely on party leadership patronage. In particular, any candidate running in a marginal seat may look toward the central party for campaign and resource support, especially as their own financial outgoings must be strictly accounted for and are limited by the electoral commission.[8] Finally the major UK political parties, while undoubtedly classed as catch-all, have their foundation linked to class cleavage representation. Even today parties can be identified with key policies and philosophies such as the Conservatives favouring less market regulation, or Labour with promoting the industrial rights of employees. While these cleavages have weakened over the years and parties have become more ideologically similar, parties in the UK have traditionally stood for something concrete and voters have found it much easier to identify with a party and nationally promoted policies. While they don't have the same ideological basis, parties are often seen by both themselves and by the public as brands (Scammell, 2007). As Stanyer (2008 p. 421) writes,

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[7] BBC News website 2/8/2013 - http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-23437111

[8] BBC News website 18/12/2014 - http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-30477250. Candidate spending during the "short" campaign period (from 30th March) was limited to £8,700 + per voter allowances

"at a general election, voters still very much vote for the MP because he or she is the representative of a party'.

Campaigning in Japan

The tradition of candidate-centred voting in Japan stems from two key historical and interconnected factors – the dominance of the LDP and the pre-1996 single non-transferable vote system used in elections. In 1955 the Democratic Party and the Liberal Party united to form the LDP and in doing so created what became known as the "1955 System". From 1955 until 1993 the LDP was able to win an outright majority or form a coalition government in which it was the dominant force. According to Krauss & Pekkanen (2011 p.112), factions within the LDP became institutionalised in the 1970's and took over control of policy formation and leadership selection. The LDP's control over resources and its faction based organisation meant that policy formation was made through intra-party negotiations rather than through inter-party legislative debate. With its close ties with business and the bureaucracy the LDP was the party of choice for many of the most capable potential legislators. The Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV) system used prior to electoral reform saw district magnitudes of up to five seats and more importantly saw candidates from the same parties running against each other, especially within the LDP. In order to maintain factional harmony the central party was unable to favour one candidate over another within a district. Thus, candidates became reliant on private supporter networks known as *koenkai*. *Koenkai* are district based groups that support a political candidate but they are not official organs of any political party. They include business, neighbourhood associations and networks of personal connections. Through fundraising on a semi-permanent basis and vote mobilisation at election times the *koenkai* built personal ties with the candidate they supported – not with the political party itself (Ramseyer & Rosenbluth, 1997). Many of these *koenkai* were subsequently passed down through family connections to be taken over by younger generations.[9] Since electoral reform in 1996 some key changes have taken place. Japan now uses a mixed member majoritarian system of SMD seats and regional PR which has eliminated much of the factional conflict over candidate selection.

[9] As an example current Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's grandfather was Prime Minster and father Foreign Minister

Moreover, public financing has become more significant in the campaign process and increased the importance of the party label (Maeda, 2007). However, with the exception of Junichiro Koizumi of the LDP[10], few party leaders have had the power within their own party to act in a more "presidential" fashion. Public financing does not provide candidates with enough resources in increasingly expensive elections (Pempel, 2008). Reed (2011) highlights the highly pragmatic position taken by the LDP in particular. Candidates who have strong support bases, such as inherited *koenkai,* are often able to run as independents and later join a major party, or are even able to split and form rival parties. For instance, the DPJ was primarily founded by disaffected LDP legislators, while personalistic parties which run only a handful of candidates may also form, such as Ichiro Ozawa's Life Party or the Party for Future Generations, founded by former Tokyo governor and LDP lawmaker Shintaro Ishihara.

A unique feature of the country's elections, which has kept Japanese campaigning candidate-centred, lies in the ability for candidates to stand in both a SMD constituency and on a regional PR list, leading to the election of "zombie" candidates – candidates who lose in SMD races but are elected through regional PR lists. It is expected that in systems using an element of PR there will be less incentive for candidates to seek the personal vote and instead aim to capture votes on behalf of the party (see Carey and Shugart). However, in the case of Japan dual listing of candidates has the opposite effect. The particular convention between the LDP and DPJ means that all PR list candidates will also run in SMD seats and dual candidates will be ranked on the same level on the PR list, with no preferential ranking, and their selection depends on their performance in the SMD seat. Therefore, candidates with even a small chance of winning a SMD seat have an incentive to run "hard" in a local constituency, encouraging personalised and localised campaigning strategies (Reed, 2005). An example of this can be seen in the Hokkaido region in 2012. Prior to the election the DJP held 8 out of the 12 SMD seats and 4 out of 8 PR block seats in the region. In 2012 they were almost wiped out, losing in all 12 SMD seats and winning only 2 out of 8 seats in the PR block voting. The two DPJ candidates who were selected for these PR seats were Takahiro Yokomichi and Satoshi Arai. Both had been incumbents in SMD seats, both lost their seats but were elected based on the fact that their margins of defeat were smaller than those of

[10] Prime Minister (LDP) from 2001-2006

other DPJ candidates in the Hokkaido region. Despite predictions that the electoral reform of 1996 would make party-centred campaigning more of a factor in Japanese elections, the existing traditions of supporter personalised networks and existing conventions regarding PR candidates have ensured that Japan had maintained its tradition of candidate-centred campaigning up until the 2012 lower house election.

The use of new media by candidates in Japan should confirm its potential role in facilitating candidate independence. On the face of it, we might not expect new media to be used by UK candidates in a way that is independent of their parties. However, if the same traits are seen both countries, contradicting the UK's party-centred campaign tradition, then it will mark a significant change in the way elections will be fought in democracies in the future. For the first time since campaigning became more professional in the UK, candidates have the potential to distinguish themselves from their party and campaign, at least on new media platforms, for the personal vote.

Hypotheses for Chapters 3-7

The following hypotheses, based on the theoretical framework provided by existing studies will be tested as a basis for answering the research questions set out above. The bulk of these will be tested in Chapters 3-6 of this thesis, which examine candidates use of new media to pursue the personal vote. The final hypotheses, H6a – H6c relates to the sub-research question, the effect of personal vote seeking behaviour on candidates electoral performance.

Chapters 3-6: Content analysis of new media use during election campaigns

Based upon the existing literature several hypotheses have been chosen for study, relating to different levels of analysis.

> *H1: Candidates in a candidate centred campaign system (Japan) will use new media to increase their independence from the national party through the personal vote to a greater degree than in a party centred campaign system (the UK).*

This is a *system-level* hypothesis. It can be expected that the organisation and policy promotion potential of new media will especially appeal to politicians in a candidate centred system. As outlined above, the UK and Japan, despite featuring the same electoral system (at least in constituency races) have two different campaign styles. This would be evident in Japan as an extension of existing campaign methods which rely on candidates being able to raise considerable funds through supporter groups, mobilise volunteers and voters through personal networks and promotion of local/personal policies. To prove a systemic difference, candidates in the UK would be expected to have less organisational capacity evident through their new media platforms and to be less likely to promote personal/local policies and their own personal brand. Evidence of greater candidate independence regardless of systemic difference would imply potentially significant changes in political campaigning and candidate-party relations of a general nature. That is, these changes would be so general as to overcome country- or party-specific traditions.[11]

> *H2: Incentive for candidates to pursue independent campaigns will relate to national party popularity. The lower the party popularity, the more incentive for candidates to use new media to pursue the personal vote.*

This hypothesis represents *party-level* analysis. Gibson (2013) showed that nationally competitive parties in the UK (for example the Liberal Democrats) which have less resources in comparison with their competition were more likely to encourage "citizen initiated campaigning", effectively decentralising some aspects of campaign organisation in the Obama/hybrid mould. It seems logical that this would also apply to constituency candidates. In an era of declining party membership, candidate self-sufficiency may be born out of necessity, even in countries where party-centred/controlled campaigning is the norm. This also applies to party popularity. Candidates representing parties which are unpopular on a national level may make a rational choice to differentiate their policy stances or attempt to build a more personalised identity in an attempt to counter a weak national party image (Burnham, 1975). Unpopular national parties can have a direct negative effect on the vote of even relatively safe incumbents, although not necessarily to the degree that it would cause a dramatic, seat-changing swing (Fisher et al 2016). Smaller national parties may also

[11] For specific examples of campaign differences between the UK and Japan see Chapter 5

lack the resources to support their candidates in all constituencies, with candidates left to fend for themselves both in the lead-up to and during a campaign (Primo & Snyder, 2010). For the purposes of this study parties have been combined from both countries into three groups: "Ruling party" (Conservative/Liberal Democratic), "Main opposition party" (Labour/Democratic) and "Third party" (Liberal Democrat/Japanese Restoration).

> *H3a: Incentive for candidates to pursue independent campaigns will relate to the marginality of the contested (SMD) seat. Candidates fighting in marginal seats will have more incentive to use new media to pursue the personal vote.*
>
> *H3b: Incentive for candidates to pursue independent campaigns will relate to their incumbent/challenger status. Incumbent candidates will have more incentive to use new media to pursue the personal vote.*

These hypotheses represent *constituency* level analysis. Candidates fighting marginal seats have a greater incentive to use all campaign tools at their disposal in order to win and run on localized policy platforms which may not represent the priorities of the national party. They will be more pragmatic, appealing directly to the voters who will get them elected, rather than be ideologically dogmatic along party lines (Zittel, 2015). In addition, marginal seats are also likely to feature higher levels of campaign intensity, with marginal constituencies seeing a greater degree of volunteer activism and evidence of higher levels of campaign spending (Fisher & Denver, 2009). While the resources for higher levels of campaign intensity may come from the national party, or private donors, greater marginal campaigns can "boost local campaign efforts and promotion of the (constituency) candidate" (Cutts et al, 2012 pg. 361). If marginality is not shown to be a significant predictor of personal vote seeking behaviour, then we may conclude that where parties target seats and high levels of campaign intensity occur, reliance on party image remains the most significant influence on candidate behaviour. Incumbent candidates, with an already established local name and infrastructure are also expected to have a stronger personal vote already in place, which they will actively pursue (Miller & Stokes, 1966; Curtice & Steed, 1980; Golden, 2003; McAllister, 2015). The performance of the national party does have a significant effect on candidate performance at the constituency level (Fisher & Denver, 2009). It is intuitive that where an incumbent can remove the potential

effect of party performance and strengthen their own position not just for the present election but also for subsequent contests, that opportunity will be taken. This level of analysis also implies an element of necessity about further candidate independence and bases itself in existing theoretical assumptions. Candidates contesting marginal seats and incumbents have either more of an incentive or more of an opportunity to engage in more individualistic behaviour, such as producing their own campaign material or seeking localized forms of additional funding (Pekkanen *et al*, 2006; Zittel & Gschwend, 2009; Adams, et al., 2010).

> *H4a: Incentive for candidates to pursue independent campaigns will relate to the candidate's age. Older candidates will be more likely to use new media to pursue the personal vote.*
>
> *H4b: Incentive for candidates to pursue independent campaigns will relate to their level of experience. Candidates who have already been elected multiple time before will be more likely to use new media to pursue the personal vote.*

These hypotheses represent *personal* level analysis. The primary focus of the research question is on candidate independence but also aims to analyse which candidates are most likely to be using new media. Existing studies have shown that new media usage is expected to be greater amongst younger candidates who are more in tune with new media and open to using less traditional campaign methods (Hooghe & Vissers, 2009, Williams & Gulati, 2013, Miyawaki, 2014). However, younger candidates are also more likely to be beholden to party leadership, have less in the way of a committed local support base and therefore are likely to have less of a personal vote to draw on, whereas older and more experienced candidates are more likely to use their established position within their constituency to rely on a personal vote. Candidates who have served multiple terms in office are more entrenched within their local community and should already have a strong personal vote to draw on (Burnham, 1975). Multiple time incumbents will most likely have greater financial resources and/or a network of local activists which have been built-up and battle hardened over multiple election campaigns (Fisher & Denver, 2009). Candidates with local name-recognition, are less beholden to the national party for support and can risk breaking with the party line. As with H3a and H3b, there is a rational choice assumption; where there is an

opportunity for greater independence it will be seized upon by the candidate. These candidates may exhibit signs of both greater new media diffusion, in both variety of platforms used and frequency of new media use, and a greater level of independence.

In using this multi-level analytical framework this study will be able to come to draw viable conclusions as to what leads candidates to become more independent, using their new media output as the primary data source. It will also be able to test candidate behaviour in relation to personal factors (H3a&b and H4a&b), establishing whether or not candidates will campaign more independently where the *opportunity* to do so i.e. through new media, is present.

Chapters 3 and 4: National party policy comparison

The potential for candidates to use new media to craft personal identities at the expense of party identification is one of the core theoretical underpinnings of this study. There is an assumption based on the above hypotheses about which candidates will be more likely to pursue the personal vote and Chapters 3 and 4 will set out how candidates go about this. This understandably focuses on comparing campaign behavior amongst candidates. However, there is also value in exploring a direct comparison between candidate and party behavior to determine how closely candidates follow the party line during elections. As such the separate country studies (Chapters 3 and 4) will also include content analysis of national party social media use in order to test an additional hypothesis:

> *H5: Candidate policy positions will depend on their party alignment. The lower the party popularity, the more incentive for candidates to pursue policies which are different to the national party.*

The above hypothesis looks specifically at policy, something social media is particularly suited for. This hypothesis works under the assumption that candidates representing parties with high public support will be more likely to follow the party line and keep to the party's core message. In the case of both the elections under study, the two most popular parties were also the governing parties (or lead coalition partner in the case of the Conservatives),

so candidates also had their parties achievements in government to be a focal part of their campaigns.

Chapter 7: The Impact of personal vote seeking behaviour on vote share

If online campaigning is to create a significant shift in political campaigning the most obvious effect it should have is a positive correlation between new media use and votes. This chapter determines the impact of online campaigning on candidates' electoral support at constituency level, while controlling for some key offline factors. The following hypotheses are explored in this chapter, focusing on the effect that online presence has on candidates' vote share:

> *H6a: Candidates using personal vote seeking new media will receive, on average, a larger vote share than those who do not, all other effects being equal.*
>
> *H6b: More frequent use of social media by a candidate will result in a larger vote share, all other effects being equal.*
>
> *H6c: Candidates with higher numbers of followers on social media will receive a larger vote share, all other effects equal.*

Determining the effect of personal vote-focused new media is the primary focus of this chapter. In order for online campaigning to make candidates more independent from the national party, there must be evidence that pursuing a personal, rather than party, vote will pay dividends electorally. If there were no benefit in doing so, personal vote-seeking through online campaigning would be pointless and could be expected to become much less common in future, thereby refuting the idea that greater candidate independence is a natural by-product of changing campaigning technology. Hypothesis 6a aims to make the biggest contribution to the field of study on both the personal vote and of internet campaigning. It is logical to expect that candidates seeking a personal vote in two countries with single parliamentary districts will benefit from pursuing the personal vote (Carey & Shugart, 1995; Stanyer, 2008; Zittel, 2015). Traditionally this may have been done through greater public engagement at the constituency level through promoting institutions and campaigning for local services, or placing greater emphasis on the candidate's ability to

provide benefits for their constituency (especially if they are an incumbent) and to be an effective representative at the national level (Primo & Synder, 2010; McAllister, 2015). These core functions of personal vote seeking behaviour are not just possible through the use of new media, but with candidates' complete control over the content of these platforms, they would seem to be a campaign strategy with obvious potential benefits.

It is important to distinguish those candidates using social media to pursue the personal vote from those who social media for other purposes. Just because a candidate has embraced social media does not mean they are automatically using it to enhance their personal image; they could just as easily promote the national party and its leadership. A strong social media presence by itself, as a form of free advertising and an effective method of engaging with voters, could logically have a positive effect on vote share and it is important to take this into account when assessing the impact of online campaigning on vote share. Hypothesis 6b works on the assumption that greater use of social media will raise a candidate's public awareness and have a positive effect on the number of votes they receive. While existing studies have determined that new media use is not a decisive factor in candidate's vote share, most studies have found a positive relationship between greater social media use and votes (Boulianne 2015; Jacobs & Spierings 2016; Hansen & Kosiara-Pedersen). H6c relates to a candidate's online presence. Simpy put, candidates with a higher social media following could be expected to gain more of an advantage in online campaigning and this will be positively reflected in their vote share. A larger online following in itself already represents greater public awareness of a candidate. Moreover, candidates with a small following may use a campaign strategy which is highly personal vote-seeking or make hundreds of social media posts during an election campaign. If the number of people receiving these posts is relatively small, then it will have little actual impact on the votes they receive at the aggregate level. Having a large number of followers does not just give the candidate a larger direct audience, but also encompasses their followers own personal networks (i.e. third parties, those following the direct follower of the candidate). This can potentially expand a base of hundreds of direct followers into thousands of people who may see a candidate's social media output, many of whom it can be expected will live in the same constituency (Bond et al, 2012, Koc-Michalska et al 2014). This indirect form of exposure to the candidate may prove especially beneficial as the information regarding the

candidate comes to the third party not through traditional media but through a “trusted other”, a friend or family member whose opinion they are more likely to be influenced by (Boulianne 2015)

Chapter 2

Research design and methodology

This study consists of three distinct sections. Chapters 3-5 examines the core research question of the thesis set out in the Introduction. Chapters 3 and 4 analyse the use of new media by candidates from the 2014 Japanese lower house election and the 2015 United Kingdom general election. These chapters will establish how candidates are using new media to enhance their independence and pursue the personal vote during election campaigning. Chapter 5 presents information from the same data set and makes a direct comparison between Japanese and UK candidates to test country level differences and confirm which other factors determine personal vote seeking behavior in both countries. Chapter 6 aims to confirm the findings from statistical analysis in Chapters 3-5 through use of qualitative analysis, namely interviews with candidates from both countries. Chapter 7 examines the sub-research question set out in the Introduction and determines whether personal vote focused new media use plays a significant and/or positive role in the number of votes candidates receive.

The use of mixed methodology in social science

Skinner (2012), speaking from the view of an anthropologist, notes that while some research methods, specifically interviews, do not provide enough data themselves to satisfactorily answer a research question without some form of observation to test and validate findings, they do provide researchers with the potential to uncover previously unknown knowledge. "Merging" data from different sources can add a greater depth to research within social science (Creswell & Clark, 2007). The use of mixed methodology within social science was first developed by researchers to overcome the limitations of positivist methodology unable to fully appreciate the phenomena underlying relationships of interest, but still maintaining the ability to rigorously test hypotheses in a scientific manner (Heath, 2015). This led social scientists to adopt a combination of analytical tools in order to successfully answer a research question. Denzin (1970) identified four variations on the use of triangulation: *data, investigator, theory* and *methodological* triangulation. Of these forms this study is most closely an example of methodological triangulation. The overall research question remains the same although the questions used in candidate interviews are derived from the results of the content analysis in Chapters 3-5. Denzin states: "(the) basic feature will be the combination of two or more different research strategies in the study of the same empirical

units" (pg. 308). In the strictest sense the methodology used in this study uses only elements of triangulation. Content analysis of new media and candidate interviews are distinct techniques, with the initial analysis relying on a framework created by the researcher themselves. As such while the two different methods of data collection do, in part, run in parallel they are able to stand alone as separate data, a key component of triangulation of methodology (Lin & Loftus, 2005). Primarily though, this study is concerned with using data collection and analysis as a first step followed by candidate interviews to act as a deeper explanatory tool, a valid use of mixed methodology (Lieberman, 2005, Ong *et al* 2006). Webb (1966/2000) highlights the main advantage of using a mixed methodological approach: "When a hypothesis can survive the confrontation of a series of complementary methods of testing it contains a degree of validity unattainable by one tested within the more constricted framework of a single method study". This research examines the use of new media by candidates across a number of different levels, but is also an examination of the behaviour of individuals during election campaigns. Goerres and Prinzen (2010) add further support in using mixed methodology for studies at the individual level. Studies must fulfil the criteria of *inertia,* specifically with data collection taking place at multiple points in time and the investigating a research question which requires a mixed methodological approach. While this second point is rather vague this study fulfils both of those criteria. The analysis of candidates' use of new media was conducted during the respective elections while candidate interviews were conducted some months after. The combination of methodology allows for both a researcher led analysis of candidates' new media output but also allows the candidates themselves, with the benefit of hindsight, the opportunity to both corroborate and confirm the intentions behind their new media use. The use of mixed methodology has the advantage of providing some level of balance to what Heath (2015, pg. 641) describes as any "error caused by method bias, response sets, or investigator bias, to name but a few.."

<u>Chapters 3- 5: Methodology</u>

The vast majority of existing studies into the use of the Internet and politics employ some form of content analysis. Krippendorff (2004) defines content analysis as "a research

technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" (p. 18). Many scholars over a considerable period of time (see Berelson, 1952; Hardy, Harley, & Phillips, 2004; Lowe, 2004) have characterised content analysis as being a purely quantitative method of data analysis. Krippendorff disagrees, saying that while content analysis needs to be objective, replicable and verifiable, the coding analysis of texts (and in the case of this study online written text) requires qualitative input from researchers to define what constitutes valid content. A form of content analysis which "starts with a theory or relevant research findings as guidance for initial codes" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; p. 1277) certainly falls under the classification of qualitative methodology. Table 2.1 summarises the use of content analysis in studies concerning the use of the Internet in politics.

Table 2.1: Summary of existing research areas and methodology used in studies of candidates' new media output

Platform	**Common Research Areas**	**Common Methodology Used + main functions of platform**
Party/Candidate website	Site function Site interactivity	*Content analysis + interviews* - Use of site in information provision - Use of site in supporting offline organisation - Use of websites to build online networks - Incorporation of web 2.0 features such as embedded videos and integration of other social media platforms
Facebook	Frequency and depth of use	*Content analysis* - Measurement of number of posts/likes and candidate interactions + subjects referenced
Twitter	Frequency of use Function of use (personal vs professional)	*Content analysis* - Collection of data by functional category (@/#/RT) - Content analysis of collected data

The methodology used in this study falls under the classification of qualitative research. A combination of qualitative methods, namely content analysis and semi-structured interviews, are used in this research in order to answer the core research question. While qualitative research relies on the author's own interpretive reasoning rather than a strict scientific foundation, by using different forms of qualitative methodology to investigate the same research question, this study achieves a form of triangulation and provides results which can be validated through multiple data sources.

For the purposes of this study content analysis of data from three new media platforms – candidate websites, candidate Twitter feeds and candidate Facebook pages have been collected and analysed in the following ways:

Candidate websites

In earlier studies of political party websites, content analysis was used primarily to assess the functionality and interactivity of candidate websites, finding their primary use to be one of top-down information provision with very little in the way of active reader engagement (Stromer-Galley, 2000 Gibson, 2003, Trammel, 2006). In more recent years websites have been viewed as a platform for candidates to increase their personal appeal, using detailed candidate biographies or including personal information, for example, about the candidate's family or hobbies (Hermans & Vergeer, 2013). The main development in the Web 2.0 era has been provision for website interactivity. Static, information only, websites are no longer the norm. Websites now offer more ways to get supporters involved and using a variety of features such as videos, volunteer registration and downloadable "do-it-yourself" campaign content. Recent studies have found that websites are becoming more geared towards encouraging activism, establishing online networks for voters to both discuss issues and organise offline support for election campaigns, rather than just informational content (Strandberg, 2008; Vaccari, 2009; Cardenal, 2013; Greffert, 2013). This includes not only making websites more engaging for readers but also including a greater variety of functional tools which include the ability for candidates to directly elicit financial donations, distribute campaign material and recruit volunteers.

Levels of candidate independence will be judged on a points basis derived from a number candidate vs party campaign features, with a maximum of 7 points indicating the highest level of personal vote features. Both *fundraising* and *volunteer sign-up* (organisational functions) have been given primacy over personalised functions promoting candidate image or personalised policies. With a trend of decline for parties both in financial support and human/volunteer resources, the ability for candidates to personally attract both donations and volunteers is becoming increasingly important (Carty, 2004). Online campaigning has not yet replaced traditional campaigning as candidates' primary focus on campaigns. In terms of mobilizing voters, money and in particular volunteers (at least in the UK) remain the most important resources in a constituency candidates' arsenal (Fisher & Denver, 2009; Cutts et al 2012). Candidates less reliant on the national party have a much greater opportunity to run independent, candidate focused campaigns (Zittel & Gschwend, 2008). In the UK for example, financing at the constituency level consistently fails to meet the needs of local parties, with this being especially true in untargeted seats at election time (Pattie & Johnston, 2016). The same is true in Japan, where the national party is not always viewed as being capable of organising effectively at the local level (Krauss & Pekkanen, 2011). These features of candidate websites have been coded as follows:

- Fundraising: Website offers users chance to donate directly to candidate/local party = 2
- Volunteer sign-up: Website offers users the chance to volunteer directly to the candidate's campaign = 2
- Personalisation: Website features biographies of candidates detailing their personal, not just professional, histories = 1
- Policy – Website details candidate's own personal policy preferences, often focused on local issues = 1
- Website design / extra content – Website is unique in design, not based upon a design used by other candidates of the same party / website features additional content which could help with campaign organisation or uses the candidate's image as a strong selling point = 1[12]

[12] This includes downloadable information such as candidate newsletters, highly detailed information about the candidates life history/personal beliefs or downloadable campaign material such as posters or signs

The above criteria will be used to rank candidate websites on a 7-point scale, with 7 being the maximum and showing candidates using websites to pursue the personal vote at a high level. The use of an index to represent website functionality has not been unusual in studies of the internet in politics. In previous studies indexes have been used to show whether internet use has led to *equalisation* amongst political parties (Gibson et al, 2003), greater candidate personalisation (Hermans & Vergeer, 2013), and of particular relevance to this project, candidate-centered campaigning (Zittel & Gschwend 2015). Like those, this study looks at which functions are present on candidate websites, implying that where these functions exist, candidates are consciously trying to pursue the personal vote or increase the organisational strength of their own constituency campaign.

Twitter and Facebook

Twitter and Facebook represent the two most commonly used social media platforms, are free to use and have a global registered user base of 1.415 billion and 288 million respectively[13]. As with candidate websites, content analysis has been the primary methodological tool for analysing the recent explosion of social media use. In two separate studies Thamm and Bleier (2013) and Kaczmirek *et al* (2014) examined the use of Twitter by legislators and candidates in the German Bundestag. Thamm and Bleier concluded that the act of *retweeting* is one of professional engagement/promotion, whereas direct *replies* are used to build more personal engagement. More content specific studies were conducted by Goldbeck *et al* (2010) and Margaretten and Gaber (2014). Goldbeck *et al* also used content analysis in their study of the use of Twitter by US congressmen. 200 Tweets were taken from each Congressman and manually coded based on the function of the Tweet including categories such as *communication* ("internal" with other Congressman and "external" with the public"), *requesting action* e.g. fundraising and *location/activity.* Margaretten and Gaber (2014) analysed Scottish MPs' use of Twitter over a two year period going deeper than previous studies into explaining what legislators use Twitter for, who they communicate with and how formal these interactions are – finding that Twitter is a platform which allows

[13] http://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/

politicians a greater level of "authenticity" in their communication with the public. These studies attempt to answer the question "What do politicians use Twitter for?" While not the precise question which will be addressed in this thesis this question acts as a good starting point for the analysis of all online platforms and the content analysis used in looking at the Scottish Assembly and US Congress point to a methodology which is also applicable to examining specific areas such as candidate policy preferences in comparison to the national party.

Research into the use of the popular social media platform Facebook is more limited in comparison to party/candidate websites and Twitter. However, Facebook's popularity, with over 850 million visitors every day, the ability to upload photos and video and the focus on creating online networks, make it an attractive, easy to use and cheap, at the most basic level, campaign tool. Williams and Gulati (2013) analysed posts from two hundred different congressional candidates in elections held in the US and coded information based on user update frequency and depth of content updates, supplemented with candidate interviews on the importance of Facebook use. The results showed that the competitiveness of a race within a Congressional district was the key independent variable affecting how and why new technology is used. Miyawaki's (2014) study of the 2013 Upper House elections in Japan used a deeper level of content analysis on candidate Facebook pages - by measuring the frequency of posts and counting the number of times candidates engaged with commenters and mentioned specific policies. The results were then tested against variables *party affiliation, age, gender* and *incumbency (times elected)* using regression analysis – showing that party affiliation was the most important explanatory variable. Kaczmirek *et al* (2014) used a specifically designed software application to monitor how candidates were interacting with visitors during the 2013 German Bundestag election. In order to quantify what kind of interaction was taking place on these pages, posts were coded according to key words that were used in topic discussion and how emotive/personal users were in their Facebook interaction.

For the purposes of this study candidate *tweets/retweets* and Facebook *posts/shares,* all signifying a conscious endorsement by the candidate, have been manually categorised into eight areas:

- Local policy promotion: Personal/local issues promoted by the candidate which relate specifically to the constituency.
- National policy promotion: National issues promoting national party policies/achievements.
- Personal: Output which promotes the individual virtues or accomplishments of the candidate.
- Party: Output which relates to the national party and its leadership rather than the candidate.
- Campaign activity: Posts which detail candidates campaigning which could advertise upcoming speeches of visits or encourage supporters to join the campaign team.
- Positive campaigning: Content which refers to another party or their candidates in a positive way.
- Negative campaigning: Content which details the candidate's opposition in a negative light and promote their own professional capability.
- Any other uncategorised output

Twitter and Facebook accounts used in this study have been verified by Twitter and Facebook page[14] or if the Twitter/Facebook account is directly linked from the candidate website or national party website.

Coding for candidates' social media posts is based on a pilot study conducted by the author into the 2014 Rochester and Strood by-election in the UK.[15] Taking this election as a starting point for social media use the author found that the vast majority of candidate output during an election period was devoted to the campaign itself and could be categorised into the fields shown above. Other studies have analysed social media posts in the same way, by analysing content to determine what political actors are talking about and how they are presenting themselves to their electorate (Thamm & Bleier, 2013; Hermans & Vergeer, 2013; Margaretten & Gaber, I, 2014) and in what different ways they are using social media posts (Goldbeck et al, 2010; Miyawaki, 2014; Zittel & Gschwend 2015). Due to the nature of

[14] A free service for public figures or Twitter/Facebook users (featuring a blue tick by the username)
[15] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/273257564_New_Media_Campaigning_in_the_Rochester_and_Strood_by-election_-_November_2014

this study, it was important to be able to contrast candidates' pursuit of the personal vote with their reliance on party/national issues in campaigning, especially when making a party vs candidate-centered system comparison. As such, the coding scheme covers two distinct types of campaign posts, those which pursue the personal vote: *campaign, activity, personal* and *local policy promotion,* and those which focus on the national party: *party and national policy promotion.* Posts relating to *negative camapigning, positive campaigning* and *uncategorised output* made up enough of candidate output to be noteworthy during the Rochester and Strood campaign and are included here to add greater context to show how candidates campaign, although they do not contribute directly to the research question.

From these posts those falling into the category of *local policy promotion, personal* and *campaign activity* are added together to determine candidates overall *personal vote content* (PVC) score from social media, and reported as percentage of their social media posts. *Local* campaign posts show the candidate concerned not just with the role they would play in the national legislature but what they would focus on personally as a prospective servant of a given constituency. As such they are categorised as personal vote seeking behaviour. It is also worth highlighting the importance of the *campaign activity* category and why it has been classified as being part of personal vote seeking behaviour. Campaign activity posts primarily show candidates out and about on the campaign trail, either meeting constituents, making policy speeches or addressing support groups. They can also include information about a candidate's campaign e.g. where they are scheduled to visit or specifically which part of the constituency they have visited and appeals for donations and volunteers. There are two key reasons as to why campaign activity posts have been classified as related to personal vote. Firstly, posts which are focused chiefly on the candidate and their activities can be seen as a form of microblogging (Orkibi 2015). As these posts are often being made in real time and show the candidate in a less managed environment, in comparison to prearranged event appearances and campaign literature, their intention is to project an air of authenticity. Interaction, even if one-way, becomes more personal and less professionalised. Secondly, these posts help to document a candidate's campaign. They can be designed to advertise upcoming campaign apperances as well as create a record of where the candidate has been active during a campaign. An important aspect of cultivating the personal vote is being *visible* to one's constituents (Miller & Stokes, 1966, Fenno, 1978).

In trying to project an active and dynamic campaign on the ground, candidates use campaign activity posts to show voters both a connection with the local area they wish to represent and potray a campaign led by an hardworking and dynamic candidate. The candidate is front and centre as the focus of the campaign, rather than a party leader or party label.

Data collection

Recent studies into the use of new media support Krippendorff's (2004) methodological view that content analysis can be qualitative – assessing what candidates use new media for and inferring what the strategy behind it is meant to achieve

Table 1.2: An overview of methodology and data collection for the proposed study

Platform	**Method of analysis**	**Data collected**
Candidate websites	Content analysis – one time during the campaign	Website features/functions of candidate sample from UK and Japan
Twitter	Content analysis – all *tweets/retweets*	All tweets and retweets from candidate sample from UK and Japan
Facebook	Content analysis – all posts/updates made by the candidate	All Facebook posts and shares posts from candidate sample from UK and Japan

SMD candidates from both the UK (N = 78) and Japan (N = 73) were selected from among the three largest parties in both countries for this analysis, making a total of 151 candidates. Candidates were selected so as to achieve an approximately even division primarily between the parties studied but also the other independent variables featured Chapters 3-5. For example, from the UK, approximately one-third of the candidates selected were from the Conservative Party, one-third from Labour and one-third from the Liberal Democrats. All

of these were divided approximately evenly between marginal and non-marginal seats.[16] The selection of candidates under these parameters was random. All candidates were eligible for inclusion as long as they fulfilled the conditions set out above. Candidate websites were analysed to determine both the functionality of the website and the policies promoted by the candidates. In addition, all candidate output from Twitter and Facebook was collected and categorised as set out above. This includes all *tweets* (Twitter posts made by the candidate), *retweets* (Twitter posts made by other users and highlighted by the candidate), and *Facebook posts* or *shares* (activity which requires the active engagement of the candidate). Twitter posts were collected using Tweet Archivist software, with collection taken every seven days throughout the course of the respective campaigns.[17] Facebook posts were read live and coded directly from candidates' Facebook pages. Social media output can take the form of written text, linking to external sites or news reports and posting of images and videos. Social media output for both countries was collected from the "short" campaign periods in both countries – Monday 25th April 2015 – Thursday 7th May 2015 in the UK and Thursday 2nd December 2014 – Sunday 14th December 2014 in Japan. When this research plan was originally formulated the Japanese general election had been scheduled for December 2016 (as the latest possible date the election could be held). Despite the turbulent nature of Japanese politics over the past ten years, the comfortable majority held by the LDP/Komeito coalition after the 2012 election hinted at a stable and enduring government. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's surprise decision to call a snap election in December 2014 accelerated the timetable for data collection for this study.

While not all of the parties included contest every SMD seat in their respective general elections, they are large enough and geographically diverse enough in where they are running candidates to be classed as national parties and promote themselves as being a potential part of a national government. Due to the complex nature of the data classification candidate numbers are limited to a medium N. Analysis of large N data concerning candidates' use of new media was judged to be unrealistically time consuming.

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[16] Full breakdown of candidate selection can be seen in Chapters 3 and 4

[17] While Tweet Archivist software allows users to use a variety of analytical tools, for this study its basic function which allows users to collect and export tweets, along with time/date/origin information, and export them to a readable excel file was used. This captured all tweets and retweets from a given Twitter account and allowed them to be stored for later analysis. More information on software can be found at - http://www.tweetarchivist.com

For example, many candidates made hundreds of social media posts during the campaign period. While collecting this data would have been possible, analysing all social media output, especially along the lines of national vs local policy, would not have been feasible given the constraints of a doctoral thesis. As such, the following sampling rule was followed: when a candidate made less than 200 posts on one social media platform, all posts were read and coded. When over 200 were made, a statistically significant number of posts were read and coded (to a 95% confidence interval).

Dependent and independent variables included in PVI analysis (H1-H4)

Dependent variable – Personal Vote Index (PVI) score

For Chapters 3, 4 & 5 of this thesis, the candidates' pursuit of the *personal vote* will be used as the dependent variable. The personal vote can be defined as "that portion of a candidate's electoral support which originates in his or her personal qualities, qualifications, activities and record" (Cain, Ferejohn, & Fiorina, 1987; pg. 9). Regardless of the specifics of the electoral system, any candidate who is directly elected by voters relies on a personal vote to some degree (Golden, 2003). Moreover, SMD systems such as the UK and Japan generally suffer from lower turnout than PR systems based on a national or regional list vote, which can present a further challenge to candidates attempting to mobilise support (Robbins, 2010). The personal vote can be made up of several different factors. Firstly, especially in candidate-centred systems, it is important that the incumbent is able to show their constituents that they have been able to provide benefits during their time in office and for challengers to highlight the incumbent's shortcomings and their own suitability to hold a legislative position. This is most important in marginal races where a greater personal appeal may help a challenger overcome the incumbent's natural advantage in resources and name recognition (Herrera & Yawn, 1999). Secondly, with the decline of traditional party cleavages and partisanship, the policies for which a candidate stands are becoming more important in comparison with their party identification (Wattenburg, 1991). An important element of the personal vote is for candidates to identify local issues which directly affect their constituents, such as talking about a local school under threat of closure or property

development. As stated previously these issues may well be in conflict with those of the national party. Thirdly, candidates may tend toward *personalisation* – referring to candidates talking more about their private lives via the media, constructing a more humanising narrative and creating a connection with voters on a personal level (Driessens *et al*, 2010). In many democracies, with partisanship falling, an increasingly sceptical public increasingly is looking to the media for information and assessments of the personal qualities of politicians (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 2010). This personalisation can be seen as a way for politicians to take back control of the narrative which is produced about them by the independent media. New media represents a way for candidates to get their message about their own performance, policy and personal characteristics into the public domain, unfiltered by a critical media. In summary, Chapters 3 & 4 do not attempt to evaluate the strength of the personal vote, but rather the extent to which candidates take action that seeks to attract it.

This study takes data from two very distinct sources, candidate websites and social media, in order to develop an understanding of candidates' overall new media strategy. Data from both these sources is measured in different ways. From candidates' websites, a 7 point scale based on functionality is used. For social media, a percentage of posts which are classed as personal vote focused is the measurement. It is therefore necessary create a dependent variable which incorporates both of these elements. This has been done by standardising the Candidate Website Index scores and the percentage of personal vote content (PVC) of social media and adding the two values together. This creates a Personal Vote Index (PVI) score for each candidate which acts as the dependent variable in chapters 3, 4 & 5:

Candidate Website Index Z score
+
Personal Vote Content Z score
=
Personal Vote Index (PVI) score

Independent variables

The following will be used as independent variables in the proposed study:

- System level variable (H1): *country* of candidate (UK or Japan)
- National level variable (H2): *party affiliation*. Which party the candidate represents.
- Constituency level variables (H3): represented by two factors – *marginality* of contested seat (a seat is classified as marginal if it requires a 6% swing[18], based on results from the previous election held for that seat or reliable polling data) and *incumbent/challenger status* of the candidate.
- Personal level variables (H4): As well as the *new media candidate independence* testing variables laid out above, the analysis takes into account two other personal attributes that the literature suggests might be relevant when it comes to the personal vote and use of new media: *age* and *previous terms served* by candidates.

Along with a systemic comparison between the UK and Japan (H1), representing party-centred and candidate centred election campaigning respectively, the above variables are designed to answer the hypothesis set out above.

Based on the research question the initial hypothesis would be for H1 (country effect) to be the biggest contributory factor. Based on personal vote literature (see Chapter 1) it could also be expected that party, constituency and personal factors would also determine candidates behavior. This will be tested through use of Multiple Classifiction Analysis (MCA). MCA is an additive modelling technique which is appropriate for interval-level dependent variables and nominal-level independent variables, such as those being used in this study. The Beta coefficients express the explained variance in the dependent variable as a

[18] There is no strict definition for a marginal seat. The BBC defines a marginal seat where the runner up is 10 or less percentage points (a 5% swing) behind the winner (http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-39655379). While this was not an issue in the UK, the Japanese 2014 election resulted in very few marginal seats by this definition. It was decided to extend the needed swing of votes from incumbent to runner-up by 1 percentage point, thus allowing more Japanese candidates to be classed as *marginal* and eligible to be included.

proportion of the total variance, while controlling for the effects of other independent variables (Retherford & Choe, 1993).

Chapters 3 & 4: National party policy comparison (H5)

In addition to social media output collected from the candidate sample, tweets were also collected from the official Twitter feeds of the six parties included in this study. Unlike the candidate tweets, which were manually analysed, these tweets have been categorised using NVivo software based on keywords relating to policy statements only.[19] Comparing the type of policies mentioned by candidates to which policies their respective parties are promoting gives an additional insight into what degree candidates are willing to talk about issues which are different from the national party or conversely may show evidence of candidates following a national party message in terms of what issues they are talking about. Dissent over policy with the national party can itself be seen as a way to pursue the personal vote (Kam, 2009).

All Twitter output from the six national parties during the respective short campaign periods has been collected. All tweets and retweets from national party accounts have been categorised by policy area using NVivo software.[20] The percentage of party tweets devoted to each of the policy areas is then compared with social media output of the candidate sample based on party identification to determine which candidates are following the parties' own policy priorities and which candidates are willing to form independent policy platforms. To be sure, this is a test of how congruent the *agendas* of candidates and their national parties are, rather than the actual content of policies, but this is still an important indicator of the extent to which candidates develop policy emphases and priorities that differ from those of their parties. To this extent, it is a valid test of personal independence of the candidate from the party in a campaign context. The advantage of using real-time social media posts over other indicators of party policy, for example resources such as the Comparative Manifesto Database, is that they provide evidence of how party policies evolve during an election campaign. Party manifestos are written, unchangeable texts formulated

[19] See appendices C and E

[20] Based on an initial categorisation of candidate tweets, the following policy categories were used: *economy, environment, education, healthcare, defence, transport/infrastructure, Europe, immigration, housing, other*

before the campaign. However, the policies set out within are often left by the wayside when an election campaign hits full stride and parties have to adapt to events and public reaction to manifesto pledges. As such social media can act as a much more reliable indicator of which policy areas parties are prioritising in election campaigns.

Chapter 6: Candidate Interviews

In addition to the data collection and analysis conducted in Chapter 3 to 5, interviews were also conducted with candidates or members of their campaign staff, and these are the focus of Chapter 6. Elite interviews most commonly refer to subjects that have specific knowledge or occupy a specific position within an organisation, such as a business or political party. It is expected that those in elite positions have the ability to describe their own position/behaviour and give a unique insight into events or practices (Hochschild, 2009). Elite interviews, unlike standardised interviews, are a method to check, rather than develop, a hypothesis and will be employed in this way to confirm the findings of the data collected from candidates' new media output (Yin, 2009). The primary purposes of conducting these interviews are twofold. Firstly, interviews will establish how much input the central party has in candidates' new media output. Is the party controlling what candidates say? Considering the financial and organisational challenges faced by most major political parties today signs of greater independence may actually be strategic choices by the party. Without asking candidates directly how big the role of the party is in their new media use and how they themselves view new media, as a potentially valuable campaign tool or as merely something they are using because all of their competitors are, the primary research question cannot fully be answered. Secondly interviews are used to confirm the findings made in Chapters 3-5. The meanings behind candidates' new media output, especially and how this relates to the personal vote, have been constructed by the researcher with a solid theoretical underpinning. As such it is useful to confirm with candidates that the framework on how to classify and interpret new media output are correct e.g. the inclusion of *campaign activity* posts as part of personal vote seeking strategy. However, the specific interpretation of such posts is original to this researcher and as such benefits through confirmation by candidates themselves.

While candidates, especially those whom became legislators, are amongst the busiest and most difficult actors to gain access to, they are not always responsible for their own campaign content and strategy, be it with traditional or online forms of campaigning. As such, support staff and electoral agents are also significant actors and valid interview participants. A semi-structured approach to interviews is necessary for such subjects. Elite actors are likely to resist what Aberbach & Rockman (2002 pg.674) describe as "straight-jacketing" and may resist attempts by the researcher to confine them to a narrow line of questioning. As such it was important during the course of interviews to adapt to any tangential topics which may potentially lead to subjects raising new issues previously unconsidered, while making sure that information is both relevant and challenged in an acceptable way by the researcher so as not to upset any relationship between the two parties (Moyser, 2006). Preparation is also key to any interview and with potential time constraints the interviews must have clear aims and a set of core questions to be answered. As Berry (2002, pg. 679) states: "excellent interviewers are excellent conversationalists". Through a combination of personal flexibility, building a good rapport and preparation on the subject, it is hoped that these interviews have gone a long way to complementing the data set in answering the research questions.

Interviewing poses several challenges. For many social researchers the biggest challenge of interviewing lies in gaining access to the relevant subjects. Politicians themselves are very busy and may not have the time or interest to take part in an interview. Researchers in the social sciences inevitably find themselves constrained by time, location or interruption of interviews which are commonplace in elite interviewing and force the researcher to adjust their carefully planned set of questions (Harvey, 2011). Moreover, politicians are likely to have received media training and may be more interested in how they come across in the interview rather cooperating with the researcher to answer the relevant question. While being part of a scientific collaboration may appeal to some elite subjects, others may treat the exercise as a chance to promote a personal/political agenda. While subjects cannot be relied upon to view themselves or their actions objectively it is important that they feel comfortable enough to talk openly. How they themselves interpret their thoughts and actions gives a valuable insight into their world and other actors in a similar position i.e. other politicians. Finally, researchers must consider how to code and analyse the data

collected. An advantage of elite interviews is that, ideally, the respondents give clear and rational, at least from their point of view, responses for which a coding structure can be built around (Aberbach & Rockman, 2002). The role of the researcher is not just to register what is said but also what is left unsaid (Berry, 2002). A subject may consciously or unconsciously steer the conversation away from topics they do not want to discuss or to talk about an issue interesting for them but perhaps not relevant to the study. The researcher may not always have the ability to successfully challenge them on these points. Consistent coding schemes are vital to ensure scientific rigour and it is vital to make sure that each respondent answers the same key questions while also allowing for flexibility when interesting side topic or new concepts may arise. Once data is collected it is important to be able to identify key themes and points of consistency and differences which either tie in to stated hypotheses or that point to new trends which the researcher has yet to consider. In sum elite interviews require researchers to have a unique skill set – involving more of a personal element to conducting interviews while ensuring they remain scientifically valid.

Chapter 6 will discuss how these challenges are to be met in this study along with further details about interview preparation and formulation of interviews questions based on conclusions drawn earlier in the thesis. In total 17 interviews were conducted, 9 in the UK and 8 in Japan. Further details about candidate interviews, including their framework which is derived from the results reported in Chapters 3-5, and discussion of results, is set out in Chapter 6.

Chapter 7: The impact of new media on vote share (H6)

Dependent and independent variables

Dependent variable: *Change in candidate vote share (from previous election)*

The change in vote share each candidate received in comparison to the previous election in their constituency (as a percentage) will act as the dependent variable.

Independent variables

Candidate PVI score (H7a): PVI scores will directly relate to H7a and test whether candidates use of new media to attract the personal vote has a positive effect on vote share. This variable acts as the main indicator of personal vote seeking behavior and is derived from the same candidate *PVI score* used in chapters 3-5.

Social media output (H7b): In assessing the UK and Japan separately this variable will be taken from the number of posts made by each candidate during the "short" election period (as set out earlier in this chapter). In the second instance, Chapter 5 will combine both UK and Japanese candidates together in order to establish whether or not this variable has a more general effect. In this case this variable will be constructed from averages of candidate *posts per day.* Posts are taken from candidates' Twitter and Facebook accounts during the short campaign period and include all posts and shares on Facebook and tweets and retweets on Twitter.

Social media following (H7c): This variable is constructed from the combined number of followers on Twitter and Facebook each candidate has at the time of the election

Control variables

To determine the effect of social media on vote share offline campaign factors have also been taken into account. Specifically, *national party vote share, candidate vote share from previous election, party leader visit, marginality* and *incumbency* will act as control variables. The purpose of this is twofold. Firstly, adding control variables into a regression model allows us to see how much of an impact social media use is making when taking into account the effect of existing, traditional methods of campaigning. Secondly, differences that do exist in the effect of both social media and offline variables between candidates in the UK and Japan will further confirm the differences in campaigning styles in the two countries. The control variables are operationalized as follows:

National party vote share: The percentage of overall vote achieved by the national party. This variable represents the performance of the national party, and it is important to acknowledge that any given candidate's constituency vote share will probably be influenced by the national party performance.

Party leader visit: This variable represents a strong endorsement of the candidate by the national party leader and party resources, in both financial and time terms. This is a dichotomous variable: 1 = party leader visit, 0 = no visit.

Marginality: This variable controls for results based on the previous general elections (2010 in the UK and 2012 in Japan). Marginality is judged based on the same parameters set out in Chapter 3-5. 1 = marginal (<6% difference in vote share between winning candidate and runner-up), 0 = non-marginal (>6% difference in vote share between winning candidate and runner-up).

Incumbency: This variable indicates whether a candidate is the current incumbent, or represents the same party where winner from the previous election is not standing. 1 = incumbent, 0 = non-incumbent.

Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression will be conducted to test the above hypotheses, initially separating candidates from the two countries, and then again with all candidates pooled together. Each test will comprise of two models. The first will include only the online variables: *PVI score, social media output* and *social media following* in order to test which online platforms contribute the most to candidates vote share, and whether or not their impacts are significant. The second model will include the control variables listed above in order to determine what kind of effects social media campaigning truly has when taking more traditional means of campaigning into account. Chapter 7 will feature further discussion and a descriptive breakdown of all the variables included in this analysis.

Chapter 3

The 2015 United Kingdom general election

Background to the 2015 United Kingdom general election

The formation of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition after the 2010 general election heralded the culmination of decades of gradual change away from two party politics in the UK. The decline in grass-roots support and overall membership for the Conservative and Labour parties, combined with the rise of single issue and nationalist parties in the United Kingdom and pre-election polling numbers (Table 3.1) led many to predict that the 2015 election would lead to either another formal coalition or a "supply and demand" type agreement which the media speculated that the Labour and Scottish Nationalist parties may enter into. This belief was reinforced by the Fixed-Term Parliament Act of 2011 which had been passed to ensure the stability of a government established by ideologically unusual bedfellows in the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties and helped create a sense of stability around a government that some thought would not come close to lasting a full term in office (Leach, Coxall, & Robins, 2011). Pre-election polling reinforced the feeling of uncertainty over the outcome of the election (see Table 3.1). With minor fluctuations, polling consistently showed a neck and neck race between the Conservatives and Labour to become the largest party in the Commons, with neither expected to come near a majority.

Table 2.1: Predicted share of the vote and seats for the five "national" parties

Party	Projected vote share[21]	Projected seats[22]
Conservative	34%	273
Labour	34%	268
Liberal Democrat	8%	28
UKIP	14%	2
Green	5%	1
Others	6%	78

[21] From BBC "Poll of Polls" for 1/4/2015 -http:/www.bbc.co.uk/news/politics/poll-tracker
[22] From May2015 forecast 7/4/2015 - http://www.may2015.com/category/seat-calculator

The economy was expected to be the focal point of the election, with the Conservatives trumpeting an economy finally in recovery after economic downturn of the previous seven years and the Labour party highlighting the growing inequality in the British economy and vowing to balance the budget though higher taxes for millionaires and "clamping down on tax avoidance"[23]. There were also serious questions concerning the electability of Labour under the leadership of Ed Miliband and whether he had the leadership skills to capture swing voters and energise grass roots Labour supporters.[24]

With polls and pundits alike predicting a hung parliament and the possibility of another coalition government, the performance of the smaller parties was seen as being the decisive factor to the outcome of the election. The Scottish National Party (SNP) in Scotland, riding a wave of popularity after its success in the Scottish Assembly elections of 2011 and from spearheading the "Yes" campaign during the Scottish referendum in 2014, was viewed as a major threat to Labour's chances of gaining an overall majority but also as the only realistic partner for a potential Labour led government. The Liberal Democrats were not just predicted to be victims of the SNP's rise in Scotland but were facing a sharp drop in support from the 2010 election across the country, with many fearing an electoral wipe-out. Despite inevitable losses they campaigned on a platform of having been a responsible partner in government, willing to sacrifice party interests in order to provide the country with stable government. The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and the Green Party, both primarily issue based parties running on national platforms, were each expected to receive a significant share of the vote. UKIP, which had achieved a remarkable victory in the 2014 European elections, was predicted to not only seriously challenge in several constituencies but to take segments of both anti-European Conservative and disaffected Labour support.

In short, the 2015 election was one of the most unpredictable contests in modern British politics. In such a context, the potential for campaign activity to make a difference was clearly enhanced and on both a national and constituency level there were a variety of campaign issues and challenges facing candidates. It was also a campaign in which the importance of new media was expected to reach new heights and perhaps even to play a

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[23] From Labour Party website - http://www.labour.org.uk/issues/detail/deficit
[24] See http://survation.com/summer-recess-poll-parties-leaders-policies-beach-holidays

more significant role than in previous election campaigns. Therefore, this chapter sets out to examine the use of new media in the campaign by constituency level candidates.

This chapter will start by reiterating the hypotheses set out in Chapter 1 and specify details about the candidate sample base. It will continue by giving some context to the candidates' social media use by setting out to what extent they were using social media and the number of followers their social media posts were reaching. Candidates' pursuit of the personal vote will then be examined by separate analysis of websites and social media including descriptive statistics and specific examples of how candidates used these different platforms. Statistical analysis using Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) will then be used to test candidates Personal Vote Index (PVI) scores and will show that there are factors which cause candidates to pursue the personal vote in the UK based chiefly upon levels of candidate experience (H2-4). The chapter will also present evidence of how candidates used social media to promote national or local policies and how closely candidates matched their parties when it came to which policies they discussed, finding that some candidates were more willing to engage with a variety of different issues in comparison with their party and that policy takes a back seat to image (H5).

Details on methodology

The analysis of candidates' use of new media will be explained in two sections. The first will examine the frequency of use of social media by candidates during the 2015 general election. This section will primarily use descriptive statistics, broken down amongst the variables listed in Chapter 2, to see which factors may influence the frequency of social media use amongst the sample candidates. The second section will focus on the content of candidates' social media output and how this relates to attracting the personal vote. The following hypotheses, initially set out in Chapter 1, will be tested:

> *H2: Incentive for candidates to pursue independent campaigns will relate to national party popularity. The lower the party popularity, the more incentive for candidates to use new media to pursue the personal vote.*

H3a: Incentive for candidates to pursue independent campaigns will relate to the marginality of the contested (SMD) seat. Candidates fighting in marginal seats will have more incentive to use new media to pursue the personal vote.

H3b: Incentive for candidates to pursue independent campaigns will relate to their incumbent/challenger status. Incumbent candidates will have more incentive to use new media to pursue the personal vote.

H4a: Incentive for candidates to pursue independent campaigns will relate to the candidate's age. Older candidates will be more likely to use new media to pursue the personal vote.

H4b: Incentive for candidates to pursue independent campaigns will relate to their level of experience. Candidates who have already been elected multiple time before will be more likely to use new media to pursue the personal vote.

In total, 78 candidates from the UK 2015 general election were selected and their use of new media analysed.[25] Of the three new media platforms studied 75 out of 78 candidates had websites which were connected to their campaign. 71 had active Twitter accounts that were used during the campaign and 64 had active Facebook accounts, showing a slight bias in favour of Twitter as a preferred social media platform. All of the candidates used at least one of the three studied new media platforms.

Candidates were chosen from the three largest parties, the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrats and an approximately even distribution of *incumbent* and *challenger* candidates and candidates from *marginal* and *non-marginal* constituencies was achieved.[26] It is unfortunate to omit nationalist parties from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland but it is necessary in order to truly draw a distinction between local and national issues, as nationalist parties are much more likely to concentrate on issues relating to their own part of the UK, rather than the country as a whole. This is not to assume that nationalist parties have no interest in policies which effect the entire United Kingdom, but their priorities at the national level are likely to lay in issues which only affect their countries. Challenger

[25] Full details of candidate names and associated variable information can be seen in Appendix A

[26] Marginality was based upon the percentage swing needed for the seat to be won by a candidate from another party, based on the results of the previous general election (2010). In this study a seat needing a swing of 6% or under was considered to be marginal.

candidates either came second in the 2010 election or represented the party which came second where the 2010 candidate had not been selected to run again in 2015.

Information concerning website functionality was taken from candidate websites at the start of the campaign. Social media output, from Twitter and Facebook, was taken from the start of the "short" campaign on April 1st until the day of the election on May 7th 2015. This includes all *tweets, retweets* and *posts* on Facebook.

Table 3.2: Data collected and method of analysis from candidate sample

Platform	Method of analysis	Data collected
Candidate websites	Content analysis – one time during the campaign	Website features/functions of 78 candidates from the UK
Twitter and Facebook	Content analysis – all social media output from candidates on Facebook and Twitter	All output (*tweets, retweets* and *posts*) from 78 candidates from the UK

Candidates were selected by *age* and *previous terms in office* on as equal a distribution as possible. For *age*, candidates were placed into one of four age groups, determined by the SPSS visual binning process in an attempt to create evenly weighted groups: 26-42 (16 candidates), 43-51 (19), 52-56 (14) and 57-71 (15). For *previous terms in office*, candidates were placed into one of three categories: 0 (terms served before: 43 candidates) 1 (15) and 2-4 (20). These distributions are not perfectly even. Age information was not available for 14 of the candidates and their information cannot be included. In addition, around half of the candidates fall between the ages of 43 and 56. However with the groupings used it is still possible to see if there is a difference between younger and more mature candidates in the way they used new media. The same holds true for the *previous terms* variable which is skewed towards candidates who have never held office before. This is impossible to avoid though as with an attempted even distribution between incumbent and challenger candidates it is likely that around half of all the candidates studied will not have held office. As with the *age* variable some meaning can be inferred from the results.

Table 3.3: Breakdown of candidates included in sample by selected variables

Variable	Number of cases in sample
Conservative	27
Labour	23
Liberal Democrat	28
Marginal	38
Non-marginal	40
Incumbent	39
Challenger	39

National party policy comparison

In addition to social media output collected from the candidate sample, tweets were also collected from the official Twitter feeds of the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat parties. Unlike the candidate tweets, which were manually analysed, these tweets have been categorised using NVIVO software based on keywords relating to policy statements only[27]. Comparing the type of policies mentioned by candidates to which policies their respective parties are promoting gives an additional insight into what degree candidates are willing to talk about issues which are different from the national party or conversely may show evidence of candidates following a national party message in terms of what issues they are talking about.

> *H5: Candidate policy positions will depend on their party alignment. The lower the party strength or popularity, the more incentive for candidates to pursue policies which are different to the national party*

The above hypothesis looks specifically at policy, something social media is particularly suited for and incorporates another data source. This hypothesis works under the

[27] See Appendix C

assumption that candidates from the party with the highest pre-election support will be more likely to promote the same policies favoured by the national party. In this case we would expect Conservative candidates to follow party policy to the greatest degree, and Liberal Democrat candidates the least.

Details of frequency of use and number of followers on social media

This section examines the frequency of use of Twitter and Facebook by candidates in the main dataset as well as other potentially interesting results from the analysis. In terms of output, Twitter was used considerably more by candidates than Facebook, with the respective total *tweets/retweets* totalling 14197 compared to 3256 *posts* on Facebook amongst the sampled candidates.

Table 3.4 shows a breakdown of the number of posts made by each of the independent variables included in this study. Using the mean values as a guide, candidate behaviour is classified first by party affiliation. Compared to the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, Labour candidates used their social media platforms more extensively. The mean score shows a much higher use of social media by Labour candidates, 343.81 combined posts on Twitter and Facebook, during the 37 day "short" campaign period. There is a caveat to this mean score, however. One Labour candidate, Jamie Reed (Copeland), made a total of 1967 posts on social media, much higher than the top users of social media from the other two parties: Graham Evans (Conservative, Weaver Vale and David Ward (Liberal Democrat, Bradford East). Even with what could be described as "extreme" users of social media taken out of the equation, the 5% trimmed mean score of posts by *party* variable shows that while the scores for candidates from other parties is almost identical, Labour candidates on average made 100 more posts during the campaign period, a significant difference when considering the mean average number of posts for the entire sample was 242.38. If considered at the national level, candidate use of social media shows the members of the *challenger* party, in this instance the Labour party, are using social media more than other candidates, this could potentially counterbalance the advantage that the ruling party has. While this applies to the main opposition party, it does not seem to filter down to the "third" party, the Liberal Democrats, although their output was higher than Conservative

candidates and candidates from the party were amongst the highest users of social media (Table 3.4).

Table 3.4: Information on number of posts followers by variables included in this study

	Mean number of posts (5% trimmed mean)	Mean number of posts on Twitter	Mean number of posts on Facebook	Mean number of followers
Party				
Conservative	187.37 (177.03)	153.81	46.09	4296.50
Labour	343.81 (276.34)	302.90	63.32	7089.62
Liberal Democrat	214.74 (177.88)	186.63	54.96	6375.18
Marginality				
Marginal	297.89 (239.42)	268.03	53.86	6403.64
Non-marginal	186.86 (173.38)	151.61	54.77	5343.86
Incumbency				
Incumbency	249.58 (186.62)	219.22	55.82	9888.26
Challenger	234.78 (217.97)	198.49	52.73	1534.64
Previous terms in office				
0 (N41)	221.56 (204.28)	186.97	49.78	1634.22
1 (N15)	285.06 (246.07)	221.79	83.64	9232.30
2-4 (N20)	235.05 (171.44)	246.78	38.69	12066.92
Age of candidate[28]				
26-42 (N16)	310.43 (233.76)	274.53	53.06	8507.92
43-51 (N19)	249.63 (227.03)	223.12	55.88	3023.35
52-56 (N14)	216.64 (203.71)	168.14	48.50	7921.00
57-71 (N15)	250.26 (206.79)	205.07	61.64	6416.91

At the constituency level, the *marginality* variable shows a logical difference between marginal and non-marginal candidates. The standard mean value shows candidates in marginal seats are more likely to use social media. This is somewhat intuitive and supports the idea that candidates in marginal seats will use all the tools at their disposal, including social media, to maximum effect in a bid to attract votes or at the very least mobilise their base. All 38 of the candidates from marginal constituencies had an account registered on either Twitter or Facebook, with most having a presence on both. However, while

[28] Age information was not available for 14 candidates

challengers might be expected to use social media more in an attempt to counter the resource advantage held by incumbents, be it financial, through grass roots activism or through greater name recognition, the mean scores suggest that there is no appreciable difference between incumbents and challengers, and including all extreme cases incumbents may actually be more likely to use social media to a greater degree. Taking out extreme cases does change the balance but not to a level of difference comparable to those found in the *party* and *marginality* variables.

The mean scores show that candidates who have already been elected to office but have only served one term are the most likely group to use social media, with little difference between candidates with no prior experience in office and those whom have served multiple terms. Candidates who have only served one term are more likely to still be striving to establish a personal vote and may see a greater time-cost/benefit in using social media. They are likely to have more followers, thus a bigger audience which will be exposed to their social media output, than candidates whom have never held office before but also have weaker grassroots organisations in place to conduct more traditional forms of campaigning in comparison to candidates whom are multiple time incumbents. The initial mean scores for candidate's *age* also implies that younger candidates are more likely to use social media, with the youngest group of candidates averaging 310.43 posts over the election period. Taking into account outliers from the 5% trimmed score shows that the youngest age group are still the largest users of social media and while the difference between groups is not as vast, there appears to be a clear divide between candidates aged 26-51 and those aged 52-71 with a difference of approximately 30 posts over the campaign period.

Table 3.5: Top users of social media from sample base

Candidate	Party	Combined number of posts
Jamie Reed (Incumbent, Marginal, 41)	Labour	1967
David Ward (Incumbent, Marginal, 61)	Liberal Democrat	1262
Louise Baldock (Challenger, Marginal, 49)	Labour	898
Huw Irracana Davies (Incumbent, Non-marginal, 52)	Labour	634

Kirsten Johnson (Challenger, Non-marginal, 47)	Liberal Democrat	566

Table 3.5 shows the top 5 users of social media during the 2015 general election campaign and adds some validity to the conclusions set out above. All of the candidates come from either Labour or the Liberal Democrats, the second and third biggest parties before the 2015 election. The top three candidates were all contesting marginal seats and three out of the five were in the lower half of the age range included in this study (with Huw Irracana Davies being right in the middle at age 52). To answer the question "What influences candidates' use of social media?" it does not appear, from the descriptive data examined so far, that there is an definitive type of candidate that uses social media to a greater degree than others. There is however a strong argument that marginality plays a significant factor. That candidates in marginal seats use social media more than those in non-marginal seems to be a safe conclusion at this stage. The difference between the use of social media by Labour candidates compared to the other two main parties could also be interpreted as support for the idea that challenger candidates use social media more frequently but the term "challenger" relates to candidates on a *national* level, with Labour being the party of opposition.

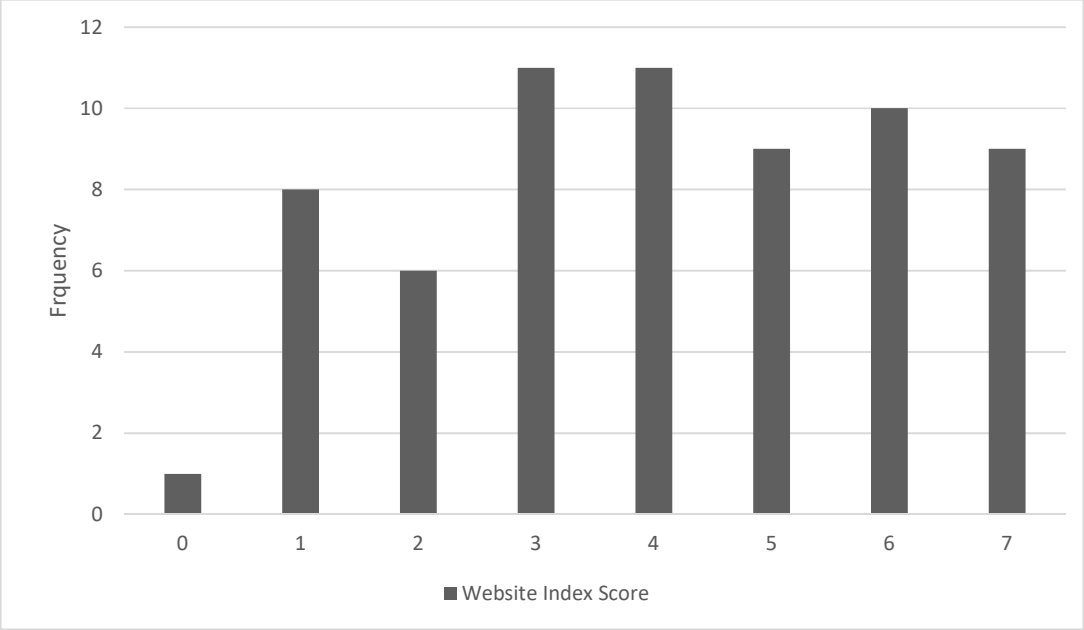
It may also be useful to examine the effect the number of social media followers has on the frequency of candidates' output. Table 3.4 also shows the total number of *followers* and *likes* candidates had under the same variables. As number of followers is not the main focus of this paper only a brief examination is required. There are several notable points from looking at the *total number of followers* data. Firstly, Labour candidates again appear to have the greatest presence on social media and the Conservatives the least. Secondly and unsurprisingly, candidates already in office have a greater number of followers than challengers do. This can be seen in both the *incumbency* and *previous terms in office* variable. This suggests that rather than being a platform for less established candidates to overcome the traditional resource advantages of the incumbent the opposite is true. Name recognition, either locally or on a national level, plays a huge role in a candidates' ability to attract an audience. More followers means more potential for engagement with voters and more chance of social media messages being seen by a wider audience through retweeting

and shares on Twitter and Facebook. At the moment incumbents have a clear advantage in getting their messages out to the public.

The following section will examine these variables in greater detail and how candidates use new media to pursue the personal vote.

New media and the personal vote: Candidate websites

Figure 3.1: Candidate Website Index (PWI) scores



As outlined in Chapter 2 the Website Index score (PWI) is a composite of personal vote functions featured on candidates' websites. Figure 3.1 shows the distribution of PWI scores of the candidates. Based on the criteria scores range from 0 to 7 with the mean score being 3.8 and the median 4. The graph shows almost a third (N=22) of candidates clustered around the middle two values, with this rising to nearly two-thirds (N=47) when adding in candidates that scored 2 and 5. The graph show that while few candidates were employing all of the website functions many were using multiple functions which can be attributed to the personal vote. 29 of candidates scored over 4 and are all guaranteed to be using at least one of the core organisational functions of candidate websites, online donations or volunteer sign up.

Table 3.6: Functions of candidate websites ranked by frequency of use

Function	Frequency (N75)	Percentage present (N75)
Personal biography	70	93.33%
Constituency specific policy	46	61.33%
Activist mobilisation / volunteer	43	57.33&
Donation directly to local campaign	29	38.66%
Other personal vote feature	28	37.33%

Table 3.6 shows the personal vote functional uses of candidate webpages. 70 out of 75 websites featured a personal biography of the candidates which detailed the history of the candidate and either professional of personal information. The vast majority of candidates see establishing their individual credentials as an important part of campaigning. Most significant for the effect of new media on campaign organisation and the potential for candidates to run self-sufficient campaigns, nearly six out of ten candidates allowed users to sign-up as volunteers to work on the candidate's campaign. This was especially prevalent amongst Liberal Democrat candidates, whose websites often allowed users to choose specifically what activities they would like to do in the campaigning, from envelope stuffing to door-to-door campaigning. This feature of candidate websites shows that while traditional campaigning is still at the forefront of candidates' campaign planning, many see the internet as a way of recruiting and mobilising activists. This is one of the potentially transformative features of new media campaigning and a way to counter-act the falling numbers of party activists that had been reported prior to 2015, especially as there is no distinction between party members and temporary volunteers. Where numbers of party activists are falling, there is the potential for their places to be taken by volunteers with no formal party allegiance but who may be attracted to a campaign by the candidate or by issues particular to the constituency campaign. The promotion of local issues was prevalent on candidate websites with 46 out of 75 candidates featuring either a specific local manifesto or detailing local issues. This compares with 22 websites, just under one third of the candidate sample, which featured or linked to the party's general election manifesto. Clicking on links to donate money could send visitors to either the national party website or keep them in the local sphere e.g. a Crowdfunder page set up in the candidate's name.

While there are conflicting levels of candidate independence, only 8 of the candidates' websites featured donation functions which linked directly to the national party's fundraising page. This shows the focus financially is to assist a candidate's campaign rather than the national party's.

Candidate websites appear to straddle a line between being incorporated in to the party brand and marketing themselves to local constituents, who are of course the key audience. Generalisations are difficult to make but it can be said for sure that websites provide a platform for candidates to present themselves to the electorate, one which can be controlled by the candidate or the local party. When considering the impact of new media on campaign organisation it is clear that websites offer a new tool, which is being utilised in many cases, for candidates to contact and mobilise supporters. There is also evidence that websites can help to augment constituency level campaign resources. Many candidates, especially representing the Liberal Democrats, set targets of £3000 to receive in donations through a Crowdfunder appeal. In further analysis it will be interesting to see both how successful these campaigns are and whether this money is compensating in constituencies not being strongly financed by the national party. Do candidates see these organisational tools as an alternative to party assistance and a way to become more independent form the party? Is greater independence seen as a positive by candidates and how much of a factor will this be in future campaigns? These questions will be examined further through candidate interviews reported in Chapter 6.

New media and the personal vote: Social media analysis

Pursuing the personal vote on social media

The major issues of the 2015 general election on a UK-wide level included the economy, the Trident nuclear missile system and the future of Scotland and the role the SNP could play in a future government. The national media, especially in a party-centred campaigning system such as that found in the UK, focus on the national contest and perhaps on a few key marginal seats on which the outcome may depend. The study of campaigns at the constituency level is usually the domain of the local press. However, social media gives

researchers the opportunity to examine what is happening at the local level through the output of the candidate's social media, especially candidates who concentrate on attracting the personal vote. This section will give some examples of these local issues and give an idea of how social media posts have been coded in this study.

The five candidates with the highest *personal vote (PV)* output rating are detailed in Table 3.7:

Table 3.7: Top five candidates by PVC on social media

Candidate name	Social media output classed as ***Personal vote***	Total posts
Charles Kennedy (Lib Dem)	91.54%	84
Jane Dodds (Lib Dem)	85.98%	74
Paul Miller (Labour)	85.23%	60
Kit Malthouse (Cons)	84.08%	101
John Cruddas (Lab)	83.87%	32

Former Liberal Democrat leader Charles Kennedy used *personal vote* categories the most out of all candidates featured in the sample dataset. The vast majority of his social media output was classed as *campaign activity* (79.51%). Kennedy's posts help to show why the *campaign activity* category can be linked to pursuit of the personal vote. Multiple posts were made to elicit donations from followers – for instance:

> A lot of local interest and support in my crowdfunder campaign. Thanks to all for reaching £1,622! Donate & help today: http://t.co/otAfZzg5mW
>
> *Twitter post from Charles Kennedy – 01/04/2015*

The link above (no longer active) sent visitors to a separate webpage where money could be donated directly to Charles Kennedy's campaign with the target of reaching £3000, a target shared by all other Liberal Democrat candidates, using Crowdfunder. This one tweet in itself provides an insight into modern day campaigning. Firstly, the linked webpage gives a specific target figure allowing users to see how much candidates are aiming to raise online.

Viewing how much has already been donated gives an indication of how well they are supported in the local constituency. Secondly it is apparent that even candidates in safe seats, having won multiple terms in office and with national name recognition can find themselves underfunded and looking to online donations. It is still unclear whether this is a result of national party agency, in this case the Liberal Democrats being unable or unwilling to fund constituency candidates in many areas, or a general trend where party finances are being increasingly stretched and candidates must find higher levels of funding for themselves. The latter case shows the problems faced by political parties due to falling membership and income and leads to potential weakening of the relationship between the national party and its candidates.

The Labour candidate Paul Miller, a challenger in the non-marginal seat of Preseli Pembrokeshire focused much more of his output on policy, with *local* issues taking up 47.53% of his total social media output. The post below promotes the candidate's personal plan for healthcare for the local area. Many social media posts, especially those on Twitter which are restricted to 140 characters, contain links to more detailed policy statement from either the candidate or the party, news articles and reports which favour their point of view. Paul Miller's social media contained similar tweets in relation to local education and town regeneration policies. In this way, social media posts are not just restricted to short messages but can take the reader to detailed policy outlines.

> Paul Millers Plan for Pembrokeshire #1The best healthcare for your family, with care close to home.http://t.co/rbMxPmGZrT
>
> *Twitter post from Paul Miller – 30/04/2015*

Paul Miller's twitter output also features softer examples of *campaign activity*, softer in the sense that the post does not ask for donations or even volunteers but informs the reader what the candidate has been doing and extols the virtues of the constituency at the same time. The below link represents a picture attached to the post.

> Taking in a Newgale sunset.... nowhere beats the Pembrokeshire Coast http://t.co/pOT8FBj7gX
>
> *Twitter post from Paul Miller – 05/04/2015*

The tweet below is from Jon Cruddas, an incumbent Labour MP in the marginal Dagenham and Rainham constituency. The tweet shows an example of *personal* campaigning. It shows the candidate highlighting his efforts to be involved in local issues and making sure that the post was seen not just by his Twitter followers but also but by the relevant parties in the "dispute" between London Borough of Barking and Dagenham council (@lbbdcouncil) and the Barking and Dagenham Post newspaper (@BDPost).

> This week I intervened to try and resolve the dispute between @lbbdcouncil and @gmbb10 workers. @BDPost
>
> *Twitter post from Jon Cruddas – 16/04/2015*

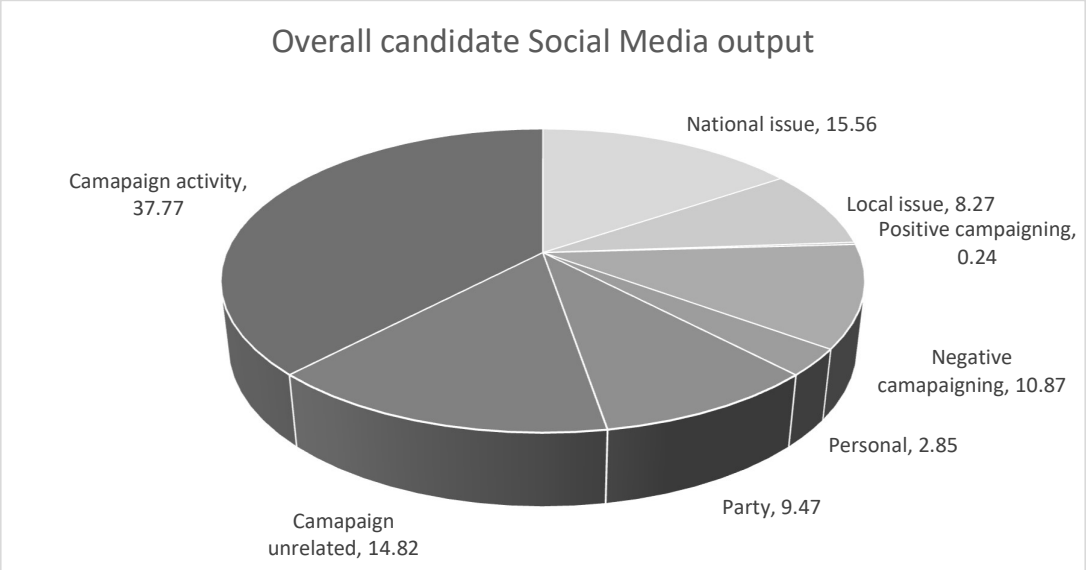
The above posts shows another way candidates are using social media to attract the personal vote. The possibility exists for all candidates to use social media to strengthen their local organisation and campaigns through appeals for donations and volunteers. It also gives them the opportunity to highlight their campaign in a positive way and specifically promote policies relevant to their constituency which the national party campaign cannot do.

Social Media content

Figure 3.2 shows the content of social media by candidates by category amongst all of the 76 candidates in the main dataset who used social media. It shows that social media was used most commonly by candidates to report on *campaign activity.* This often took the form of pictures posted on Twitter or Facebook of the candidates or their campaign team out in local areas, showing them talking to voters or posting leaflets door to door or encouraging followers to come and take part in campaigning for the candidate. An example of this can be seen in Appendix B which reports a tweet showing the Conservative candidate for North West Hampshire, Kit Malthouse out with his campaign team. In the post the names of the two areas he and his team are visiting, Baughurst and Tadley, are highlighted in bold. The

reasons behind candidates doing this can only be inferred from the data gathered from social media but most posts in the *campaign activity* category seemed designed to thank activists for their contributions and to namecheck various area in the constituency highlighting the candidate's interest in the local area. The national level alternative to this is represented by the *party* category. This category was used in reference to the party at the national level which amongst Conservative and Labour candidates most often involved comments in support of their respective leaders' media appearances and suitability to lead the country or to urge followers to vote for their party nationwide.

Figure 3.2: Overall use of social media by candidates



When comparing the promotion of *local* vs *national* issues it is clear that most candidates campaigned on national, as opposed to local, issues. When considering the personal vote it is also necessary to add the *personal* category to that of local issues. The *personal* category refers both to candidates extolling their individual qualities or personal pledges and to social media posts which opens up a window into their personal lives, such as mentions of their family or experiences which may appeal to voters outside of the normal policy arena. However, adding together the percentages for the *local issues* and *personal* category candidates still only average 10.38% of their social media output as opposed to *national issue* at 15.56%. Looking at the total number of cases implies that, at least policy wise,

national issues are still viewed as being the most important for constituency candidates to promote. The largest category, *campaign activity* covers several types of social media post and its effect on how candidates pursue the personal vote is open to interpretation. Posts which include appeals for donations or for volunteers, which are included in the *campaign activity* category can be seen as connected to the personal vote. Does this same rule apply to posts which feature photographs of the candidate or their campaign out and about in the constituency? Based on the content of the posts it can be concluded that *campaign activity* plays a significant part in seeking the personal vote through its direct appeals for money and volunteers and its assumed objective of showing the candidate being active in the constituency. Seeking the personal vote is not about policy alone. Incorporating the *campaign activity* into overall local categorisation changes the way the overall content of the data is viewed and what can be described as personal vote focused posts rises to almost half of all social media output and for the next section of analysis will be taken as the dependent variable.

Content of social media (all candidates average)	
Personal vote content (PVC) (including *local issue, personal* and *campaign activity* categories)	**National** (including *national issue* and *party* categories)
48.67%	***25.03%***

Results of social media analysis

The following section will test some of the hypotheses set out in Chapter 1 by examining what factors at *party*, *constituency* and *personal* levels, explain candidates' pursuit of the personal vote using their entire social media output during the 2015 general election as a guide.

Table 3.8: Percentage of personal vote posts by variable and MCA analysis

	Percentage PVC (mean)	β (Adjusted for factors)
Party		0.35
Conservative	44.76%	
Labour	45.27%	
Liberal Democrat	44.69%	
Marginality		0.274**
Marginal (N38)	52.28%	
Non-marginal (N40)	37.85%	
Incumbency		0.516**
Incumbent (N39)	51.68%	
Non-incumbent (N39)	38.09%	
Previous terms in office		0.396
0 (N41)	49.29%	
1 (N15)	51.77%	
2-4 (N20)	50.20%	
Age of candidate[29]		0.469***
26-42 (N16)	52.25%	
43-51 (N19)	45.73%	
52-56 (N14)	54.51%	
57-71 (N15)	49.47%	
		Model R^2: 0.242**

B coefficients come from MCA tests conducted on candidates personal vote related social media posts. **Significant at <0.05, ***Significant at <0.1

Table 3.8 shows that Labour party candidates, representing the second strongest party, used social media to pursue the personal vote more than Conservatives or Liberal Democrats, However the difference between Labour and Liberal Democrat candidates, who used PVC posts the least, was only 0.58%. As the lead governing party, it is logical that

[29] Age information was not available for 14 candidates

Conservative candidates would be more likely to run on national issues and the party's record in government. There is little support for H2 at this stage as the volume of PVC posts by candidates based on the *party* variable is virtually identical. Moreover, the beta coefficient for party effect is non-significant.

Constituency level findings provide clear support for their related hypotheses. According to H3a&b it is incumbents and candidates in marginal seats which we would expect to exhibit high levels of PVC on social media. Table 3.8 shows that as expected incumbents devote more of their social media content to personal vote focused posts (on average 14.43% more). The difference between marginal and non-marginal candidates is similar (13.59%), showing that based on social media posts alone, there is clear support for H3a and H3b. In the MCA analysis, both *incumbency* and *constituency* factors were found to be statistically significant at the <0.05 level.

The final variables are at the *personal* level are *candidate age* and *terms in office*. According to H4a&b older and more experienced candidates will have a greater incentive to pursue the personal vote and build on their established individual identity. Table 3.8 provides no conclusive support for either H4a or H4b. When examining *previous terms in office* there is little difference between candidates with a range of merely 2.48% between the highest scoring group, one previous term served, and the lowest scoring group, no previous terms served. The age of candidates also shows no pattern which would indicate that personal vote seeking behaviour increases with age. *Age* does prove to be statistically significant as a predictor in social media use ($\beta = 0.469$, significant at <0.01) but this should be treated with caution taking into account the uneven pattern of results between the age groups.

The data presented so far has given an overview of the how candidates used websites in the 2015 general election and how social media output was utilised to pursue the personal vote. The following section will take both websites and social media together and examine candidates overall new media strategy in pursuing the personal vote allowing for a more robust test of the stated hypotheses.

<u>Personal Vote Index</u>

This section tests the personal vote hypotheses by creating a Personal Vote Index (PVI) score for each candidate. Each candidate has been given a PVI based upon their Website Index score and percentage of Personal Vote Content score posts on social media. Standardised Z scores of each of these component variables have been utilised so that they are measured in a common unit and can therefore be added together (see Chapter 2)

PVI scores have been compared based on the different variables using a combination of Independent Sample T-tests and one-way ANOVA tests in order to compare the mean candidates' mean PVI scores. This is followed by Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) using the variables included in this study. The results are presented in Table 3.9.

Table 3.9: Mean PVI scores and MCA analysis by variable

	Mean PVI Score	**β (Adjusted for factors)**
Party		0.237
Conservative	-0.3932	
Labour	-0.1062	
Liberal Democrat	0.4664	
Marginality		0.236**
Marginal	0.3648**	
Non-marginal	-0.3466**	
Incumbency		0.218**
Incumbent	0.3937**	
Challenger	-0.3937**	
Previous terms in office		0.323
0 (N41)	-0.3554	
1 (N15)	0.2906	
2-4 (N20)	0.5461	
Age of candidate		0.140
26-42 (N16)	0.4975	
43-51 (N19)	-0.1959	
52-56 (N14)	0.3409	
57-71 (N15)	0.4519	
		Model R^2 0.249**

** Significant at the <0.05 level

The key point to note about the results in Table 3.9 is that only two of the variables tested are statistically significant, at the <.05 level, both of which are *constituency* level factors, namely *marginality* and *incumbency*. Candidates running in marginal constituencies, with a mean average PVI score of 0.3648, are much more likely to follow a personal vote seeking new media strategy than those in non-marginal seats, who averaged -0.3466. This provides clear support for H3a. H3b is also confirmed in the same analysis as it is incumbent candidates that are more likely to use new media in a personal vote seeking way, averaging a PVI score of 0.3937 compared to challenger candidates who averaged -0.3937. From this analysis two firm conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, incumbent candidates and those running in marginal constituencies are the most likely to use new media to pursue the personal vote. Secondly, it is constituency level variables which have the most influence over the way in which candidates use new media.

The results from other variables are not statistically significant but we can still note some interesting observations. There was an overall pattern of candidates pursing the personal vote to a greater degree based on pre-election support. Liberal Democrat candidates appear to have a more personal vote focused use of new media, averaging a PVI score of 0.4664, compared to Conservatives and Labour candidates. Their relatively high scores may be attributed to two possible factors. One, which is more certain, is that Liberal Democrat candidates faced a more pressing need to use organisational functions such as volunteer mobilisation and fundraising on their websites when compared to the other two parties given the relative lack of resources of the Liberal Democrats generally. The second is that the national party's reputation had been damaged by its time as part of the coalition government and its poll numbers leading into the election were very low (see Table 3.1). This may have given Liberal Democrats more incentive to campaign on an individual rather than a party label basis. This hypothesis will be investigated later through interviews with Liberal Democrat candidates (see Chapter 6). On a national level then, there appears to be some evidence to support H2, that the weaker the party, the greater incentive there is for candidates to pursue the personal vote and run campaigns independently of the national party.

While the age group of candidates seems to play no statistically significant part in how they use new media, there does appear to be an unexpected curvilinear pattern, with the

youngest and oldest categories showing the highest PVI scores. This might in part be explained by an interaction with experience in Parliament (*terms served*). First time candidates appear to be much less willing to pursue the personal vote, averaging a PVI score of -0.3554. This score increases amongst candidates that have served one term already, 0.2906 and even further still amongst candidates that have served two or more terms in Parliament, 0.5461. This score is the highest of the PVI averages amongst all of the variables studied and implies that candidates with greater experience are more likely to pursue the personal vote using new media and supports H4b. These results highlight an effect on the relationship between elected member and party. The more experienced a politician, the more they are able to build a personal reputation through service to their constituency, highlighting this during campaigns, and as a result being less reliant on the party label. The reasons behind this will also be verified from candidate interviews in Chapter 6. It is also the case that the candidates with most experience of incumbency are of course generally likely to be older, thus explaining the curvilinear age effect noted above. That is, the youngest candidates are likely to be most switched on to using social media, while the oldest candidates also make relatively heavy use of it because of their experience brings with it many achievements of which to boast.

This section has shown that there is a clear difference in the way that candidates used new media during the 2015 general election and that while the causes of these differences can be attributed to *constituency* level factors both *party* and *personal* level factors also appear to play a part. The MCA confirms these findings. When use of new media to pursue the personal vote was predicted using MCA it was found that the *marginality* (β=0.236) and *incumbency* (β=0.218) were the key predictor variables. Other variables included in the study were not statistically significant, although they all showed a positive correlation in line with the findings from the mean tests. The overall model fit was 0.249, also significant at the <0.05 level. There is not just a clear incentive for incumbent and more experienced candidates to pursue the personal vote but in the case of incumbents they are in a better position to do so, having a record in Parliament they can run on and years of recorded service they can use to promote their individual qualifications to the electorate. In itself this does not point to a major shift in the way candidates are functioning in the UK, a party centred campaign system. Those who are already campaigning from a position of strength

continue to have the option and the strength to campaign on a more independent level. Use of new media shows that, in general, less well-resourced candidates continue to be reliant on the national party.

Policy promotion by candidates on social media

This section examines which policies candidates chose to promote and in what context they chose to frame them. This will help to clarify two points. Firstly, it will show to what degree candidates promote local issues and policies compared to national policies connected to the party they represent, and secondly it will show which national policies they promote. For example, if the national party spends much of its time promoting an issue such as health care, to what degree do candidates also focus on health? In effect, this section constitutes a comparison of candidate and national party policy agendas, as revealed by use of online campaign tools.

Local vs national policy promotion

Overall, candidates talked about national issues (average 21.58% of all social media output) to a much greater extent compared to local issues (8.27%), seen in Fig. 3.2. A brief overview of the data shows that that *marginality* is an important factor in whether or not candidates choose to promote local policies. Candidates in marginal constituencies averaged 9.32% of all their social media output talking about local policies in comparison to 7.22% in non-marginal races. However, the same does not hold true for *incumbency* as the difference between incumbents (8.32%) and challengers (8.21%).

A comparison between parties also raises an important point of interest. As shown above, Conservative candidates were less likely to pursue the personal vote in comparison to Labour and Liberal Democrat candidates. In terms of policy at least, as this study classifies local policy as being personal vote focused, there appears to be a slight contradiction.

Table 3.10: Percentage of local social media posts by candidates by party variable

Party	Percentage of *local* issue social media posts	Percentage of *national* issue social media posts
Conservative	9.82%	23.40%
Labour	6.40%	17.09%
Liberal Democrat	8.25%	24.26%

Table 3.10 shows that Conservative candidates' local policy output is above the national average whereas Labour candidates are far below with Liberal Democrats at about the national average. This helps to identify in which areas the Liberal Democrats are pursing the personal vote. It is not necessarily in the area of policy promotion. Liberal Democrat candidates are creating independent campaigns through organisational means such as fundraising and volunteer mobilisation, on both websites and through *campaign activity* posts rather than through policy promotion. Conservative candidates featured much less in the way of organisational independence although this may have much to do with the relative strength of existing Conservative grassroots organisation which makes the pursuit of the personal vote through new media less important in an organisational sense. This is another assumption which will be tested in Chapter 6.

Party policy positions

The final question remaining is how closely candidates stuck to the party line in terms of promoting policies. It would be unusual to find candidates openly disagreeing on policy with the party they are representing. A more subtle way of assessing if candidates are in line with the national party or are more focused on what they feel will appeal to voters specifically in their constituency is to examine whether or not candidates promoted the same kinds of policies as their party. Figures 3.3-3.5 show the proportion of Twitter posts from official national party Twitter accounts categorised by policy area; and compares them to those made by candidates from the three main parties included in the study. In total, the Conservative party made 3395, Labour 2371 and Liberal Democrats 6329 posts during the election period. From these posts 1789 (52.69%) of Conservative posts, 966 (40.74%) of

Labour posts and 2586 (40.86%) of Liberal Democrat posts were be classed as policy-specific.

Figure 3.3: Content of policy posts on Twitter by the Conservative party and candidates

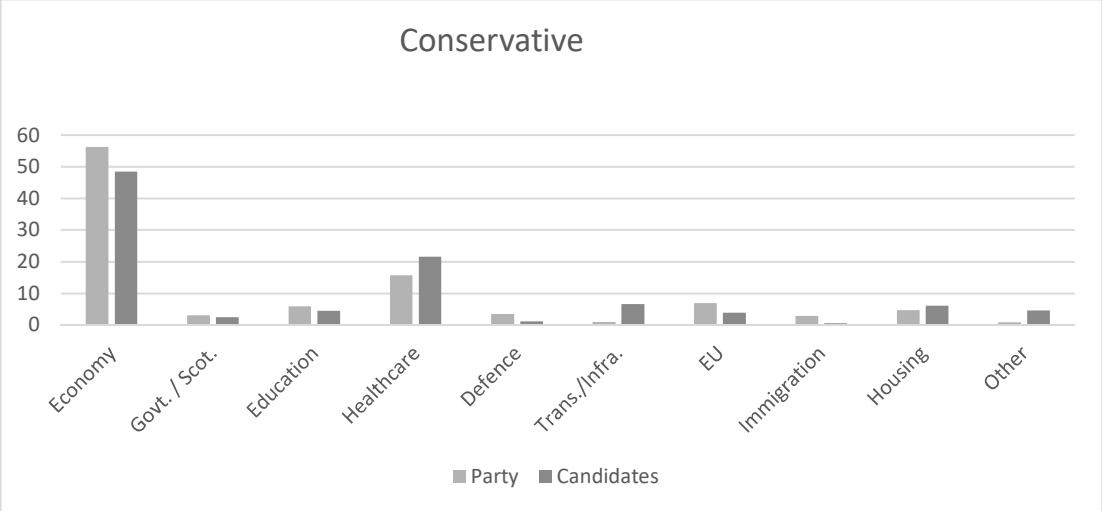


Figure 3.3 shows that both the Conservative party and Conservative candidates considered the economy to be the most important policy topic by a considerable margin (Party 56.34% and candidates 48.53%). This is unsurprising as the main policy message of the Conservative party was the improvement of the economy between 2010 and 2015:

> The next five years are about turning the good news in our economy into a good life for you and your family. #VoteConservative
>
> *Twitter post from @Conservatives – 14/04/2015*

The next most important policy for both party and candidates was healthcare (15.7% and 21.6% respectively) followed by a split in the third most important issue, with the promise of a referendum and the future of Britain's EU membership (6.93%) being number three for the party and transport and infrastructure being third choice for the candidates (8.83%). While there are no notable discrepancies between polices that the party and candidates were promoting and both were agreed on the importance of the economy in their campaign messages, there is a suggestion that from Figure 3.3 that some policies were more likely to

be promoted by the national party, for example concerning the EU and immigration, while others are favoured more by candidates, such as housing, transport and healthcare – all issues which have a clear local emphasis.

Figure 3.4: Content of policy posts on Twitter by the Labour party and candidates

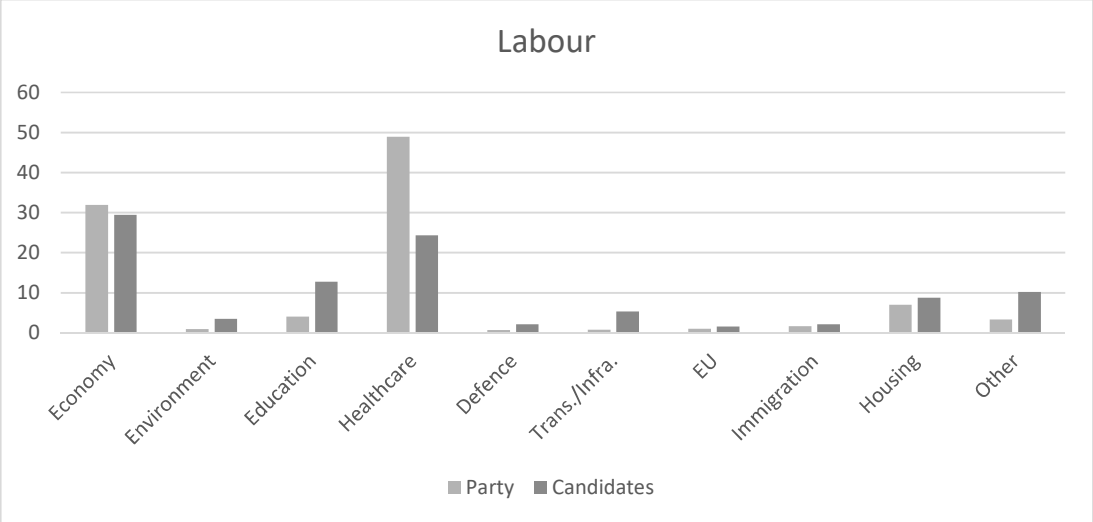
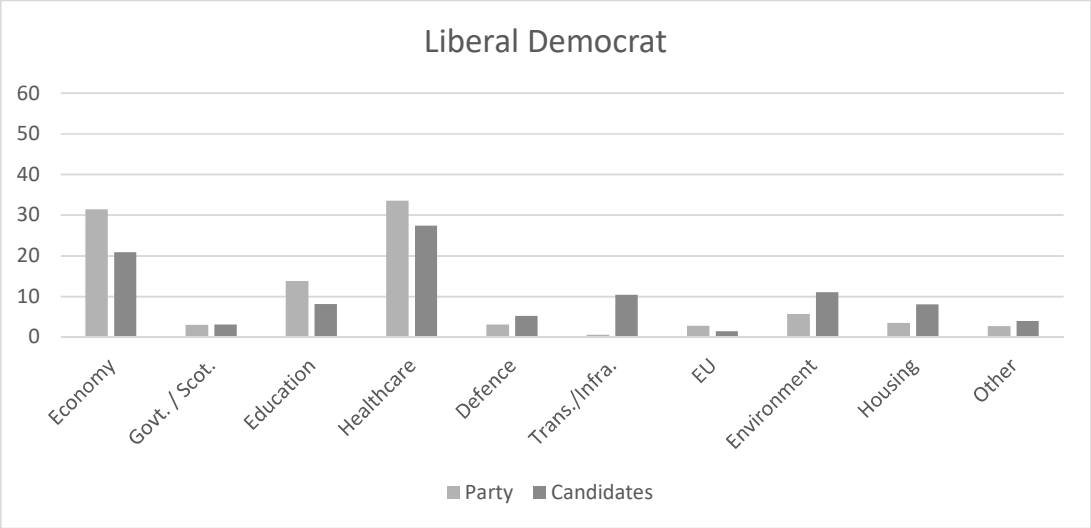


Figure 3.4 illustrates a different picture for the Labour party and its candidates. For the party, healthcare was by the most promoted policy (48.69%) while for candidates it was the economy (29.42%):

> The NHS is in crisis. We've got a plan to fix it. The Tories? See for yourself here: http://t.co/tudUXF1R8N
>
> *Twitter post from @UKLabour – 23/04/2015*

This position is reversed, for second place with the party favouring the economy (31.88%) and the candidates favouring healthcare (24.28%). Candidates were more likely to have a greater range of policy content than the national party which focused on the core messages of healthcare and the economy. Labour candidates devoted notable amounts of their social media output to education (12.76%), housing (8.78%) and transport and infrastructure (5.28%) compared to the national party. The party itself focused on the economy and healthcare at the expense of other policies which were little featured in their social media output.

Figure 3.5: Content of policy posts on Twitter by the Liberal Democrat party and candidates



The Liberal Democrat party (Fig. 3.5) had a relatively high level of synergy, with both party and candidates selecting healthcare as the top policy (33.56% and 27.46% respectively) and the economy as the second (31.43% and 20.95% respectively). In the area of healthcare in particular the party and candidates devoted a lot of output to the issues of mental health, which was raised by Nick Clegg during the leaders' debates and subsequently endorsed by many of the party's candidates:

> We want to invest £3.5bn more in mental health services to help people get the care they need http://t.co/TI323ccjAu http://t.co/5ozTv60bav
>
> *Twitter post from @LibDems – 02/04/2015*

Liberal Democrat candidates, much like Labour candidates used social media to promote a greater range of policy positions than the national party. While both party and candidates had education as their third most important policy position, candidates also gave considerably coverage to the environment (11.08%), transport and infrastructure (10.42%)

and housing (8.06%). Transport and infrastructure in particular showed a wide discrepancy with the party (0.61%).

While examining the volume and percentages of social media output cannot illustrate contradictions between party and candidate policy positions, and this chapter would not claim to do so, there is a clear difference in the policy emphases that some candidates are promoting on social media. This may not be the case for Conservative candidates, who generally match their party's policy priorities. For Labour, in the major policy areas of the economy and healthcare there is a divide between party and candidates. For both Labour and Liberal Democrats, there is a greater range of policy promotion with issues such as transport and infrastructure, housing and the environment being among those with a more candidate personalised / local focus. This gives some support to H5, namely that candidates from parties with lower public support will be more likely to promote different issues in comparison to the party they represent. While Liberal Democrat candidates discussed a greater range of policies than their party, it is also clear that Labour candidates had different priorities compared to the national party. This ties into earlier findings and points to Liberal Democrat candidates running not just more organisationally independent campaigns, but also running more policy themed independent campaigns. This is not a clear case of the weaker the party the greater the difference between party and candidate policies but it does show that candidates from the governing party are more likely to follow the party line on policy issues.

Conclusions

The evidence presented in this chapter allows for a number of conclusions to be made concerning the use of new media by constituency level candidates in pursuing the personal vote. The results of the above analysis can be summarised in three key points:

Constituency factors are key to the pursuit of the personal vote: MCA analysis confirms H3a and H3b that the factors of marginality and incumbency have the greatest effect on candidates' pursuit of the personal vote. This is further supported by the descriptive data presented in Table 3.8, which shows candidates' social media output is more likely to be

personal vote focused based on *constituency* level factors. While not statistically significant there does also appear to be some evidence to support H2, specifically that candidates from weaker parties are more likely to pursue the personal vote and promote different policies to the national party (see Figure 3.4 & 3.5). There is also some support for H4b based on candidates' PVI scores (see Table 3.9). It appears as though more experienced candidates are much more likely to use new media to pursue the personal vote. In terms of candidate independence, there is little evidence to suggest that new media has thus far had a transformative effect on campaigning. Those who have the standing and resources to pursue the personal vote and those who need greater organisational depth to make up for lack of support from the national party will run more independent campaigns.

Candidates are starting to use organisational features of new media but not yet to the fullest extent: While almost all candidates use websites to build an individual profile, the extent to which candidates are willing to do more than the basic functions of putting up a professional biography appears limited. Analysis of candidate websites shows a sharp divide between parties in the use of both volunteer and donation functions. Liberal Democrat, and to a slightly lesser extent Labour, candidates were more likely to make use of these functions and set out localised policies. Liberal Democrats candidates were also the only ones to also use their social media output to synchronise appeals for donations and volunteers, showing a greater embrace of new media campaigning at the organisational level. There is one area, however, where it can be argued that candidates are consistently using social media to strengthen campaign organisation.

Image trumps policy, but can also strengthen campaign organisation: It is apparent on candidate websites, where biographies and personal information about candidates is more prevalent than specific policy material, and on social media especially, that candidates are more inclined to post pictures and details surrounding campaign activity rather than try to persuade voters by talking about issues and engaging in online debate. This study argues that this kind of new media output, especially in the form of *campaign activity* posts, helps to strengthen a campaign's organisation. *Campaign activity* posts can act as a free noticeboard for candidates' appearances, let constituents know that candidates have visited their area and rally local supporters to help with the campaign. This theory concerning candidates' use of *campaign activity* posts will be explained in more detail in Chapter 6.

This chapter has provided indications of which factors influence the use of new media to pursue the personal vote in the UK and which candidates are running more independent campaigns. While this study does not feature information from all candidates the sample is broad enough to ensure that the conclusions drawn are valid. It is clear that most candidates in the UK are engaged with both websites and social media and see them as a necessary part of their campaign strategy. The following chapters will help assess if the conclusions reached about candidates in the UK can also be applied to candidates in a country which is generally considered to be more candidate-centred. Chapter 6, featuring interviews with candidates from the 2015 election, will also further corroborate the conclusions reached in this chapter.

Chapter 4

The 2014 Japanese lower house election

Background to the 2014 Japanese Lower House Election

In November 2014, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced his intention to dissolve the Japanese Diet and call a snap general election in which all 475 lower house seats would be contested. This was seen as a surprising move as the Abe led Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)-Komeito coalition had won a commanding victory over its main rivals only two years previously securing a total of 325 out of 485 seats, giving the coalition a commanding victory and making for one of the most electorally stable administrations since the Junichiro Koizumi led LDP won the 2005 general election. Speculation as to the reasons behind this election centred upon two key issues. Firstly, the more hawkish members of the Abe administration had long held the desire to push through dramatic constitutional reform which would allow Japan's self-defence force to have a more active role in overseas operations. Secondly, with the stalled progress of "Abenomics" many economists viewed the increase in sales tax, planned for October 2015 as a being potentially disastrous for the already sensitive Japanese economy. An earlier increase of sales tax from 5% to 8% in April 2014 resulted in a 7.3% decrease in GDP for the second financial quarter of 2014, resulting in the Japanese economy falling into recession by the time the election was called in November.[30] Against this backdrop, Abe declared his desire to seek a fresh mandate from the electorate to postpone the proposed sales tax increase until April 2017 and continue with the current administrations' manifesto. The election caught many off-guard with the main opposition party, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), still reeling from its electoral defeat two years previously and the third biggest party, Japan Innovation Party (JIP) only recently coming into existence after a merger between the Japan Restoration Party and the Unity Party that September. Without a thoroughly prepared manifesto the DPJ and the JIP were forced to campaign on a slogan of "Don't let the ruling parties sweep to a landslide victory".[31] Before the election the DPJ only registered 198 candidates in total, for both SMD and PR lists, meaning that no party other than the LDP could realistically win a majority.[32] The overall outcome of the 2014 election was something of a foregone conclusion. The real

[30] http://www.bloomberg.com/bw/articles/2014-11-17/japans-in-recession-blame-the-tax-hike
[31] Yomiuri Shimbun 7th December 2014
[32] Asahi Shimbun 4th December 2014. N.B. the only other party to field enough candidates to win a majority was the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) but they were considered outsiders in most races having a pre-election strength of 8 seats, all from the PR vote.

question lay in whether the LDP-Komeito coalition could gain enough seats to win a two-thirds majority, potentially enabling the administration to pass constitutional reform.

Table 4.1: Pre-election and predicted share of seats for the five largest parties post-election

Party	Pre-election seats	Projected seats[33]
Liberal Democratic (LDP)	294	317
Democratic (DPJ)	62	70>
Japan Innovation Party (JIP)	42	30
New Komieto	31	32
Japanese Communist Party	8	16
Others	38	10

The platform of ruling the LDP-Komieto coalition was one of continuation of economic policy coupled with potential changes to the Constitution, specifically Article 9 which bans the Japanese state from military action abroad. For the main opposition DPJ, the 2014 election would mark the first lower house election since their defeat in 2012. For the JIP, it would be the first test of the new alliance, with the majority of existing lawmakers led by Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto and the parliamentary party itself led by Kanagawa based Kenji Eda.

While the policies and outcome of the election were predictable, it was notable for being the first lower house election where online communication from candidates was legal, having first been introduced in the 2013 Upper House election. For a country as technologically advanced as Japan this may seem surprising but Japan has traditionally had very strict campaign laws where individual candidates are not allowed to buy media advertising, house to house canvassing is prohibited and the campaign period is limited to two weeks. As such, there was great interest over how the newly legalised platform of new media, social media in particular, would affect campaigning in a Japanese general election.

[33] Based on Asahi Shimbun telephone polling conducted between 6/12/2014-9/12/2014:

This chapter will follow a similar pattern to the previous one, starting by reiterating the hypotheses set out in Chapter 1 and specifying details about the candidate sample base. It will continue by giving some context to the candidates' social media use by setting out to what extent they were using social media and the number of followers their social media posts were reaching. Candidates' pursuit of the personal vote will then be examined by separate analysis of websites and social media, including descriptive statistics and specific examples of how candidates used these different platforms. Statistical analysis using Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) regression will then be used to test candidates PVI scores and will show that there are differences in which factors cause candidates to pursue the personal vote - chiefly levels of candidate experience. The chapter will also present evidence of how candidates used social media to promote national or local policies and how closely candidates matched their parties when it came to which policies they discussed, finding that some candidates were more willing to engage with a variety of different issues in comparison with their party and that policy overall takes a back seat to image.

Details on methodology

The analysis of candidates' use of new media will be explained in two sections. The first will examine the frequency of use of social media by candidates during the 2014 general election. This section will primarily use descriptive statistics, broken down amongst the variables listed in Chapter 2, to see which factors may influence the frequency of social media use amongst the sample candidates

The second section will focus on the content of candidates' social media output and how this relates to attracting the personal vote. The following hypothesis will be tested:

> *H2: Incentive for candidates to pursue independent campaigns will relate to national party popularity. The lower the party popularity, the more incentive for candidates to use new media to pursue the personal vote.*
>
> *H3a: Incentive for candidates to pursue independent campaigns will relate to the marginality of the contested (SMD) seat. Candidates fighting in marginal seats will have more incentive to use new media to pursue the personal vote.*

H3b: Incentive for candidates to pursue independent campaigns will relate to their incumbent/challenger status. Incumbent candidates will have more incentive to use new media to pursue the personal vote.

H4a: Incentive for candidates to pursue independent campaigns will relate to the candidate's age. Older candidates will be more likely to use new media to pursue the personal vote.

H4b: Incentive for candidates to pursue independent campaigns will relate to their level of experience. Candidates who have already been elected multiple time before will be more likely to use new media to pursue the personal vote.

In total 73 candidates from the Japanese 2014 lower house election were selected and their use of new media analysed[34]. Of the three new media platforms all 73 candidates had websites which were connected to their campaign. 59 had active Twitter accounts used during the campaign and 66 had active Facebook accounts, showing a slight bias in favour of Facebook as the preferred social media platform. All of the candidates used at least one of the three studied new media platforms.

The candidates were chosen from the three largest parties, the LDP, DPJ and JIP in an attempt to achieve an even distribution between *incumbent* and *challenger* candidates and candidates from *marginal* and *non-marginal* constituencies[35]. The specific breakdown of candidates can be seen in Table 4.3. Obtaining a balanced sample between the three parties proved to be challenging. Table 4.3 shows a slight bias towards marginal candidates and LDP candidates. This was in part unavoidable due to the LDP being the largest party, enjoying a substantial majority after the previous election and the only one to run candidates in all single seat constituencies while the JIP ran the fewest number of candidates of the three main parties. There were also more marginal seats being contested across the country. In addition, the nature of the election, being called with very little notice in December 2014, made candidate selection subject to severe time constraints. Nevertheless, there are enough candidates representing each variable to be able to draw meaningful conclusions from the study. Information concerning website functionality was taken from candidate

[34] Full details of candidate names and associated variable information can be seen in Appendix A

[35] Marginality was based upon the percentage swing needed for the seat to be won by a candidate from another party, based on the results of the previous lower house election (2012). In this study a seat needing a swing of 5% or under was considered to be marginal.

websites at the start of the campaign. Social media output, from Twitter and Facebook, was taken from the start of the official campaign period on December (2014) 1st until the day of the election on December 14th. This includes all *tweets, retweets* and *posts* on Facebook. Candidates were chosen at random at the start of the official campaign period.

Table 4.2: Data collected and method of analysis from candidate sample

Platform	Method of analysis	Data collected
Candidate websites	Content analysis – one time during the campaign	Website features/functions of 73 candidates from Japan
Twitter and Facebook	Content analysis – all social media output from candidates on Facebook and Twitter	All output (*tweets, retweets* and *posts*) from 73 candidates from the Japan

The variables for *age* and *previous terms in office* have been separated into groups in an attempt to create as equal a distribution as possible. For *age*, candidates were placed into one of four age groups: 32-42 (23 candidates), 43-48 (14), 49-56 (18) and 57-74 (18). For *previous terms in office*, candidates were placed into one of four categories: 0 (terms served before: 29 candidates) 1 (10), 2-3 (19) and 4+ (15). Both of these distributions were created using the SPSS visual binning command and while not perfectly even it is still possible to see if there is a difference between younger and more mature candidates in the way they used new media.

Table 4.3: Breakdown of candidates included in sample by variables studied

Variable	Number of cases in sample
Liberal Democratic (LDP)	28
Democratic (DPJ)	25
Japanese Restoration (JIP)	20
Marginal	41
Non-marginal	32
Incumbent	34
Challenger	39

National party policy comparison

This section follows the same methodology as for the corresponding section in Chapter 3. Tweets were collected from the official Twitter feeds of the LDP, DPJ and JIP parties during the lower house election campaign (2nd December 2014 – 14th December 2014). Unlike the candidate tweets, which were manually analysed, these tweets have been categorised using NVIVO software based on keywords relating to policy statements only:[36]

> *H5: Candidate policy positions will depend on their party alignment. The lower the party popularity, the more incentive for candidates to pursue policies which are different to the national party*

Details on frequency of use and number of followers

The following section will examine the frequency of use of Twitter and Facebook by candidates in the main dataset as well as other potentially interesting results from the analysis. In terms of output, Twitter was used more often by candidates than Facebook,

[36] See Appendix E

with the respective total *tweets/retweets* totalling 3831 compared to 2382 *posts* on Facebook amongst the selected candidates.

Table 4.4: Information on number of posts and followers on social media by variable.

	Mean number of posts (5% trimmed mean)	**Mean number of posts on Twitter**	**Mean number of posts on Facebook**	**Mean number of followers**
Party				
Liberal Democratic	84.29 (78.44)	56.71	38.29	8781.68
Democratic	84.72 (79.78)	62.86	32.75	14329.84
Japanese Restoration	80.55 (70.78)	63.94	26.20	9381.43
Marginality				
Marginal	80.66 (74.47)	55.31	34.66	6810.91
Non-marginal	86.94 (78.82)	67.68	31.00	16471.96
Incumbency				
Incumbency	83.29 (76.82)	61.70	33.48	12388.92
Challenger	83.51 (75.15)	60.00	32.74	9569.37
Age of candidate				
32-42 (N23)	78.17 (71.41)	49.33	33.09	7388.06
43-48 (N14)	83.57 (74.02)	73.91	25.50	9083.55
49-56 (N18)	113.00 (110.78)	72.44	45.94	19713.25
57-74 (N18)	60.39 (50.15)	52.15	26.83	4848.80
Previous terms in office				
0 (N29)	82.34 (73.41)	58.19	30.14	6384.32
1 (N10)	94.00 (91.11)	68.88	38.90	16104.63
2-3 (N19)	104.84 (98.99	73.94	41.37	7043.50
4+ (N15)	51.27 (48.13)	42.50	23.79	20809.36

Table 4.4 shows a breakdown of the number of posts made by each of the variables included in this study. Looking at the *party* variable first, there is a gap between the LDP and DPJ candidates when compared to JIP candidates. Candidates from the two largest parties had a total social media output which was nearly identical, very slightly favouring the DPJ in both mean and 5% adjusted mean scores (a difference of 0.43 and 1.34 posts respectively). JIP candidates output was much lower, averaging a mean of 80.55 and a considerably lower

trimmed mean of 70.78. While the LDP was the largest party by far going into the 2014 election, it does not appear that candidates from their main rivals were utilising social media to overcome the advantage in name recognition and organisational capacity which LDP candidates may have had.

Results from the *marginality* variable show non-marginal candidates making 6.28 more posts on average than marginal candidates. Of the three candidates from the sample who made no posts on social media at all during the campaign period two of those were in non-marginal constituencies which makes the results from Table 4.4 even more surprising and shows that those who did use social media used it to a significant extent. It also implies that those candidates who contested supposedly safe seats still saw social media as being a necessary part of their campaigning regardless of their high level of traditional organisational strength or weakness on the ground. The *incumbency* variable, much like the *party* variable, shows no difference between incumbent and challenger candidates. Japanese incumbents appear to take the use of social media just as seriously as challengers, and challenger candidates do not seem to regard a high volume of social media output as a viable strategy to overcome the advantage held by an incumbent. In the case of the Japanese electoral system the fact that some of these SMD challengers may have already held office through the PR bloc voting may also play a part in their greater use of social media. Those who already have the status and name recognition of lawmakers may well see more advantage in using social media to campaign, given that they will most likely have more followers, hence a greater reach, than those who have not been elected in any capacity.

The *personal* variables show more interesting results. In examining both the *previous terms served* and *age* variables there is an interesting pattern which occurs. In the case of both variables there is a gradual increase in social media output between groups 1 (*previous terms*: 0, *age*: 32-42) and groups 3 (*previous terms*: 2-3, *age*: 49-56. This is then followed by a sharp, and almost identical level of decreasing output when looking at the difference between groups 3 and 4, the oldest and most experienced candidates, with the mean average dropping 53.57 for *previous terms* and 52.62 for *age*. Clearly, middle aged candidates in the middle of their career, candidates who have established some level of name recognition and who are most likely have online networks already in place, are more

likely to use social media than younger candidates. This tails off for the oldest and most experienced candidates, the lowest users of social media averaging a mean of 51.27 and 60.39 respectively; these may have strong enough traditional networks within their constituencies that they do not to consider social media to be a necessary campaign tool.

Table 3.5: Top five users of social media

Candidate	Party	Combined number of posts
Takashi Takai (Challenger, Non-marginal, 45)	Japanese Restoration	329
Kenji Eda (Incumbent, Non-marginal, 58)	Japanese Restoration	305
Tsukasa Akimoto (Challenger, Marginal, 43)	Liberal Democratic	290
Kaname Tajima (Incumbent, Marginal, 53)	Democratic	252
Takako Nagae (Challenger, Non-marginal, 54)	Liberal Democrat	246

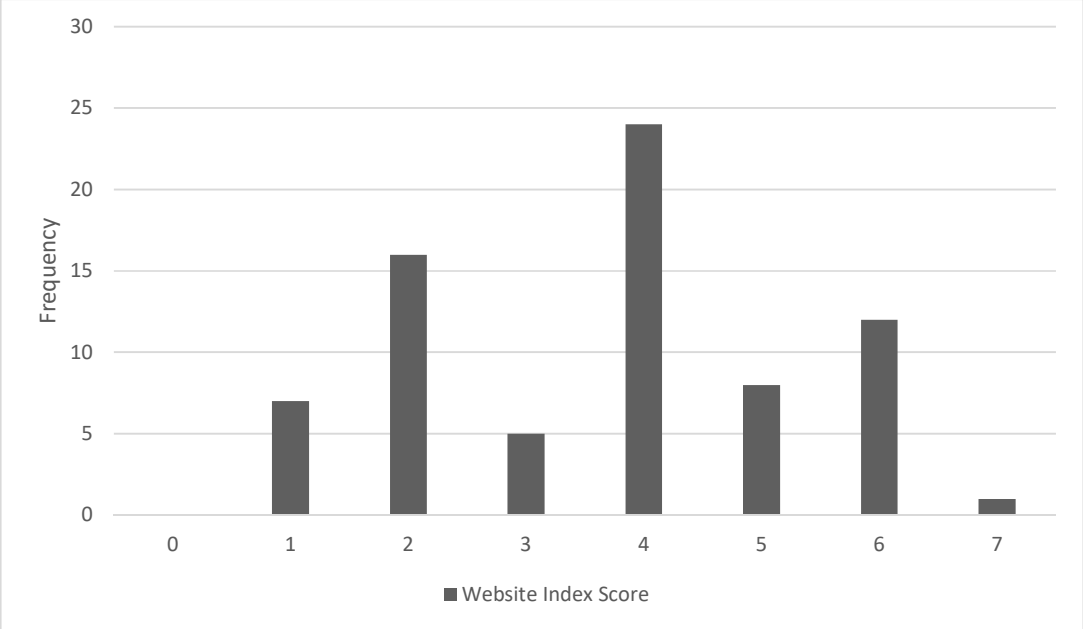
Table 4.5 shows the top five users of social media during the 2014 lower house election. There is an interesting contradiction between the mean average scores of the *party* variable and Table 4.5 which shows that the top two users of social media both represented the JIP, whose candidates had the lowest overall output by a clear margin. The explanation for this is that both Takashi Takai and Kenji Eda could be described as outliers. The third largest user of social media from the JIP Yosie Ide, a challenger candidate in a marginal constituency, whose total social media output during the campaign was only 107, was far lower than the top two. The majority of JIP candidates posted less than 100 times during the election campaign. In examining the top five users of social media there is evidence to support the above assertions made from Table 4.4. The list is a mix of incumbent and challenger candidates and those in marginal and non-marginal constituencies. Three of the candidates on the list fall into age group 3 (49-56) which had the highest output of social media while the other two candidates fall into age group 2 (43-48) which was the second highest, adding support to the above assertion that age especially is a decisive factor in social media output.

There are several notable points from looking at the *total number of followers* data. Firstly, DPJ candidates appear to have the greatest presence on social media while the LDP have the least, which is unexpected considering the LDP's strong national position. Secondly, and unsurprisingly, candidates already in office have a greater number of followers than challengers do. This can be seen in both the *incumbency* and *previous terms in office* variable. There is, however, an interesting downswing in the number of followers for candidates who have served between 3-4 terms in office already, going against a straightforward linear pattern of the higher the number of previous terms in office the higher the number of followers. When taking into account the 5% trimmed mean the gap between the number of followers for incumbent and challenger candidates is much smaller, and as with the *number of posts* section, it can most likely be attributed to many candidates having already held office, either through SMD districts seats that they held prior to the 2012 election, or to them having been members of the national parliament though PR bloc voting.

The following section will examine these variables in detail and consider how candidates used new media to pursue the personal vote.

New Media and the personal vote: Candidate websites

Figure 4.1: Candidate Website Index (PWI) scores



As outlined in Chapter 2 the website index (PWI) score is a composite of personal vote functions featured on candidates' websites. Figure 4.1 shows the PWI scores of the candidates. Based on the criteria scores range from 0 to 7 with the mean score being 3.68 and the median 4. The graph shows that a score of 4 was the most frequent with 24 candidates having this score. Added together with candidates scoring 3 this accounts for just over two-thirds of all candidates (N=29), with this rising to almost three quarters (N=53) when adding in candidates that scored 2 and 5. The graph show that while only one candidate used all functions included in this study many were using, multiple functions which can be attributed to the personal vote[37]. A high proportion of candidates scored 4 or over (N=45) with these candidates guaranteed to be using at least one of the core organisational functions of candidate websites, online donations or volunteer sign up.

[37] The only candidate to score a maximum 7 was Kenji Tamura, a DPJ challenger candidate in a marginal constituency (although the candidate had held office before though the lower house PR bloc vote

Table 4.6: Functions of candidate websites ranked by frequency of use

Function	Frequency (N=73)	Percentage present (N=73)
Personal biography	68	93.15%
Other personal vote feature	62	84.93%
Donation directly to campaign	44	60.27%
Activist mobilisation / volunteer	18	24.66%
Constituency specific policy	13	17.81%

Table 4.6 shows the personal vote function uses of candidate webpages. Japanese candidates put a lot of emphasis on personal biographies. In total, 68 out of 73 websites featured a biography. The majority of these were not simply professional profiles of the candidates but acted more as mini-autobiographies. These more detailed biographies often detail the candidate's childhood, including school attendance and sporting activities as well as their professional background. This was often presented in a clear chronological order. Some useful examples of this came from the websites of Yuichiro Tamaki (DPJ, Kagawa 2nd district) whose biography section included photos and information from his childhood, early career and activities in politics and Isshu Sugawara (LDP, Tokyo 9th district). Sugawara's website featured not only a biography but also a section labelled "Isshu's Story" which detailed the candidate's history from birth to election in the form of a manga (cartoon) strip set out over more than a dozen images.[38]

The second most used feature was *other personal vote feature,* which was defined in Chapter 2. In the case of Japanese candidates, many websites offered users the chance to sign up for regular newsletters and had an archive of these for visitors to download. Incumbents and those who had served in parliament before had pages detailing their activities and achievements in the Diet. It is clearly important for Japanese candidates to document their experience as well as qualifications and suitability to act as representatives of their constituents.

[38] An example of which can be seen in Chapter 5

Over half of all candidates allowed visitors to donate money. As documented in Chapter 1 *koenkai,* the support network that is loyal to the candidate rather than the party at a local or national level, continue to play a large role in electoral campaigning. Out of the 44 candidate websites which offered the donate feature 23 of these could be directly linked to *koenkai*, either directly on the candidates page or through a link to a payment service called "Love Japan", which in this instance works in a similar way to Crowdfunder in the UK, in that it allows users to make a donation through a secure third party directly to the candidate's campaign/association. Payments were made to political associations set up to directly support the candidate. For example, the payments through the website of Miho Takahashi (JIP, Tokyo 17) were paid to an organisation called the "Miho Takahashi Support Association". Most *koenkai* have similar names, using the candidates' names and describing themselves as "support", "policy" or "research" groups. *Koenkai* have long been an important part of traditional constituency campaigning in Japan. How effective the use of websites have been in aiding *koenkai* will be covered in candidate interviews in Chapter 6.

Table 4.6 shows how candidates made little use of the volunteer function or local policy on their websites during the campaign. Door to door canvassing is prohibited under Japanese election laws and with this form of campaigning off the table, it is possible that there is less need for volunteers in Japanese constituency campaigns. However, evidence from social media will prove that there is still a role for "on the ground" campaign volunteers. It may be that Japanese candidates still rely on traditional organisational methods when it comes to getting supporters involved in campaigns. In addition, many candidate websites had a page devoted to policy but these policies could not be described as either local or personal. Many LDP candidates talked about *Abenomics*, DPJ candidates focussed on anti-Abenomics and anti-nuclear power arguments, which were also highlighted by JIP candidates in addition to reform of the number of lower house members and their salaries, both of which JIP candidates favoured cutting. While few candidates expressly connected their policy positions on their websites to the party's manifesto there was a clear party line being followed in many cases. Few candidates, usually those in more rural constituencies, set out local or personalised issues as part of their campaign strategy, a point which will be highlighted again in their use of social media in the following section.

Some LDP candidate websites featured pictures of the candidate Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, while some from JIP candidates had those of Toru Hashimoto. Both leaders were considered personally popular, at least in comparison to other national political figures and the candidates appeared to be using their image to enhance their own campaign. This was not as prevalent amongst DPJ candidates, showing that this kind of party endorsement was only desirable if the image/endorsement of the party leaders themselves was likely to aid a campaign. On a personal and financial level, candidate websites are set up to promote the individual candidate. While most feature links and references to the national party it is interesting that all candidate websites appear to be privately operated, with a unique design and a picture of the candidate (plus their name) highlighted front and centre on the first page, in a much more prominent position than any party symbol. In terms of branding, it is clear the candidate trumps the party. In this respect, Japanese candidate websites are designed for information provision concerning the candidate. On some websites this is very detailed giving life histories and political activities in great depth and providing a multitude of literature for visitors to read. The importance of personal image certainly plays a larger factor in candidate websites when compared to party branding or the promotion of specific policies. It is this personal branding aspect which sees the strongest appeal to the personal vote on Japanese candidate websites.

New media and the personal vote: Social media analysis

The major issues of the 2014 lower house election on a national level included the economy, the continued use of nuclear power and prospect of the LDP/Komeito coalition gaining a two-thirds majority in the lower house, increasing the possibility of constitutional revision. Given that this was a snap election, the national media had little chance to prepare and focus on local constituency races. The expected victory of the coalition meant that while there were marginal constituencies, the results of these races were not considered vital to the overall outcome of the election. The nature of Japanese constituencies, labelled by number rather than as a defined local area with its own identity is an example of how there is little press coverage even at the local level for specific constituency campaigns. Social media gives researchers the opportunity to examine what is happening at the local level

through the output of the candidates' social media, specifically candidates which concentrated on attracting the personal vote. This section will give some examples of these local issues and give an idea of how social media posts have been coded in this study.

Table 4.7: Top five candidates by PVC score on social media

Candidate name	Social media output classed as PVC	Total posts
Shinji Oguma (JIP)	100%	51
Mikio Shimoji (JIP)	94.00%	49
Sumio Mabuchi (DPJ)	93.84%	130
Toru Kikawada (DPJ)	91.55%	35
Isshu Suguwara (LDP)	91.08%	191

The five candidates with the highest *personal vote* (PVC) output rating are detailed in Table 4.7. The candidate with the highest personal vote social media output was Shinji Oguma (Fukushima), a JIP challenger candidate in a non-marginal constituency. One hundred percent of his social media output was personal vote seeking and all of those posts were categorised as *campaign activity*:

> I will be giving a personal speech at 6.30pm today at the Aizu Fugado Performance Hall. Aizu people can help change Japan. Hot! Hot! Please come and listen to my passionate speech - http://t.co/XxVBAwl4dl
>
> *Twitter post from Shinji Oguma – 10/12/2014*

The tweet above, translated from Japanese, has three noteworthy aspects. First, it notifies readers when and where a campaign speech by the candidate will be given. Secondly, it specifically appeals to the local area, Aizu, and how its decision can contribute to the country as a whole. Finally, it communicates the candidates "passion" and tries to portray the campaign as being dynamic, or as the term is used "hot". For all Japanese candidates, *campaign activity* took up a significant amount of social media output. Oguma's social media use, while the most extreme case of this, shows (i) a distinct bias towards using PVC in their campaigning, and (ii) that these posts will use the personal image of the candidate to a much greater degree than localised policy. This is especially surprising in the case of

Oguma, as his constituency was in a prefecture affected by the Fukushima nuclear crisis of 2011 and there was an obvious policy area focus to his campaigning on.

Of all the candidates listed in Table 4.7, the only one to talk about policy to any kind of significant degree was DPJ incumbent Toru Kikawada (Iwate 3). *Local policy/issues* made up 11% of all social media output compared to the candidate sample average of 1.31%. The Iwate prefecture suffered a great deal of structural and economic damage from the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami, with many of the prefectures fishing boats and processing plants being destroyed. The Facebook posts below relates to this particular issue:

> Today was the first meeting of the campaign. I spoke about revival of coastal areas after (the 2011 tsunami). I have promised give all my power to support the construction of a new tunnel that will link the coastal areas with the inland areas and the International Super Collider (located in Iwate)
>
> *Facebook post from Toru Kikawada – 02/12/2014*

Videos, as well as pictures, were often used by candidates to publicise their campaign activity. These videos were shot by campaign staffers or volunteers on smartphones or small video cameras, not professional productions. Candidates posted these videos on both Twitter, Facebook and other video sharing sites such as Vine and then linked via candidates other social media accounts. This allowed candidates to upload either a part of their "stump" speech or the speech in its entirety, sometimes lasting over forty minutes, and show that they were travelling around their constituency. In terms of content, these videos raged from local to national issues, from attacks on the opposition's party's policies to the personal qualities of the candidate. A good example of this last type of video is present in a short video uploaded by Sumio Mabuchi (DPJ, Nara 1). In giving a speech on the theme of care for the elderly Mabuchi talked about his own parents and how important the hard work of his mother was to his own family. In talking both about his reasons for being in politics and connecting them to his own experience this post is one that is categorised as pursuing the personal vote. It also appeals to voters in an area, Nara, which is one of many in Japan seeing the average age of its population increasing year on year.

> I entered politics in order to protect the way families are living…….my mother who worked very hard. For the people who are working hard. I want to use politics in order to help with nursing and provide care to the elderly
>
> *Excerpt from a video posted on Facebook from Sumio Mabuchi – 12/12/2014*

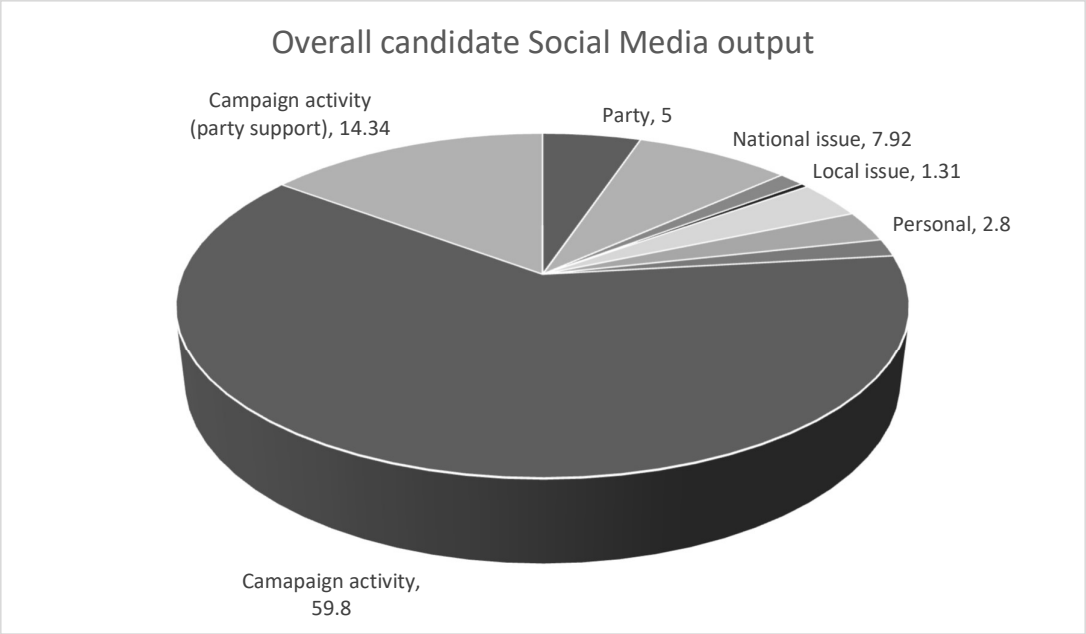
The above posts show in which ways candidates are using social media to attract the personal vote. The possibility exists for all candidates to use social media to promote their personal image and appeal to constituents as an individual, not just as members of a political party. For example, in the above video by DPJ candidate Sumio Mabuchi, no symbols of the DPJ were on the candidate's posters or vehicle. It also gives candidate the opportunity to promote policies relevant to their constituency, which the national party campaign cannot do and to show a dynamic campaign engaged with local voters.

Social Media content

Figure 4.2 shows the average usage of social media by candidates by category amongst all of the 73 candidates in the main dataset who used social media. It shows that over half of all posts by candidates fell into the *campaign activity* category (59.80%). In many cases these posts were accompanied by photos or videos of the candidate at a notable local landmark, such as a train station or community hall, shaking hands with people, making public speeches or addressing a meeting of private supporters. These posts had two main functions. The first of these was to show a lively dynamic campaign covering large areas of the constituency. The other was to act as a detailed noticeboard for the candidate's appearances throughout the day with an entreaty for readers to come and give their support. Candidates also put a great deal of importance upon receiving the endorsement from senior members of their own party, celebrities or prominent local individuals. The overall degree of party support can be seen in the *campaign activity (party support)* category (14.34%). Visits from senior members of the party were more prevalent for members in urban areas. JIP candidates were an interesting example of this, with candidates

based in Osaka receiving regular visits from Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto while the efforts of party leader Kenji Eda were concentrated in Tokyo.

Figure 4.2: Overall content (selected categories) of social media by candidates (N73)



Policy centred social media output of candidates provides an instructive insight into Japanese campaigning for two reasons. The first is that national issues trump local issues in importance, although this may not be unusual for candidates in a general election. The second is that discussion of policy of any kind makes up less than 10% of candidates average social media output. This is most likely attributable to the candidate centred nature of Japanese campaigning in which the promotion of a candidate's personality and image is more extensive than policy or ideology. This assertion and the reasons behind it will be explored further in candidate interviews. One may expect to see a higher proportion of posts under the *personal* category but this accounts for only 2.8% of candidate social media output. Adding this together with the *local policy* category gives a total of 4.21%, still much

lower than the 12.92% dedicated to *national policy* and *party* themed posts. The largest category, *campaign activity*, is difficult to classify and its effect on how candidates pursue the personal vote is open to interpretation. Does this same rule apply to posts which feature photographs or videos of the candidate making speeches or their campaign out and about in the constituency? Based on the content of the posts it can be concluded that *campaign activity* plays a significant part in seeking the personal vote though its promotion of the candidates image and its goal of showing the candidate active in the constituency. Seeking the personal vote is not about policy alone. Incorporating the *campaign activity* into overall local categorisation changes the way the overall content data is viewed and what can be described as constituency focused posts rises to over half of all social media output; for the next section of analysis this score will be taken as the dependent variable.

Content of social media (all candidates average)

Personal vote content (PVC) (including *local issue, personal* and *campaign activity* categories)	**National** (including *national issue, party* and *campaign activity (party support)* categories)
63.89%	***27.26%***

Results of social media analysis

The following section will test the hypotheses set out above by examining what factors at *party*, *constituency* and *personal* levels, explain candidates' pursuit of the personal vote using their social media output during the 2014 lower house election as a guide.

The *party* variable consists of each candidates category based on party *pre-election polling*. This variable is relatively straightforward as the LDP were most popular party in the Diet before the election and polled well ahead of the DPJ and JIP. According to H2 JIP candidates should have the highest rate of social media output dedicated to *personal vote content* (PVC) issues.

Table 4.8: Percentage of personal vote posts by variable and MCA analysis

	Percentage PV content (mean)	β (Adjusted for factors
Party		0.84
Liberal Democratic (N26)	64.90%	
Democratic (N25)	63.48%	
Japanese Restoration (N20)	63.06%	
Marginality		0.182
Marginal (N40)	61.70%	
Non-marginal (N31)	66.69%	
Incumbency		0.21
Incumbent (N32)	64.01%	
Marginal (N39)	63.77%	
Age of candidate		0.126
32-42 (N23)	62.62%	
43-48 (N14)	67.76%	
49-56 (N18)	63.30%	
57-74 (N16)	62.95%	
Previous terms in office		0.124
0 (N29)	63.89%	
1 (N10)	67.53%	
2-3 (N19)	64.14%	
4+ (N13)	60.69%	
		Model R^2 0.05

B coefficients come from MCA tests conducted on candidates personal vote related social media posts

Looking solely at the social media output of candidates there is no support for H2, that candidates from less popular parties will pursue the personal vote to a greater extent than others. In fact, the opposite appears to be true. LDP candidates were, by a small margin, using personal vote posts to the greatest degree (64.90%). The pre-election polling gap between the LDP and the other "major" parties was so great that it is surprising that both DPJ and JIP candidates, on average, did not have a noticeably higher use of the personal vote. Most interestingly though, the small very small difference in social media use between all party averages (1.84%) implies that (i) *party* is not a factor in seeking the personal vote, at least through social media, and (ii) that there is clear evidence of all candidates seeking the personal vote to a relatively high degree, which is in line with traditional models of

Japanese election campaigning and hints at little party involvement in candidates campaign strategy.

There is also little appreciable difference between candidates at the *constituency* level. Somewhat surprisingly, candidates in non-marginal seats (66.69%) use personal vote posts to a greater degree than those in marginal seats (61.70%). While this is not to a significant degree, it does seem safe to say there is no support for H3a. While incumbent candidates (64.01%), as expected, scored a higher average than challengers (63.77%), this again is to a very minor degree and is not significant (H3b).

The final variables are at the *personal* level – *candidate age* and *terms in office*. According to H4a and H4b older candidates and those with more experience in office will have a greater incentive to pursue the personal vote and build a strong individual identity in order to capitalise on existing name recognition in their local area. The results from Table 4.8 show that "mid-career" politicians, those who have been elected at least once before, are seeking the personal vote more than the youngest (62.62%) and least experienced candidates (63.89%), but surprisingly also the oldest (62.95%) and most experienced groups (60.69%). Within both groups there is little variance and the results again are not significant. In any case there is no support at this stage for either H4a or H4b. Table 4.8 does not prove which group is using social media to pursue the personal vote the most but it does show which group is using it the least. More experienced candidates have embraced social media the least and are not using it to pursue the personal vote to an appreciably higher degree than other candidates. These candidates, already with established support networks and local name recognition, may not see the necessity of using a new campaign platform to further promote their personal image amongst their constituents.

The data presented so far has given an overview of the how candidates used website in the 2014 lower house election and how social media output was utilised to pursue the personal vote. What is most striking is that there is very little variation in scores, no category averaging less than 60%. The following section will take both websites and social media together and examine candidates overall new media strategy in pursuing the personal vote allowing for a more robust test of the hypotheses set out in Chapter 2.

Personal Vote Index

This section tests the personal vote based hypotheses based upon candidates' score on the Personal Vote Index (PVI) score. As with UK candidates in Chapter 3 each candidate has been given a PVI based upon their Website Index score and percentage of PVC posts on social media.

PVI scores have been compared based on the different variables using a combination of Independent Sample T-tests and one-way ANOVA tests in order to compare the mean candidates' mean PVI scores. This is followed by Multiple Classification using the variables included in this study. The results are presented in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Candidate PVI scores tested by variable

	Mean PVI score	**β (Adjusted for factors)**
Party		0.238
Liberal Democratic	0.1340	
Democratic	0.2223	
Japanese Restoration	-0.4665	
Marginality		0.175
Marginal	-0.1732	
Non-marginal	0.2220	
Incumbency		0.004
Incumbent	0.0375	
Challenger	-0.0327	
Age of candidate		0.240
32-42 (N23)	-0.2474	
43-48 (N14)	0.3984	
49-56 (N18)	0.1635	
57-74 (N18)	-0.1572	
Previous terms in office		0.171
0 (N29)	-0.2940	
1 (N10)	0.4473	
2-3 (N19)	0.2721	
4+(N15)	-0.0745	
		Model R^2 0.13

Table 4.9 shows the results of the PVI score tests. When combining candidate websites and social media use the *party* variable shows that JIP candidates had the lowest PVI scores (-0.4665), confirming the results presented in Table 4.8, which show JIP candidates as among the lowest users of personal vote seeking social media. JIP candidates may have used social media to pursue the personal vote but organisationally and in terms of branding, they were much more reliant on the party, especially in their use of websites. DPJ candidates (0.2223) had the highest PVI scores on average, followed by LDP candidates (0.1340). While there is little to support H2, the idea that the less popular the party the more likely candidates will pursue the personal vote and exhibit high levels of organisational independence, the results from Table 4.9, taken together with those in Tables 4.8, do point to DPJ candidates, the national opposition, being the most focused on the personal vote. Candidates from the more established parties were more likely to pursue the personal vote using new media than the newly formed JIP.

At the *constituency* level results go against the proposed hypotheses set out in H3a but support H3b. Incumbent candidates were more likely to use new media to pursue the personal vote, indicating that their stronger organisational capacity and personal name value has transferred over from traditional campaigning. Challengers appear to be more reliant on the party brand. The advantage that incumbents have is being transferred into new media campaigning, although it should be noted the difference in the average score is relatively small and not significant (0.0702). Earlier sections showed how important campaign support from senior members of the party was for Japanese candidates. Levels of this kind of social media output were higher in urban and marginal constituencies. This may go some way to explaining the higher average PVI score for non-marginal candidates. In contrast to H3b non-marginal candidates are more likely to either have the freedom to run a more independent campaign, or lack the backing of their party thus having no choice but to go it alone, although again this does not prove to be statistically significant. There is in general a higher concentration of non-marginal seats in non-urban areas where the constituents may be receptive to personalised campaigns or those which are more focused on local issues. This will be covered in more detail in candidate interviews in Chapter 6.

The *personal* level variables show only partial support for H4a and H4b. For both *previous terms* and *age* it is the least experienced (-0.2940) and youngest candidates (-0.2474) which have the lowest PVI scores. The scores for both variables peak in the second category and then trend downwards to the final group in both cases. There is a difference between these results and Table 4.8, which was concerned purely with social media use. As has been shown, a good deal of the candidates' social media output concentrated on promoting the candidates' images and campaign activity. The disparity between high PVC and relatively low PVI score can be attributed to the use of websites and implies that less experienced/younger candidates are using websites less than other groups to strengthen organisational independence and promote localised policies. These candidates are clearly less independent of the national party than others, especially experienced lawmakers. While no concrete claims can be made from the results in this section, it appears safe to conclude that it is mid-career politicians, those who have served between one and four terms in office and are aged between 44 and 57, who are using new media the most to attract the personal vote.

MCA tests fail to provide any statistically significant results and the model produced (R^2 0.13) does not provide any clear indication of the studied variables providing an explanation of how candidates are using new media. While analysis of candidates mean PVI scores has failed to provide any statistically significant differences between the variables studied, it should be borne in mind that this might be down to the low number of cases involved, so there are two tentative conclusions that can be made. Firstly, experience is a key determining factor behind candidates' pursuit of the personal vote. Less experienced candidates, be it in terms of age, experience in office or indeed belonging to the newest party (JIP) are less likely to pursue the personal vote. Secondly, while earlier results have shown a high degree of personal and campaign image promotion on social media, this is not always matched by candidate websites, which often lack the functional depth for independent campaigning and promotion of local policies which lead to candidates having more independence from the national party. Once again, this is especially apparent amongst younger/less experienced candidates and those representing the JIP. There is a general consensus that Japanese campaigning has begun to shift towards a more professional, party run model since electoral reform in 1994 (see Chapter 1). The results from this study so far

imply that it is still very much the candidate who has responsibility for strategising and organising their campaign and who remains the focus of it. Influence from the national party appears to be limited to younger and less experienced candidates. Whether these younger candidates continue to embrace the party label as they continue in politics, or they follow the trend of older members who campaign independently to a greater degree, will affect both the way in which campaigns are run and candidate-party relations in the future.

Policy promotion by candidates on social media

This section examines which policies candidates chose to promote and in what context they chose to frame them. This will help to clarify two points. Firstly, this section will show to what degree candidates promote local issues and policies compared to national policies connected to the party they represent. Secondly, it will demonstrate to what degree candidates are emphasise the same policies as the national party.

Local vs national policy promotion

From analysing social media accounts of 73 electoral candidates, it becomes clear that policy is secondary to candidate image. In total only 9.22% of all candidate output could be described as focused on policy. Of those only 1.31% of posts were about *local* policy/issues compared to 7.91% for *national* policies/issues. Japanese politics is traditionally seen as candidate, rather than party-centred, and much of a candidate's appeal is based upon what provisions they can provide for their constituents. There is evidence, at least in the use of social media that there has been an important shift in how candidates pursue the personal vote. The lack of local policy promotion and the high levels of candidate focused imagery, especially *campaign activity* themed posts, implies that candidates are running less on what they can specifically do for constituents and more on their suitability as representatives in the national legislature. This is a potentially important development in both Japanese campaigning in general and Japanese politics in general.

With such a low overall use of *local* centred posts, it is hard to make any firm conclusions amongst the variables studied although two results are worth mentioning. In keeping with conclusions already made, there is a noticeable difference between candidates in non-

marginal constituencies and those in marginal constituencies. Candidates in these areas averaged 1.70% and 1.01% of *local* posts respectively. There was also a difference in the *age* and *previous terms* groups. The two youngest groups, encompassing candidates aged 32-49 averaged 1.02% while those aged 50-74 averaged 1.61%. For *previous terms* the most experienced candidates (5+ terms) averaged 2.10% of *local* posts, the highest amongst all of the variable groups studied.

Party policy positions

The final question remaining is how closely candidates stick to the party line in terms of promoting policies. This is challenging in the context of Japanese elections, for both candidates and parties, due to the overall lack of policy engagement. In total, the LDP made 125 tweets/retweets, the DPJ 1043 and the JIP 99. This massive disparity in social media use plays out in the results of party policy analysis. In using an NVivo text analysis it became apparent that parties, much like their candidates, did not focus a great deal of their social media output of policy. Surprisingly results from the analysis of JIP party tweets showed not a single specific policy based post. For the LDP, just under half of posts could be classed as policy posts (53), with the vast majority of those being classed as *economic* (47). The DPJ, with a much higher output, not surprisingly displayed a greater range of policy promotion. In total 232 Twitter posts were categorised as based on policy, with just over half of those concerning *economic* issues (125 / 53.88% of all policy-based posts). The DPJ also made notable mention of transport *and infrastructure* (12.5% of all policy-based posts), *rural* (9.48%) and *education* (7.76%) among other policy areas.

Of the 73 candidates studied, 17 either did not use social media or made no policy posts at all during the election campaign[39].

Table 4.10: Candidates top 5 policies promoted on social media by party[40]

Ranking	Liberal Democratic	Democratic	Japanese Restoration
1	*Economic* (68.65%)	*Economic* (55.49%)	*Economic* (44.52%)

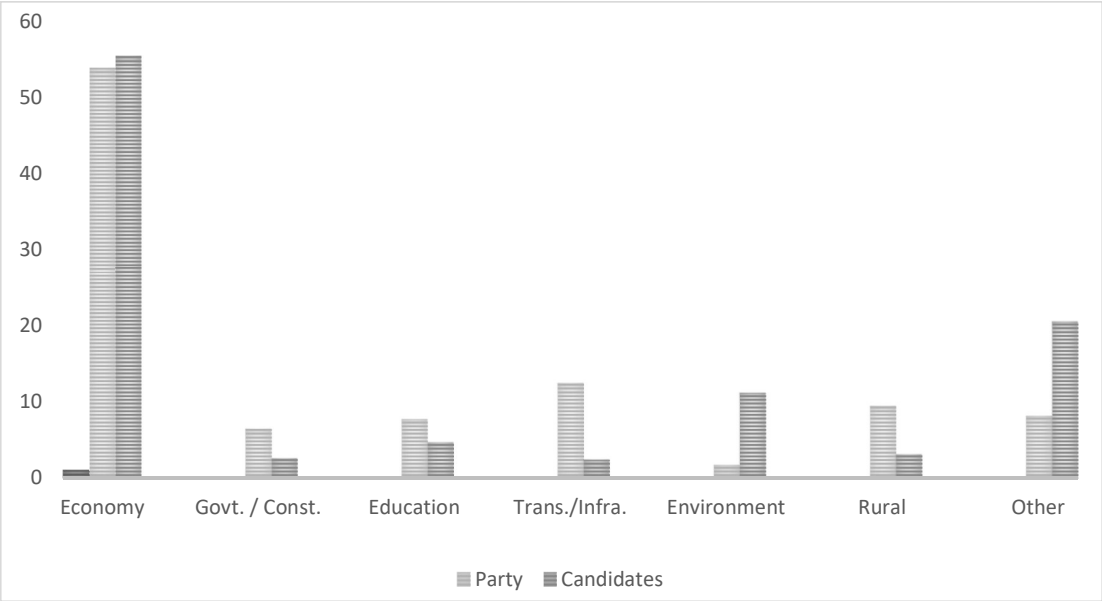
[39] Leaving N20 for LDP, N20 for DJP and N16 for JIP
[40] Percentages are taken only from posts which were classified as being *policy* related

2	*Environment* (6.43%)	*Environment* (11.20%)	*Govt./Const.* (12.15%)
3	*Rural* (4.88%)	*Education* (4.66%)	*Trans./Infr.* (10.82%)
4	*Trans./Infr.* (3.69%)	*Rural* (3.10%)	*Foreign* (7.47%)
5	*Art/Sport* (3.43%)	*Govt./Const.* (2.58%)	*Environment* (6.46%)

Table 4.10 shows the top five policies mentioned on social media by party group. For candidates from all parties, *economy* was the most important issue, although there is a considerable difference between LDP and JIP candidates. It is debatable whether LDP or DPJ candidates show the least variation of issues covered. It appears the only notable difference is in DPJ candidates' greater *environmental* content which is linked to many DPJ candidates opposing the continued use of nuclear power following the Fukushima accident in 2011. DPJ candidates show much less variation in policy promotion than their party while JIP candidates show the highest levels of policy variation. This is perhaps somewhat surprising considering the lack of any significant policy content from the national party.

Due to the lack of party policy output, it is only possible to gauge how closely candidate and party policy promotion aligns for the DPJ and its candidates. Figure 4.3 shows some congruence in policy for the DPJ with percentage of posts relating to *economy* being very similar (Party: 53.88%, Candidates: 55.49%). While JIP candidates cover a wider area of policy areas, DPJ candidates are the only ones matched by their party in this respect. There is little synergy on which issues are covered aside from the economy. As the second most covered topic, DPJ party gave coverage to *transport and infrastructure* issues (12.5%) and candidates *environmental* (11.2%). In the Japanese context however, both of these topics were heavily associated with the Fukushima nuclear crisis and reconstruction efforts following the March 2011 tsunami. Certainly, this was a leading topic of discourse amongst many candidates critical of the government's efforts to rebuild affected areas after the disaster. This is an assumption and cannot be seen as conclusive evidence of party/candidate policy synergy and there is no proof of orchestrated policy promotion at this stage of the study.

Figure 4.3: Content of policy posts on Twitter by the DPJ and candidates



Overall there is little evidence of policy co-ordination between parties and candidates although the effects of this are hard to judge with confidence, given the low levels of policy output on social media by both parties and candidates. The economy, especially pro- and anti- Abenomics posts, dominated much of the policy discourse in the 2014 lower house election. Two of the major parties failed to engage with policy promotion on social media to any great extent although the party which did, the DPJ, showed similarity with its candidates. In general, there is evidence of continuation of traditional Japanese politics continued in the online sphere. Which policies candidates talk about is largely down to their own judgement and constituency level needs. This is something which will be covered in greater detail in Chapter 6. In the case of Japan, this is not facilitating greater independence in policy strategy, but it is confirming the status quo of candidate-centred campaigning.

Conclusion

The evidence presented in this chapter allows for a number of conclusions to be made concerning the use of new media by constituency level candidates in pursuing the personal vote:

Candidate image dominates new media discourse: Candidates appear unwilling to use websites or social media to differentiate themselves through personalised or localised policy promotion. This may be attributable to the tradition of strict campaign for traditional campaigning in Japanese elections which has carried over into the manner in which candidates campaign online. Social media output is dominated by campaign activity and attempts to get supporters out attending meetings and rallies. While support from senior members of the party is publicised, there is little use or mention of the party label in constituency level campaigning. Even without a direct comparison to UK candidates at this stage, it seems clear that the assertion in H1, that Japanese candidates are highly likely to pursue the a personal, rather than party vote, holds true.

Highly personalised candidate websites are the norm: Candidate websites are highly personalised, each with a unique design and original content. There is an emphasis on personalising the candidate, either through highlighting their existing achievements in their professional life or detailed candidate biographies which stress the candidate's background and their motivation for entering politics. Organisationally many candidates take advantage of websites to promote membership of their *koenkai*. This membership most often involves financial rather than time commitment from supporters and few candidates feel the need to encourage greater participation from supporters outside of donations and attending campaign meetings. In some cases websites link the national party site, feature the party logo and a picture of the party leaders but candidates do not rely on the national party for design or assistance when building and maintaining a website. Party websites seemingly run wholly independently of the national party.

Experience is a factor in pursuit of the personal vote: It is difficult to make any concrete conclusion in this regard but it appears that mid-career politicians, in terms of age and experience in office, and candidates in non-marginal constituencies are the most likely to pursue the personal vote. The conclusions are tenuous. What is clearer is which candidates

are not using new media to pursue the personal vote. Younger and less experienced candidates are more likely to require support from the party in both image and organisational backing, providing some limited support for H4a&b. The results do not show younger and less experienced candidates embracing new media to a higher degree than other candidates and they are not using it to create personalised, independent campaigns.

There is no question that candidates in Japan are embracing new media as a campaign platform. While many conclusions in this chapter may be open to interpretation it is clear that new media is, for most candidates, being used to strengthen personal image. There is no evidence of the national party playing a role in how candidates are using new media and candidates in turn focus most of their efforts on promoting themselves rather than the party. This would imply that traditional Japanese campaigning has transferred over to the online sphere. While campaigning is becoming more professionalised at the national level, with more importance being attached to the image of the party leader and the ability of the party itself to govern, new media is strengthening, or at the very least complimenting, candidate independence in the Japanese campaigning system.

In an attempt to strengthen the conclusions made so far and to see if any claims can be made which will apply to both countries, the following chapter will take results from both UK and Japanese candidates and make direct comparisons between the two based on a country level difference in addition to the variables already included in the two empirical chapters so far.

Chapter 5

Comparison of United Kingdom and Japanese elections

The United Kingdom and Japan – campaigning in comparison

As set out in Chapter 1, the UK and Japan have two very different traditions of electoral campaigning. The UK exhibits party-centred campaigning, where the party brand is seen as the key determining factor in how voters select parliamentary candidates. In Japan, despite electoral reform lessening intra-party competition and recent examples of stronger central party leadership, campaign styles which grew out of Japan's post-war single non-transferable vote system are still prevalent and have resulted in Japanese parliamentary campaigning remaining candidate-focused and as a consequence allowing candidates more independence from the national party during election campaigns. The purpose of this chapter is twofold. Firstly, it introduces a *country* level analysis to the existing methodological framework to determine what effect campaign traditions have on how candidates are using new media. It can be expected that systemic difference in campaign traditions will be the key factor in the degree to which candidates use new media to campaign independently. If this is the case then new media campaigning can be said to replicate traditional. While also including levels of analysis covered in Chapters 3 and 4, the focus of this chapter can be summarised by the following hypothesis:

> *H1: Candidates in a candidate centred campaign system (Japan) will use new media to increase their independence, through the personal vote, from the national party to a greater degree than those in a party centred campaign system (the UK)*

This hypothesis represents *country* level analysis. It can be expected that the organisation and policy promotion potential of new media will particularly appeal to politicians in a candidate centred system. This would be evident in Japan as an extension of existing campaign methods which already rely on candidates being able to raise considerable funds through supporter groups, the mobilisation of volunteers and voters through personal networks, and the promotion of local/personal policies. To demonstrate a systemic difference, candidates in the UK would exhibit have less independent organisational capacity in their new media platforms and to be less likely to promote personal/local policies and their own personal brand. Evidence of greater candidate independence regardless of systemic difference would imply potentially significant changes in political

campaigning and candidate-party relations which are so general as to overcome country or party-specific traditions.

Secondly, this chapter will include the hypotheses already covered in earlier chapters in order to see which conclusions already made from single country studies can be applied to both countries. By testing whether conclusions from single country analysis are applicable to both countries, this chapter will help to establish which uses of new media may be applicable to candidates from other politically systems. To recap, conclusions drawn so far from Chapters 3 and 4 are summarised in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Conclusions from single country analysis (Chapters 3 and 4)

Japan	**United Kingdom**
Conclusions from separate country analysis: -High levels of personal vote behavior -Incumbents (H3b) more likely to pursue the personal vote -Younger and less experienced least likely to pursue the personal vote	Conclusions from separate country analysis: -Incumbent and marginal candidates (H3a+b) more likely to pursue the personal vote -Candidates from weaker parties more likely to pursue the personal vote -More experienced candidates more likely to pursue the personal vote
Hypotheses confirmed/rejected: -H2 (*party*): Rejected (non-significant, not in expected direction) -H3a (*marginality*): Rejected (non-significant, not in expected direction) -H3b (*incumbency*): Not rejected (non-significant, but in expected direction) -H4a (*age*): Not rejected (non-significant, but in expected direction) -H4b (*experience*): Not rejected (non-significant, but in expected direction)	Hypotheses confirmed/rejected: -H2 (*party*): Not rejected (non-significant, but in expected direction) -H3a (*marginality*): Confirmed (significant and in the expected direction) -H3b (*incumbency*): Confirmed (significant and in the expected direction) -H4a (*age*): Not rejected (non-significant, but in expected direction) -H4b (*experience*): Not rejected (non-significant, but in expected direction)

In total 151 candidates from the Japanese 2014 (N73) and UK 2015 (N78) lower house elections were selected and their use of new media analysed. Of the three new media

platforms studied 148 out of 151 candidates (98.01%) had websites which were connected to their campaign. 134 (88.74%) had Twitter accounts which were active used during the campaign and 138 (91.39%) had active Facebook accounts.

As with analysis conducted in earlier chapters, candidates' use of new media has first been separated into analysis of websites and social media (Twitter and Facebook). Results from these platforms have subsequently been combined to create a Personal Vote Index (PVI) score for each candidate, pooling cases from the UK and Japan, and analysed through multiple classification analysis (MCA).

In addition to statistical analysis, this chapter will also present specific examples of candidate case studies in order to show how new media is being used to pursue the personal vote in the UK and Japan. This will include a detailed analysis of website content and social media use from amongst candidates with the highest and lowest use of new media to attract the personal vote, based on PVI scores, in order to see which common factors are shared by candidates scoring both high and low PVI scores.

Results 1: Candidate websites and social media

Table 5.2: Major descriptive statistics of social media platforms

Variable	**Mean PWI score**	**Mean *PVC score***	**Average number of social media posts per day during campaign**
Country	*	*	
Japan (N73)	3.68	63.89%	5.92
United Kingdom (N78)	3.80	48.67%	6.39
Party represented			
Ruling party (N55)	3.43	54.64%	5.49
Opposition party (N48)	3.83	58.02%	7.46
Third party (N48)	4.02	55.56%	5.70

Incumbency			
Incumbent (N73)	3.96	57.24%	6.28
Challenger (N78)	3.55	54.88%	6.06
Marginality			
Marginal (N79)	3.81	57.11%	6.77
Non-marginal (N72)	3.67	54.78%	5.50
Candidate Age			
23-42 (N31)	3.94	58.52%	6.23
43-48 (N27)	3.70	59.64%	7.00
49-53 (N31)	3.50	55.97%	7.24
54-58 (N22)	4.45	52.74%	6.51
59-74 (N26)	3.58	59.42%	4.56
N/A (N14)			
Previous terms served	**	**	**
0 (N46)	3.36	47.38%	5.67
1 (N41)	3.49	60.08%	6.70
2-3 (N17)	4.38	55.20%	8.94
4 (N32)	4.25	61.23%	5.87
5-11 (N15)	3.80	60.70%	3.66

Note: Mean scores relate to candidate PWI scores and Personal vote social media output. Social media content: *Significant at <0.01, **Significant at <0.05. Significance levels have been derived from comparison of means tests (Independent Sample T-tests on dichotomous variables, ANOVA for multicategory group variables)

Candidate Websites

Table 5.2 shows the averages of Personal Website Index (PWI) scores based on the variables under study. Based on a 7-point scale, the mean scores show little difference in the extent to which candidates from the UK (3.80) and Japan (3.68) are using websites to strengthen their own campaign organisation or their personal image. Table 5.2 also shows candidates from weaker parties will be more likely to use personal vote features and there is a clear distinction between the three-party groups studied, although not at a statistically significant

level. PWI averages were highest amongst "third party" candidates (4.02), with a steady decline in average scores of opposition parties (3.83) and the ruling parties (3.43). When looking at websites in particular, there is some evidence to support H2, which is to say that candidates from weaker parties are using websites to in some way compensate for their national party's shortcomings. Amongst the two *constituency* level variables there is a differing degree of support for H3a and H3b. There is a slight difference in the utilisation of websites between candidates at the *marginality* level, with marginal candidates using more personal vote features, as expected. A more substantial difference can be seen between incumbent and challenger candidates, with a 0.41point difference between the two groups in favour of incumbents. At the *personal* level*,* in the case of both *age* and *experience* there is no clear evidence to show that older and more experienced candidates use more personal vote features. In terms of website use the data points to what might be described as *mid-career* politicians using more personal vote features. It is the second to oldest group (aged 54-58) which has the highest PWI score (4.45 – the highest amongst all the groups included under each variable) and candidates with between 2 and 4 *previous terms served* (and average of 4.32 taken two separate ranges). While this does little to prove H4a and H4b it does not show that the opposite is true, namely that younger and less experienced candidates are using more personal vote features. Taking the mean scores at face value there is little conclusive proof that one group is using personal vote functions to a greater degree than another, although some differences can be observed. A more detailed look at the different ways in which candidates use websites provides a more useful assessment of website utilisation.

More detailed analysis shows a qualitative difference in the way in which candidates from Japan and the UK use personal vote features on their websites. Figure 5.1 (below) shows that the use of candidate biographies was standard amongst all candidates, with only ten websites not featuring one (five each from the UK and Japan). It should be noted that Japanese candidate biographies were very often much more detailed, for example describing the candidate's entire life, rather than just their professional histories. Japanese candidate websites generally had much more extra information, such as monthly newsletters and campaign posters available to download and videos of candidate activities either in parliament or in local politics. This accounts for their much higher scoring in the

other personal vote feature category. The other area in which Japanese candidates had a higher frequency was in *donations*. 60.27% of Japanese candidates had a *donate* function compared with 31.17% of UK candidate websites[41]. Donations to Japanese candidates most often went to their personal *koenkai* through a third-party fund raising website called "Love Japan". In the UK, the donate function was most prevalent amongst Liberal Democrat candidates using Crowdfunder, setting a precise target of £3000 specifically to raise for the election. The *volunteer* function was used to a much higher degree by UK candidates (55.13%), especially those representing Labour and the Liberal Democrats. The same also applies to policy. 58.97% of UK candidates had a local manifesto or specifically mentioned local policies, a much higher proportion than in Japan (17.80%), where mentions of policy overall were much lower (see Figures 5.1 and 5.2). There is a clear qualitative, if not statistical difference, in the way in which UK and Japanese candidates are using online platforms which ties in to their respective traditions of campaigning. Japanese websites are designed to highlight the personal qualities and achievements of the candidate, arguably at the expense of discussing specific policies. Election laws mean door to door canvassing is not permitted in Japan and this, coupled with weak local party organisation (compared to candidate centred *koenkai*) explains why candidates in Japan see volunteer mobilisation as being less important than financial donations. Supporters of Japanese candidates campaign in a different way, often organising meetings or attending rallies where the focus is on projecting a strong campaign image. They act almost independently as a third-party, without the candidate taking the lead in organising an event. Volunteers play a very different role in UK elections and are a vital resource for any candidate wishing to make contact with potential voters. In the UK volunteers can more actively engage with potential voters through door-to-door canvassing and speaking on a candidate behalf in public campaigning. It should be noted there have been instances of candidates attracting volunteers and donations through websites but this is still at an early stage and has yet to play an important part in campaign organisation[42].

Perhaps most significantly, and something which is not revealed in the analysis so far, is that all Japanese candidate websites featured a unique design as opposed to UK candidate

[41] More UK candidate websites did feature a donate function but those cases in which this led the user to directly give money to the national party have been omitted from the total
[42] See Chapter 6

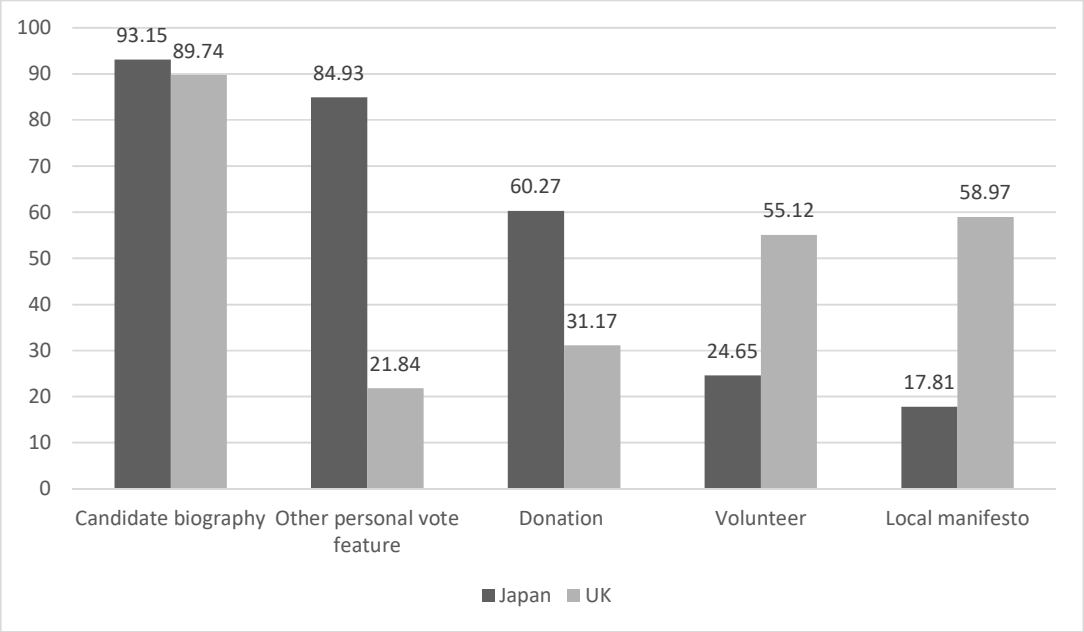
websites, which were built from standard templates shared by members of the same party. This shows that Japanese candidates are solely responsible for the design and upkeep of their website. This means that all websites have a unique design which may not immediately identify the candidate as representing a political party. This may have more to do with necessity than choice as parties see the candidate as being responsible for and bearing the cost of maintaining an online presence. Candidates therefore decide to what degree the images of the party brand or party leader feature on their websites. In the vast majority of cases it is the image of the candidate which features most prominently and in some cases the party logo was not immediately evident, located near the bottom of the front page or found on a very small banner link. Where reference is made to the national party, especially though pictures of the party leader, it was for LDP and JIP candidates whose leaders, prime minister Shinzo Abe and Toru Hashimoto (although only for candidates based in the Kinki region) respectively, had much higher personal ratings of popularity in comparison to DPJ leader Banri Kaieda. All UK candidates used a template (different for the respective parties) for their website design. While these mostly featured the candidate in a prominent position on the front page, all were colour-specific, Conservative candidates' websites designed primarily in blue, Labour in red and Liberal Democrat in yellow. There would have been no confusion for the visitor as to which party the candidate represented. Candidates not holding office prior to elections in the UK were less likely to maintain a website between elections and party funding would not stretch to providing a website to every prospective candidate or an individualised website for all selected candidates. As such candidates decided to put their limited campaign resources into other areas of campaigning, knowing that the party template website would provide the requisite functionality needed for their campaign.[43]

In a content analysis of candidate websites it becomes apparent that at the *country* level there is a stark difference in the way candidates use websites. The focus of Japanese websites is almost always on the candidate personally with any party symbolism, where it is found, coming from images of the candidate with the party leader or often small party logos. In the UK, some organisational functions (e.g. *volunteer*) and promotion of individualised manifestos are being used to a greater degree although this is balanced out

[43] See Chapter 6

by the strong identification that each website has with the national party represented. In regard to the personalisation of websites there is consistent support for H1, while organisational features are divided by the respective importance placed on financing by Japanese candidates and activist mobilisation by UK candidates (see Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: Frequency of functions used on candidate websites



Note: All figures are percentages. UK N=78, Japan N= 73

Social media

The Personal Vote Content (PVC) averages from Table 5.2 show a stark contrast between Japanese and UK candidates in their use of social media. Total output from the respective election campaign periods shows that Japanese candidates (63.89% of all social media output) used posts which could be categorised as seeking the personal vote to a much higher, and statistically significant, degree than UK candidates (48.67%) At face value this supports the hypothesis set out in H1. As with candidate websites it is important to examine the qualitative differences between how websites are used by candidates in both countries. Figure 5.2 shows the breakdown of social media use by candidates from both countries by content. For candidates from both countries social media output classed as *campaign activity* makes up the biggest single category of social media activity. In the case of Japanese

candidates, well over half of their posts (59.80%) related to *campaign activity*, significantly higher than those of UK candidates (37.77%). *Campaign activity* posts were utilised in a number of different ways. Most commonly, candidates reported what they had been doing on the campaign trail and which places they had visited in their constituency. These posts were designed not just to connect the candidates with constituents in local areas by showing that the candidate was "interested" in said area but also to give the impression of a vibrant, active campaign which may help to attract people to attend future events. There were clear benefits to using social media to help candidates build a local profile, something which would be more difficult for challenger candidates to do through traditional media. There is a sense of candidates building a "narrative".[44] A whole campaign can be documented online. People can see candidates working hard in their constituency which builds and promotes the personal image of the candidate as hard working and concerned with local issues. *Campaign activity* posts can mobilise supporters and followers and act as a tool for sending out campaign information. It was common amongst Japanese candidates in particular, for upcoming itineraries for the next several days campaigning to be published. Networks created through social media also allow candidates to reach voters who do not follow them but are linked to people who do.

The fact that Japanese candidates use *campaign activity* posts to a notably greater degree than their UK counterparts shows how much more important the image of the candidate and their campaign is in comparison to other areas such as party and general policy promotion. This reinforces support for H1. It is more important for candidates to build a personal connection with voters and supporters in Japan as they have a weaker party brand to rely on. In the UK, clearly *campaign activity* posts play an important role in new media strategy but are used to a lesser degree, while posts relating to *national policy* and *negative campaigning*, which most often concentrates on the leader of a rival party, are more of a factor.[45]

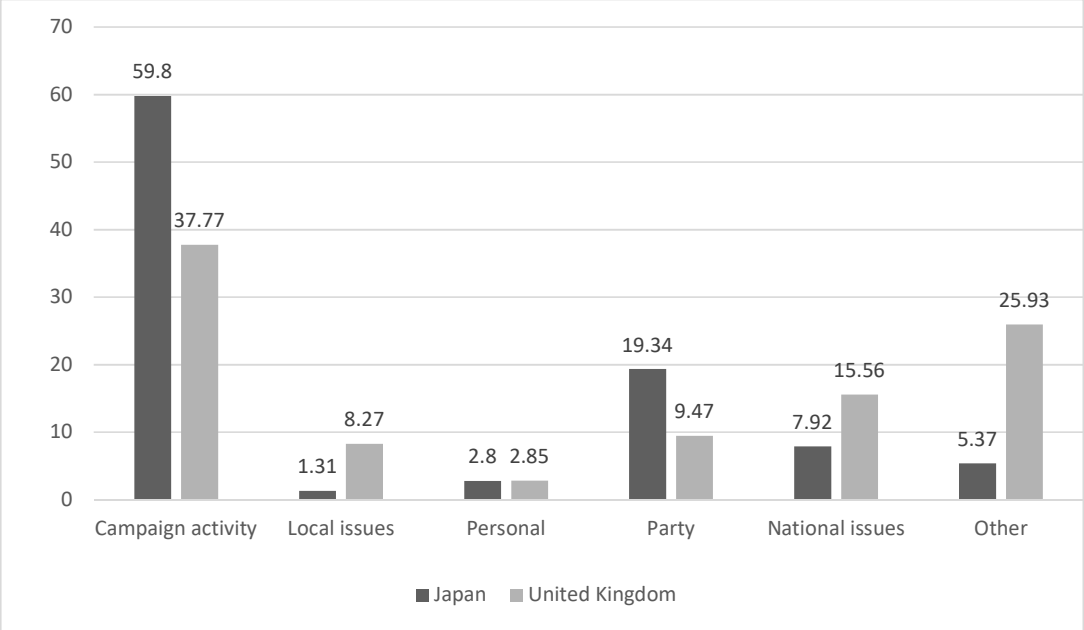
The predominance of image amongst Japanese candidates is reinforced by the lack of posts based on policy which makes up only a combined 9.23% of all social media output (7.92%

[44] See Chapter 6

[45] In figure 12, posts which were designed to portray other parties, their leaders and their candidates (although it was most often the first two of these) were categorised as *other* as they are not judged to be irrelevant to candidates seeking to personal vote.

for *national issues*, 1.31% for *local issues*). This compares to overall policy posts totalling 23.83% of UK candidates output (15.56% for *national issues*, 8.27% for *local issues*). This is evidence of traditional campaign styles being replicated on social media. Evidence from Chapter 4 shows Japanese parties themselves put very little emphasis on policy, at least through social media campaigning. UK candidates willingness to discuss specific policy overall can also be attributed to the national party having specific policies highlighted in manifestos which in turn provides candidates with a clear set of policies to endorse and promote on social media which will closely identify them with their party. In the case of Japanese candidates, the fact that they were contesting a snap election combined with the fact that the DPJ and JIP lacked strong policy platforms voters could identify them with, made it unclear even to their candidates what their party stood for and how to communicate this to voters (see Chapter 6).

Figure 5.2: Content of social media output by candidates from UK and Japan



Note: All figures are percentages

In breaking down the other variables in Table 5.2 *party* factors do show that the ruling parties, as expected, have the lowest degree of personal vote social media use. However, it is candidates from official Opposition parties, not Third parties as set out in H2, who have the highest overall personal vote content; although this difference does not prove to be

statistically significant, it is consistent with the possibility of candidates at the national level seeking to overturn the advantage that candidates representing the ruling party have in both brand recognition and established *national* policy platforms by pursuing a strategy based on the personal vote to a greater degree. The two *constituency* level variables show differing results in regard to expected behaviour. The overall averages between the two variables are virtually identical, with *marginal* constituency candidates using personal vote content on average 2.36% more than *non-marginal* candidates and *incumbents* 2.33% more than *challenger* candidates. These results make it difficult to draw any firm conclusions about social media use at the *constituency* level. Social media use at the *personal* level tells a similar story to that of candidate websites. While there is not a general trend which shows that the more experienced a candidate, the greater degree to which they will use personal vote posts, there is statistically significant confirmation that the least experienced candidates use these types of posts the least, averaging just 47.38% and again that mid-career politicians are using personal vote posts the most, those having served four terms previously averaging 61.23%. *Age* plays a less decisive factor, with the second to oldest group, candidates aged 54-58, the lowest scoring group (52.74%) but scores amongst other age groups being similar, with the oldest group (59-74) using personal vote posts only 0.90% more than the youngest sage group (23-42). Examining social media use according to *age,* H4a can be safely rejected based on the results.

In addition to the number of personal vote posts made by candidates, Table 5.2 also shows the frequency of posts made by candidates based on each variable under study. At the country level there is little appreciable difference to the amount of posts made, with UK candidates (average of 6.39 posts per day) posting slightly more than Japanese candidates (5.92). At the party level, opposition candidates (7.46) were using social media to the greatest degree, considerably more than the ruling or third-party group, but this difference was not statistically significant. This in itself suggests that opposition candidates were more likely to utilise social media, attempting to engage with voters and using a relatively cost-effective platform to overcome the advantage held by the incumbent national party. This may tie into the overall PVC score (Table 5.2) and PVI score (Table 5.3) which shows that opposition party candidates are most likely to use new media to pursue the personal vote. Table 5.2 also shows, while not significant, that candidates in marginal seats (6.77) used

social media to a greater degree than those in non-marginal seats (5.50), a result which conforms to expectations. Personal factors also seem to play a part, at least with older and more experienced candidates. Candidates in the oldest age group, aged 59-74, were by far the least likely to use social media (4.56) as were the most experienced candidates, those having served five or more terms in office previously (3.66). There is of course very likely a high correlation between experience and age of candidates. Clearly it is younger candidates who are embracing social media to the greatest degree. In examining social media separately, it is clear that *country* level differences are the most significant factor when determining to what degree candidates are pursuing the personal vote. This exhibited in both countries through the use of posts designed to promote the candidate and the local campaign they are running, showing a much higher frequency of use amongst Japanese candidates

The next section will combine data from candidate website use and social media use in order to construct and joint PVI score for candidates in both countries, based upon the formula used in Chapters 3 and 4. This will be able to confirm the significance of *country* level difference between candidates from the UK and Japan and by combining candidates from both countries into other variables, determine which other factors play a role in candidates pursuit of the personal vote.

Results 2: Modelling candidates' overall use of new media

The preceding sections have examined the use of two different platforms (website and social media) independently. In this section, we combine the use of both websites and social media into a single measure, candidate *PVI score*, which is utilised as the dependent variable in a multivariate model. By doing this, it is possible to test hypotheses concerning the personal vote for candidates' overall new media strategy. Results from multiple classification analysis can be seen in Table 5.3 along with the mean PVI scores for each independent variable.

As expected the *country* variable shows the most significant difference between candidate pursuit of the personal vote. Japanese candidates averaged a PVI score of 0.3313 compared to -0.3101 for UK candidates showing concrete support for H1 ($\beta = 0.111$) and proving that

thus far, at least in the case of the UK and Japan, campaign traditions are being transferred onto the online sphere. While the extent of the difference between UK and Japanese candidates may, in the most part, be attributed to the difference in the way candidates use social media, the detailed analysis of candidate websites set out above shows that while functionally, Japanese candidate websites cannot be described as enhancing candidate independence to a greater degree, it is true that Japanese candidates promote a greater level of candidate independence through their design and administration. As such the conclusion that Japanese candidates have an overall new media strategy which is more geared towards the personal vote and encourages greater independence from the national party is entirely justified.

Table 5.3: Multiple Classification Analysis of Personal Vote Index (PVI)

Variable	Mean *PVI* Score	β (Adjusted for factors)
Country		0.111*
Japan (N73)	0.3313*	
United Kingdom (N78)	-0.3101	
Party represented		0.111
Ruling party (N55)	-0.2354	
Opposition party (N48)	0.1432	
Third party (N48)	0.1265	
Incumbency		0.03***
Incumbent (N73)	0.1718	
Challenger (N78)	-0.1608	
Marginality		0.045
Marginal (N79)	0.0867	
Non-marginal (N72)	-0.952	
Candidate age		0.151
23-42 (N31)	0.2254	
43-48 (N27)	0.1504	
49-53 (N31)	-0.1326	
54-58 (N22)	0.2377	
59-74 (N26)	0.0571	
N/A (N14)		
Previous terms served		0.200
0 (N46)	-0.5938**	
1 (N41)	0.0517	
2-3 (N17)	0.2899	
4 (N32)	0.5282	
5-11 (N15)	0.2240	

	Model R^2 0.15

Note: *Significant at <0.01, **Significant at <0.05, ***Significant at <0.1. Significance levels for "Mean PVI score" have been derived from comparison of means tests (Independent Sample T-tests on dichotomous variables, ANOVA for multicategory group variables). Significance levels for **βs** are derived from the MCA tests.

The other results reported in Table 5.3 generally support earlier conclusions. At the *party* level, it is clear that membership of the Ruling party gives candidates the opportunity to run to a greater degree on the strengths of their party's record in government, with those candidates averaging the lowest PVI score (-0.2354). Results show that it is the main Opposition party (0.1432) rather than the weakest party (0.1265) which is likely to use more personal vote features. It was not unusual for Liberal Democrat and JIP *challenger* candidates at the constituency level to lack a strong local identity. It was more common for candidates from both those parties to be newcomers to the constituency they were running in and lack grassroots support, any kind of local party infrastructure and name recognition within the constituency. While building a personal identity was important for those candidates, the quickest way to do that, especially for candidates in Japan, who had little time to prepare for the 2014 election, was through the party label. The fact that Opposition party candidates scored the highest PVI average can be explained by having campaign strategies which were a combination of the factor listed above. Opposition party candidates, who in the case of both Labour and the DPJ had candidates who had been part of a governing party just five years ago, were more likely to have established local identities and local organisation. This was combined with the fact they were representing national parties which arguably focused their national campaigns on criticism of the governing party (e.g. Abenomics in Japan and austerity in the UK) rather than having strong manifestos themselves. As such it may have been important for Labour and DPJ candidates to craft "positive", local focused policies and stronger individual identities. Even so, the MCA shows that these differences were not significant in terms of overall PVI score and not enough evidence is present to confirm H2[46].

On average both incumbent (0.1718) and marginal (0.0867) candidates were more likely to use new media to pursue the personal vote. The *incumbency* variable was found to be statistically significant (β = 0.03). Incumbent MPs were more likely to have a higher PVI

[46] See Chapter 2

score than challengers (-0.1608), resulting in further confirmation of H3b. The idea that challengers may seek greater candidate independence cannot be applied to candidates generally, just as it was not found to be the case in single country studies. In this respect new media shows candidates who have a personal record to run on and a more established local identity feel more comfortable, or are more capable of, running more personalised campaigns.

The other key independent variable is *previous terms served* (β = 0.200), which again shows that it is the least experienced candidates which are using personal vote features the least (-0.5938), providing limited support for H4b. While it is not the most experienced candidates who are using personal vote focused new media to the greatest degree, candidates who had served 4 terms previously were the highest scoring group (0.5282) and there was a general positive, statistically significant, correlation found in the results (β = 0.200). Results relating to *candidate age* show no pattern, with younger candidates and the second to oldest group (54-58) having the highest use of personal vote focused new media and as such H4a cannot be confirmed. These results tie in with the above explanatory factors; candidates from opposition parties, challenger candidates especially, and those in non-marginal constituencies, are unlikely to have much in the way of grassroots support and local party organisation. They have little choice but to use new media to promote themselves under the party label by promoting the party manifesto, talking about national issues and focusing much of their social media output on what party leadership, especially the party leader, are doing or saying. Results show it is the more established, mid-career politicians which are the most inclined to utilise new media to create independent campaigns.

There also appears to be a relationship between frequency of social media posts and pursuing the personal vote. While this is not the case at *country* level, where UK candidates made more social media posts during the respective election campaigns, can be seen at *party* and *constituency* level in both Tables 5.2 and 5.3. Opposition party candidates had both the highest rates of social media use and highest PVI scores. This is also true of marginal and incumbent candidates. At these levels of analysis it can be speculated, although not statistically confirmed, that candidates who are using social media to a greater degree are the ones with the highest PVI score

Case studies of new media use

Highest and lowest users of independent focused new media

This section will expand on the findings of set out in the preceding chapters by making a detailed examination of candidates' campaign strategies. By assigning candidates a PVI score this study has established which candidates are most likely to use new media to further their independence from the national party through pursuing the personal vote. By looking in detail at some case studies from amongst the candidates with both the highest and lowest PVI scores, we will be better able to conceptualise what characteristics these candidates have in common and how they actually campaign through new media.

Table 5.4: Five candidates with the highest PVI scores and demographic information

Name	**PVI score**	**Party**	**Incumbency**	**Marginality**	**Age Group**	**Previous terms**
Charles Kennedy	3.49	Lib Dem	Incumbent	Non-marginal	54-58	4
Stephen Lloyd	2.92	Lib Dem	Incumbent	Marginal	54-58	1
Isshu Sugawara	2.91	LDP	Incumbent	Non-marginal	49-53	4
Dan Rogerson	2.66	Lib Dem	Incumbent	Marginal	26-42	2
Takako Nagae	2.57	DPJ	Challenger	Non-marginal	54-58	1

Table 5.4 shows the five candidates from the 151 candidates in the sample with the highest PVI scores. While none of the candidates feature all the traits listed in the previous section as being a determinate of personalised new media use there are many common elements which these candidates share. Contrary to the major findings from PVI analysis set out above, the candidate with the highest PVI use was from the UK, Charles Kennedy. However, as a former leader of his party, with a high national profile and representing a rural seat in Scotland, Kennedy had the seniority to be able to campaign based almost entirely independently of the party. It is not so surprising that Kennedy was by some margin the highest user of personal vote new media output. Three of the five candidates came from the UK, all from the Liberal Democrat party which also shows, at least within the UK, the importance that party identification plays in use of new media, with candidates from the least popular party using personal vote features to the greatest degree. Other features support the conclusion made from MCA. Four out of five candidates were incumbents and

all could be described as *mid-career* politicians, all having previously served as lower house members.

Table 5.5: Five candidates with the lowest PVI scores and demographic information

Name	PVI score	Party	Incumbency	Marginality	Age Group	Previous terms
Pauline Latham	-3.41	Con	Incumbent	Non-marginal	59-74	1
Merion Jenkins	-3.23	Con	Challenger	Marginal	N/A	0
Mitsunari Hatanaka	-3.12	JIP	Challenger	Marginal	26-42	1
Chris Took	-3.04	Lib Dem	Challenger	Non-marginal	N/A	0
Graham Stuart	-2.87	Con	Incumbent	Non-marginal	49-53	2

Table 5.5 shows the five candidates with the lowest PVI scores in the sample. Four of the five candidates, in line with the findings from the MCA, are from the UK. The candidate with the lowest PVI score, Pauline Latham, represented the ruling Conservative party in a non-marginal seat, and was located in the final age group, which MCA analysis showed to be the age group with the second to lowest average PVI score (Table 5.3). Three of the five represented the Conservative party, the ruling party in the UK, three were challengers and three were contesting non-marginal constituencies, partially fitting the typology of candidates expected to use personal vote focused new media the least. In addition, only one of the candidates had served multiple periods in the lower house before and two of the candidates had never been elected before, displaying examples of candidates with less name recognition relying more on the party brand.

Examples of new media campaigns

This section will look at three specific studies of candidates chosen from amongst the highest and lowest users of the personal vote in order to see how the typology of candidates using new media both in extremely personal vote and non-personal vote seeking ways, actually manifests itself. Website content and breakdown of social media use can be seen in Tables 5.6 and 5.7.

Table 5.6: PWI factors of selected candidates

Name	Fundraising	Activist mobilisation	Personal biography	Local manifesto	Other personal vote features
Stephen Lloyd	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present
Isshu Suguwara	Present	Present	Present	Not present	Present
Pauline Latham	*Not present*	*Not present*	*Present*	*Not present*	*Not present*

Table 5.7: Social media output of selected candidates

Name	Campaign activity	Local issues	Personal	Party	National issues	Other
Stephen Lloyd	67.79	11.85	0	0	1.69	18.67
Isshu Suguwara	89.52	1.04	0.52	1.04	7.35	0
Pauline Latham	*16.12*	*0*	*1.61*	*20.96*	*20.96*	*40.35*

Note: All figures are percentages

Stephen Lloyd

Stephen Lloyd was the candidate with the second highest PVI score (2.92) amongst all the 151 candidates in the sample. Lloyd was an incumbent candidate in a marginal seat, representing a non-ruling party and could be described, at least in terms of age, as a mid-career politician. Aside from *country* classification, he fit the typology of a candidates likely to use new media in a personal vote seeking manner. Lloyd was defending a majority of 3,435 (6.6%) from the 2010 election in a seat which before then had been in Conservative hands since 1992.

In contrast to many UK candidates, Lloyd's website contained a great deal of personalised content. There were opportunities for users to both donate and volunteer to help with the campaign. The donate page featured a personal letter from the candidate, highlighting the amount of money being spent by the main Conservative challenger, encouraged people to give to the campaign and stated: "Everyday of the week since I became your MP I have worked tirelessly for our town". The website also featured two separate pages detailing the candidate's activities in the Eastbourne area and promoting local businesses and attractions. The volunteer page gave users the option of what activities they would be interested in, from canvassing to assisting in the constituency office. Aside from the design of the website, which used a template, in the colour of the Liberal Democrat party, also used by other Liberal Democrat candidates, and a page being devoted to the national party manifesto, Stephen Lloyd's website was branded in such a way as to maximise his personal and local appeal, concentrating on the Eastbourne area and promoting local issues and his role within the community.

Stephen Lloyd's use of social media was also heavily personal vote focused. During the short campaign he made 61 posts on social media, 29 on Twitter and 32 on Facebook. Like the majority of other candidates, *campaign activity* posts made up the largest amount of his social media output (67.79%) and was well above the national average (see Table 26). Many of these posts not only highlighted an active campaign, but promoted local businesses, giving the candidate's (at the time local MP) endorsement and making sure to include the name of the business in the post (see Appendix F). Only one post was made in relation to national issues and no posts mentioned the national party or the party leader Nick Clegg. In comparison 11.85% of social media discussed local issues specifically, including local healthcare services, environmental issues and highlighting local events not related to campaigning. The strategy of Lloyd's new media use was to highlight his connection to the constituency. On social media there was only one reference to the party, with Lloyd giving his endorsement to a fellow candidate in a different constituency. The Liberal Democrats had been a part of the coalition government for five years so it somewhat surprising that no reference was made to the national party's achievements and policies. However across both the UK and Japan, Liberal Democrat candidates made up three of the five candidates with the highest PVI scores. It can be inferred that for Liberal Democrat candidates, the damage

which had been done to the party's reputation during its time in government played a significant part in convincing its candidates to campaign on the personal vote.

Isshu Suguwara

Isshu Suguwara was the Japanese candidate with the highest PVI score (2.91). He was unusual against the expected typology of candidates using high degrees of personal vote campaigning, in that he represented the ruling LDP party and that he was contesting a non-marginal seat, defending a seat with a 32.9% majority. An explanatory factor may be his incumbency status combined with a high level of experience, having been elected to the lower house four times previously.

Unusually for Japanese candidates, Suguwara's website was one of the few which allowed users to both sign-up as volunteers and donate to his campaign. In addition to this the website encouraged supporters to arrange independent meetings which the candidate could then attend. There was also a contact number where individuals wishing to put up a campaign poster of Suguwara in or around their neighbourhood could apply. In comparison to Stephen Lloyds' website, and this is true of a general comparison between Japanese and UK candidate websites, Suguwara's website contained a high degree of functionality designed to enhance the candidate's campaign. While it may not be the case that such operations in their present form could lead to an entirely self-sufficient campaign, the potential exists for significant organisational contribution through candidate websites. Website content is heavily dedicated to the candidate, his image is front and centre at the top of the page, there is extensive detail of his activities in Parliament and a mini biography in the form of a *manga* (cartoon) story which sets out Suguwara's life story and motivation for getting into politics (see Appendix F). In comparison to Stephen Lloyd's website, the onus is not on the MP serving the people of his constituency, which is only given a brief mention on one page, but on his personal qualifications to be a national lawmaker, including a separate "Parliamentary activities" page and reference to national issues rather than local, which do not feature at all. The website itself is uniquely designed and aside from one banner linking to the national party website and mention of his status as a LDP lawmaker on the front page, there is no immediate reference to the LDP. The colour of the page is blue

and white, a politically neutral colour, and at first glance it would not be immediately obvious which party the candidate represented through simply looking at the front page.

In total Isshu Suguwara made 191 posts on social media, 90 on Twitter and 101 on Facebook. The overwhelming majority of Suguwara's social media output was devoted to *campaign activity* posts (89.52%). Many of these posts included short video clips of Suguwara making stump speeches or greeting commuters outside of train stations. Some contained references to policy but these were generally concerned with national economic issues. In comparison to UK candidates, Japanese candidates were more willing to utilise higher levels of technology, for example in posting videos, and have a more diverse range of social media platforms. These posts functioned in much the same way as a simple *campaign activity* post in the UK, which would often be accompanied by a photo. Almost no mention was made of local issues particular to the constituency. This may well be explained by the nature of the constituency, Tokyo 9, and the idea that national issues, for urban populations, are effectively considered local issues.[47] It should be noted that frequency of national and local issues posts from Suguwara were in line with the national averages in Japan and as such the relatively small number of posts made of specific policy issues may also be a result of *country* (campaign style) factors. References to the party mainly consisted of references to senior, high profile, members of the party who endorsed Suguwara by appearing with him and making speeches in his constituency, although these posts only made up 6.28% of output. If an overall strategy can be inferred, it appears as though there is a focus on featuring the candidate campaigning being active, showing a level of dynamism and a willingness to stand out in public and attempt to engage with constituents, reminding them of his years of experience within the legislature and representing the interest of the constituency rather than highlighting the achievement of the LDP, which had been in power and enacted numerous pieces of legislation since coming to power. LDP candidates did have party platforms to campaign on, especially continuation of economic (Abenomics) policy which had been generally supported by the public. By not embracing this party line to any significant degree Suguwara displayed transference of traditional styles of Japanese campaigning to online platforms, with the candidate seeking the personal vote being front and centre in the public's eye.

[47] See Chapter 4 for further discussion

Pauline Latham

Incumbent Conservative MP Pauline Latham was the candidate with the lowest PVI score (-3.41). While being an incumbent, she represented the ruling party and was contesting a non-marginal seat, defending a majority of 11,292 (23.8%), generally fitting in to what be the typology of a *non-personal vote* seeking candidate.

Latham's website featured only a biography under personal vote functions. The biography details her personal history, stressing her ties to the constituency (Derbyshire) area and highlights some national level issues which were of particular interest to her, such as international development (of which she was a member of the parliamentary select committee) and healthcare. There is also a page describing the demographics of the constituency, which was only created in 2010. Aside from this the focus of website content is on her work as in parliament. The website makes no reference to specific local issues and does not feature functions which allow user to donate of volunteer to her campaign. The website uses a standard, primarily blue coloured, template shared by all other Conservative candidates and features links to Latham's personal Facebook and Twitter accounts.

During the 2015 election campaign Pauline Latham did not make any posts on Facebook, only on Twitter. Unlike many candidates *campaign activity* did not make up the largest category of her social media output. Both *national issues* and *party* posts were categorised as being used in the greatest frequency (aside from *other* posts) both accounting for 20.96% of output. In terms of specific policy, 53.84% of posts which were devoted to discussing economic issues, broadly in line with the national party's priorities (see Chapter 3). These posts focused on promoting the party's message of economic achievement and in most cases, were direct re-tweets of news posted by the party. This is also true of *party* posts, which were also often retweets of activities of the party leader David Cameron, or the candidates direct support of the party or leadership:

> *The choice is clear: @David_Cameron's strong leadership or a Labour Govt. propped up by #SNP Which would you trust with our country's future?* – Tweet from @Pauline_Latham, 04/05/2015

The above tweet provides something of a microcosm of the Conservative campaign. The Conservative's somewhat surprising majority at the 2015 election has been attributed to a combination of economic recovery and ability to convince swing voters that if Labour were to have won the most seats, then they would have been reliant on support from the Scottish National Party to pass legislation, a claim which was denied by Labour leader Ed Miliband. Regardless of what may actually have happened, the Conservative party successfully built this narrative, one which its candidate were eager to endorse and which turned out to be a winning message. The above post is a clear example of Pauline Latham's, and indeed most Conservative candidates, social media strategy, to follow the party line, endorse the party leader and stay on message. The feeling that the Conservative party had the "winning message" is one shared by most UK candidates, Conservatives in particular. With a clear national party message, candidates had less need to pursue the personal vote through new media – confirming the significance of the *party* level variable in candidates' campaign strategies.

Specific examples of candidate's new media campaigns confirms earlier findings. While statistical analysis shows a clear difference in the way candidates from the UK and Japan use new media, there are examples of UK candidates acting against type, at the most extreme level effectively ignoring the party label entirely and running what is in effect an independent campaign. In the case of Stephen Lloyd, if his website had not been designed with the same template other Liberal Democrat candidates used, it would have been very difficult to identify which party he represented. The website of Isshu Suguwara was typical of Japanese candidate websites in terms of design, but unusually made full use of personal vote functions such as volunteer and donations features. It is difficult to define a typology of the personal vote seeking candidate that fits both the UK and Japan but it appears that *incumbency* status is factor which influences candidates using new media to the greatest degree, even factoring in *country* differences. If candidates have the desire to do so, new media provides the platform to pursue highly personalised campaigns. While candidates such as Stephen Lloyd in the UK may be an exception to the rule, some candidates are using new media in order to pursue campaigns which contrast with traditional campaign styles

Conclusion

A number of conclusions on the general use of new media can be made from the analysis of this chapter. Firstly, campaign traditions, generally, determine how candidates use new media. The fact that Japanese candidates are more likely to use new media to pursue the personal vote shows that new media campaigning replicates traditional campaigning. There is a clear country level difference, providing strong evidence in support of H1, that Japanese candidates are using new media to attract the personal vote to a greater degree on comparison to UK candidates and this finding is supported by statistically significant result from MCA analysis. Japanese candidates clearly exhibit greater levels of independence from their party both in the image they choose to promote and what campaign strategies they use. In relation to the core research question, there is little evidence that would suggest that a change in the status quo, that new media is causing candidates in a candidates-centred campaign system to pursue independent campaigns to the same degree as those in a candidate-centred system.

Secondly, of the other factors under study; *party*, *incumbency* and *experience* contribute to how candidates use new media, albeit to a lesser degree than at *country* level. This demonstrates that candidates representing opposition parties or with greater public profiles and more experience in office campaign on the personal vote to a greater degree, showing again that new media campaigning is replicating conventional styles of campaigning. These findings are supported by evidence from specific candidate case studies and will be further elaborated on through candidate interviews in the subsequent chapter.

Finally, this chapter also confirms that the promotion of candidate image is a key part of most candidates' online campaigning. The clear difference between Japanese and UK candidates in both website and social media use, specifically the degree to which output is devoted to image promotion, is highlighted by the findings in this chapter. Image promotion is something which is being encouraged by online campaigning platforms amongst candidates in both countries, but as expected this is much more evident amongst Japanese candidates. Candidates in both countries are looking to use online platforms to generate publicity and are using this extra outlet to focus on themselves to a greater degree.

The following chapter will present findings from candidate interviews held with both UK and Japanese candidates. In particular, it will establish whether the conclusions made in this chapter, namely that *country*, *party*, *incumbency* and *experience* factors play a significant role to the degree in which candidates are using new media to attract the personal vote and how this is enabling candidates to be more independent from the national party.

Chapter 6

Interviews with candidates

This chapter will present evidence from interviews with candidates and members of campaign teams who ran in either the 2014 Japanese lower house election or the 2015 UK general election. This chapter will firstly explain how these interviews are used to validate or refute the findings made in Chapters 3-5. The format of these interviews will then be set out in greater detail including the process of approaching candidates for interview and the formulation of interview questions and which specific questions raised from the content analysis seen in Chapters 3 and 4 were covered in the interviews. Finally, detailed responses from the candidates, results and discussion will be presented, showing broadly that there is support for the major conclusions drawn from the content analysis in earlier chapters, namely that personal vote engagement via new media is generally higher not only amongst Japanese candidates and also amongst candidates representing electorally weaker parties, something not conclusively borne out in the results from content analysis.

The following section will discuss how these challenges are to be met in this study along with further details about interview preparation and formulation of interviews questions based on conclusions drawn earlier in this thesis.

Research Design and methodology for candidate interviews

Structuring of candidate interviews

There is often some debate as to how structured an elite interview should be. An interview with an open structure runs the risk of yielding little in the way of useful data but provides both an easier form of data collection than, say participant observation, and has the potential to provide a rich, detailed insight into previously unknown behaviour and mind-sets (Bryman, 2001). The preference for more open structured interviews amongst social science researchers has created a new method of investigation. Kvale (1996) concludes there are few set rules or models to follow in qualitative interviewing but a more open interview structure requires the interviewer themselves to have ability to both draw out meaningful responses from subjects and interpret them into meaningful data. There is a much greater emphasis placed upon the interpersonal skills of the researcher, their ability to create bonds of trust or win the respect of their subject, incorporating a skillset beyond

mere observation and interpretation (McDowell, 1998). Despite the methodological challenges interviews have become recognised as a valuable source of data collection.

This study will rely on semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews ensure the interview stays on point in terms of answering the research question but also allows the flexibility to follow other lines of enquiry which may come up in the course of conversation. In addition, it may also help to overcome the boundaries that many in elite positions naturally set-up, for example as a result of media training, when interacting with outsiders (Harvey, 2011). Part of the research question does involve asking candidates about their relationships with the national party. For example, feelings on whether they felt the national party had given them sufficient support was a natural line of enquiry. Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to have the flexibility to broach potentially sensitive questions or avoid topics should they feel it necessary. Within the field of political science, and elite interviews in particular, the semi-structured interview is the most commonly used, allowing the discussion to take on more of an informal air and ideally facilitate a level of openness between researcher and interviewee (Pierce, 2008).

Interviews conducted in this study used a core of questions which were asked to each candidate (see Appendix G). The order of questions and content of follow up questions were dependent on the interviewees answer. In most cases interviewees were happy to talk at length on each of the questions asked and required very little in the way of prompting. Initial interviews were also acted as way to refine the core set of questions, remove any redundant questions and establish any new lines of enquiry that had not been previously considered. Some questions were candidate specific, some were country specific. For example, for Japanese candidates the modern day role of their *koenkai* was an interesting line of enquiry, not just because of the possible effects on use of new media but also on the overall organisation of campaigns. All interviews were partially transcribed, with responses recorded in order to identify common themes of new media use. There was no strict coding for the responses given to the questions; rather, the author took an intuitive approach, deciding what parts of given answers were relevant to the core questions (see page 153). In particular, the candidates' views on pursuit of the personal vote based on *party*, *constituency* and *experience* were of particular relevance, as well as candidates' overall

experience of new media use. Corroboration of the importance of these factors, or evidence to the contrary, was the main goal of candidate interviews.

Candidate selection

In order to secure interviews with candidates, letters were sent to email addresses used during the election campaigns[48]. Where email addresses were not available the same letter was sent as a private message to the candidate's Facebook account. Interestingly, in the case of Japanese candidates email addresses, especially for sitting members of the Diet, were difficult to obtain with many members not listing an email address on their personal website. In addition, neither the website of the national parliament or national party websites list members' official email addresses. There was one website which provided a partial list of members' email addresses which was not linked to any official organisation that proved to be useful[49]. The primary method of contacting Japanese candidates was through messages sent via the candidates' website which went either directly to the candidate or a member of their staff.

Letters were sent to all candidates included in the content analysis study requesting an interview either in person, via telephone/Skype or written correspondence via email. In order to build an effective rapport with the interviewed candidate, it was important that they had been included in the content analysis stage of the research, so that the author had an effective working knowledge of their campaign output and could ask specific questions related to their campaign behaviour. Only one candidate replied through Facebook, with the rest replying directly via email. From the UK nine candidates responded agreeing to be interviewed – a response rate of 12.82%. Contacting Japanese candidates proved to be more difficult. Messages were sent to the 73 candidates included in this study. In total 6 candidates replied – a response rate of 8.22%[50]. All candidates who responded to interview requests were interviewed and provided the author with useful/usable data. This response

[48] Special thanks here must go to Professor Masahiro Iwasaki and Naoya Asai of Nihon University who helped arrange additional interviews and proofread translation of the approach email respectively.
[49] See: http://democracy.minibird.jp/

rate was lower than in the UK but it should be pointed out that while not all of the candidates contacted won in the 2014 SMD races, some would have been elected through the proportional list section of the election and as such been busy with official duties. In addition, the amount of time that could be spent conducting interviews in Japan was limited to a period of four weeks, which was stated in the approach letter. In addition, two further interviews were conducted with non-candidates to give a broader and more up to date understanding of Japanese electoral politics than has been available in present English language literature. The first was conducted with Professor Yoshikadu Iwabuchi of Nihon University, an expert on Japanese electoral campaigns and the second with Tsutomu Yoshida, a local government representative in Machida, Tokyo. Mr Yoshida was able to give valuable insight into Japanese campaigning traditions and how new media is changing the way in which politicians of all levels are communicating with their constituents. The only drawback to the list of respondents was lack of representation of candidates from the LDP. However, even without representatives from the ruling party in Japan, hypotheses can still be confirmed on *party* level differences through interviews with candidates from other parties. If the hypotheses hold true, candidates from the DPJ and JIP should identify and confirm that the status of their party, namely being electorally weaker than the LDP, plays a key role in how they use new media. The five other parties included in this study are represented, as are incumbent/challenger candidates, marginal/non-marginal candidates and candidates with a variety of experience in political life.

In the UK, interviews took place between January and April 2016. All but one interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, the only exception being former Liberal Democrat MP Stephen Lloyd who very generously participated for almost 90 minutes in his former constituency office in Eastbourne. Two interviews took place in the Houses of Parliament with incumbent MP's and the rest were conducted via Skype or telephone. All interviews with UK respondents were with the candidates themselves. Japanese interviews were limited to a period from mid-May until mid-June 2016. Two interviews took place at the national Diet building one with a sitting member, one with a member of a candidate's campaign staff responsible for the members social media output during the election. Other interviews took place either in local constituency offices, or via email correspondence.

All interviewees were given a confidentiality sheet to sign, indicating whether or not they wished to be identified in the study. All but one (labelled as Con MP) agreed to allow their names to be used on the proviso that they would be privy to seeing a copy of any related work before external publication. Consent forms were provided as part of the University of Sussex's ethical guidelines. While none of the subject matter proved to be controversial, it was important to give interviewees the option to keep their identities confidential in order to ensure they would be comfortable talking openly, especially on matters related to intra-party affairs (Richards, 1996). A full list of interviewees can be seen in Appendix H.

Formulation of research question – conclusions from Chapters 3-5

This chapter has two primary aims. The first is to clarify the three key conclusions drawn from the content analysis featured in Chapters 3-5:

1. There is a significant difference in the way that candidates use new media based on *country*. Candidates from Japan place a greater importance on the personal vote in campaigning and actively try to pursue this through their new media use than their UK counterparts

2. Party popularity plays a factor in pursuing the personal vote through new media. Candidates representing weaker parties will be more likely to use new media to pursue the personal vote.

3. The level of candidate's experience plays a role in the use of new media to pursue the personal vote. Candidates with more political experience, most often incumbents, will use new media to pursue the personal vote to a greater degree.

This chapter will test these the robustness of these findings by presenting evidence from candidate interviews. While interviews were semi-structured, each interviewee was asked their opinion on how new media helped to attract the personal vote in the following areas:

- The role of the national party in new media strategy and campaigning
- The functions of each of the online platforms under study and how they were utilised in campaign organisation
- The use of new media to promote both national and local policy
- The importance of candidate image and the personal vote on campaigning and how this was executed via new media
- The particular use of *campaign activity* posts and how they are relevant to the personal vote
- The future of internet campaigning

These themes provide both an explanation for the findings from Chapters 3-5 and give context for how candidates viewed the ability of new medias to help them organise and promote campaigns.

Candidate interviews

The role of the party in candidates' new media use

Of the 15 candidates interviewed, two candidates received direct training on internet use by their national party. The campaign manager for Caroline Ansell (Conservative, Eastbourne), Robert Findon attended a number of seminars relating to online campaigning:

> *"There remained a considerable scope to learn and enact greater targeting strategies or bulk communications though support from CCHQ* (Conservative Campaign Headquarters)*: ultimately different campaigns had differing degrees of focus on online communications…dependent on the individual campaign manager's time"*

Robert Findon was the only individual interviewed whom described going to seminars specifically designed for online campaigning. Evidence from other candidates implies that this was most likely due to the fact that Eastbourne was seen as a target seat by the Conservative party and resources were devoted to what was perceived to be a tight

electoral race. This also supports the theoretical basis of H3a, at least amongst UK candidates, showing the effort that both the party and candidates put into winning marginal seats. This was reiterated by other candidates in target seats:

> *"…we had loads of training. I was designated as a marginal constituency…we got a paid organiser, I went to London every quarter for briefings….(on Internet specific training) I think there probably was training, but you can't go to everything can you?"*
> – Louise Baldock (Labour, Stockton South)

Other candidates from both Labour and the Conservatives confirmed that training was available to them but was optional. This implies that parties themselves have recognised that internet campaigning is becoming a factor in elections which needs some form of investment in time and resources at the constituency level. However, this is not a mandatory requirement for candidates. Proximity to London may also have played a part as most training was conducted by parties in London offices. This made the likelihood of candidates living in constituencies relatively far away, willing to travel to optional seminars much less likely. Party strength also played a factor in the role of the party. Paul Hodgkinson (Liberal Democrat, The Cotswolds) was a challenger candidate in a non-marginal constituency. He explained that his constituency had originally been a target seat and general campaign training had been provided but as the election drew closer and the Liberal Democrats shifted their focus to retaining rather than winning seats, the support from the national party had decreased (in terms of training and organisational support). All UK candidates reported being impressed by the professionalism of their parties own social media output. For most candidates the contribution of the national party came in the form of output which they could either copy or re-post, which set out the policies that candidates should be promoting:

> *"The national party was very good when it came to policy. They distributed to all candidates an email circular; these are the top lines for today….they didn't give you an amount of latitude to go rouge if you like but when it came to something like mental health, if you've got personal experiences and you don't mid using (them) and*

> *you are comfortable in sharing your experiences then by all means do….there was a bit of flexibility but do stick to the message"* – Chris Took (Lib Dem, Woking)

While policy will be covered in greater detail in subsequent sections, the above highlights that parties' main contributions to their candidates' online campaigning came in the form of real time party messages sent out during the campaign rather than in depth training and development of strategy alongside their candidates. Party influence was also clearly limited amongst the incumbent candidates, who were essentially left to their own devices when it came to use of social media. In the case of Con A, a long-standing incumbent in a safe Conservative seat he "was trusted to get on with it".

In the case of Japanese candidates the lack of party influence is even more pronounced. There are a number of factors which contributed to this. Firstly, the 2014 election was the first in which lower house candidates were allowed to use the internet during the election campaign itself, having been first sanctioned in the previous year's upper house election. Secondly, the 2014 lower house elections were branded a "snap" election, coming only 24 months after the LDP had won a comfortable majority in the previous general election.[51] The dissolution of parliament is at the discretion of the Prime Minister and while Japanese post-war politics, especially in the previous two decades, has shown that elections are a frequent occurrence, there was little time for either the LDP or opposition parties to establish a new media strategy. Party specific issues may also have played a part. Since its electoral defeat in 2012 the DPJ has struggled to match the financial power of the LDP and does not have the resources to invest in its own social media strategy:

> *"The party had no (social media strategy). The DPJ has only one member of staff dealing with social media. The LDP has around twenty. I think social media needs more people (to utilise). The gap in staffing has a greater effect on the internet when compared to mass media. Social media is very interactive, used many times and requires more engagement"* – Satoshi Takayama (DPJ, Saitama 15)

While similar information is not known about the JIP, it can be assumed that their resources were not much greater and it is conceivable that they had little in the way of a social media

[51] From an interview with Professor Yoshikadu Iwabuchi

strategy. As such candidates from the DPJ and JIP would have had no choice but to conduct online campaigning independently, showing a difference in behaviour based on party affiliation (H2) due to lack of party resources. As has been described elsewhere the JIP was a relatively new party, essentially an electoral alliance between *Osaka Ishin no Kai*, led by former governor and mayor Toru Hashimoto and the Kanto based *Yui no Toh* (Unity Party) led by Kenji Eda, which had only formed earlier in 2014. At the time of the 2014 election the party had had little time to develop any kind of electoral strategy and candidates were left to do this by themselves. Candidate strategizing was more likely to be done in an informal intra-party manner amongst colleagues with whom lawmakers and candidates had an already established relationship. One candidate interviewed, Yoriko Madoka (DPJ, Tokyo 8), had served as vice-president of the DPJ for a time from 2006. As a senior member of the party there was no question of her taking organisational or policy guidance from the party, she acted in part as an independent. While the 2014 election was the first in which social media could be used, all of the candidates interviewed had established and independently run websites and social media accounts some years prior to the 2014 election. All 2014 candidate interviewees had run in lower house elections before or held office in the lower or upper house of the Japanese Diet. Combined with the fact that parties were unprepared for the election, there was also little need to provide basic level training to candidates who had already been using internet platforms to present themselves as politicians for some time prior to the 2014 election.

Evidence from interviews suggest that parties in both countries pursue a hands-off approach to the way in which their candidates use new media, although this is more pronounced in Japan. Where parties do provide guidance, it is for candidates and members of their staff who have never held office before, in constituencies where the party considers it has a realistic chance of success. Parties' resources are limited and the focus is on the national campaign or targeted seats. Incumbent candidates, or those with experience in national level politics, are left to their own devices in terms of how they utilise new media. In the case of Japan, there is no evidence to suggest that less-experienced candidates are treated any differently to their more experienced colleagues. This may in part be attributed to lack of national party resources but the nature of Japanese online campaigning, where candidates are responsible for creating their own website and other online platforms

implies that this may be more of a cultural factor than a practical one. While party input and training into new media use is dependent on circumstance in regards to UK candidates, for Japanese candidates the party's input is not a factor in candidates' use of new media.

The functions of different new media platforms

In the preceding chapters data from Facebook and Twitter were taken together to create a single unit of measurement (candidates' *PVI score*). In the course of content analysis it was clear that in some areas the two platforms were used in different ways. Chapters 3 and 4 showed that some candidates used only one platform, some used one more than others and many used them for different types of content. There was also an apparent country level difference, with Facebook being more popular amongst Japanese candidates and Twitter amongst UK candidates. As was mentioned in Chapter 5, this country level difference was even starker in the use of websites, especially in the degree of individuality in design exhibited by Japanese candidates. This section aims to provide a short overview of what candidates considered to be the key functions of websites and social media and how these relate to candidates pursing the personal vote.

Websites

All UK candidates used templates created by professional website building companies on behalf of the national party, for example Nation Builder for Labour and Prater Rains for the Liberal Democrats, which were run either by their campaign team or the local constituency party office. Template websites were clearly designed around the colours of the national party e.g. blue for Conservative. Some candidates mentioned the cost of creating individual websites would be prohibitive and this may have factored into this. Candidates were split on the main functions of their websites and how useful they were. For some campaigns, a website was the first access point for constituents wishing to know more about that candidate and an important platform to promote the candidate themselves, in a way which traditional campaigning was not able to:

> *"Despite our considerable efforts and focus on door-to-door campaigning, many constituents would first interact with Caroline (Ansell) via the internet; it was*

> *therefore imperative that the website was informative, intuitive and personal. The purpose, therefore, was to convey Caroline's personality and policies in an orderly and user-friendly manner"* – Robert Findon

As will be seen later in this chapter while many websites in the UK featured 'donate' and 'volunteer' functions these were seldom used by the public. Opinion as to the utility of websites differed between candidates in the UK. One candidate, Merion Jenkins (Conservative, Bridgend) had minimal interaction with the website set up under his name by the local party. He found focusing resources on Facebook and paying for advertising in order to boost his profile more beneficial in attracting views. He was the only candidate who paid for advertising on social media and reported some benefits in doing so. This included having posts highlighted to people in the local area which increased visibility and subsequently followership.

In Japan most candidates have a personal website, which they had administered themselves for a number of years prior to the 2014 election. In a similar way websites act as a hub for people wanting to access or learn about the candidate. Images of the candidates are prominent, much more so than a party symbol (if any is used at all). Japanese websites also featured more unique content, such as videos, live social media streams, copies of newsletters the details on candidate activities. The focus of the website is clearly on establishing the candidate's personal image. Websites in both countries are designed with information provision in mind rather than encouraging interactivity. But crucially, in the UK this is centred on the candidate as the member of a party and in Japan with the candidate as an individual. This can be seen in the country level differences (H1) seen in Chapter 5.

Social media

There was a divide in opinion between candidates over which social media platform they preferred. This can best be explained by detailing the strong and weak points of each platform. Candidates who preferred the use of Twitter said that the main benefit was the ability to communicate with followers quickly using short, to the point messages. Japanese candidates particularly highlighted the importance of Twitter, which is seen by candidates as

a more popular platform than Facebook amongst younger voters, although this assumption is debateable given published statistics.[52] Many candidates in both countries highlighted the anonymity of Twitter and the potential for "trolling", personal attacks on the candidate, as a considerable drawback. Candidates, female candidates especially, reported instances of abuse and one candidate even went so far as to say the experience of using social media had put her off standing as a candidate in the future. There were some reports of Twitter being an organisational asset and a place of engagement for candidates and constituents (see below). More candidates highlighted Facebook as a better platform for this kind of campaigning. As Facebook profiles feature users real names, candidates could see who they were interacting with. Users were also more likely to be from the candidate's constituency and be connected online with their family and friends and people they knew locally, meaning that an interaction with a candidate could potentially be seen by a user's online network of known people. This raised the profile of the candidate not just amongst people they interacted with but with all the people that user was "friends" with on Facebook, many of whom lived in the same constituency. Lack of anonymity often made for a higher quality of conversation as did the fact that Facebook allowed unlimited writing space where candidates could better explain their policy positions or campaign activity. There did appear to be a difference between UK and Japanese candidates in this respect, with the former more likely to write longer pieces attempting to interact with users. Japanese candidates often used Facebook and Twitter to publish links to other social media accounts (of which a greater variety were used by Japanese candidates), blogs and websites as well as a greater degree of *campaign activity* posts. While there was no quantifiable preference amongst candidates as to which social media platform they used there were clear differences in how candidates viewed the uses of Twitter and Facebook. How these were specifically utilised will be discussed in later in this chapter.

Campaign organisation through new media

[52] Statistics from both Twitter and Facebook show that the percentage of users under 35 years old is roughly the same at around 55% of all users as of 2014 - http://jetscram.com/blog/industry-news/social-media-user-statistics-and-age-demographics-2014

This section aims to establish how new media was used by candidates to strengthen their constituency campaigns organisationally through attracting supporters online, receiving financial donations and turning supporters into activists. Candidate websites and social media will be examined separately. There was a clear division of opinion between candidates on the utility of both websites and social media to help strengthen campaign organisation

Amongst UK candidates, most websites allowed users to register for frequent updates via email newsletters. This gave candidates a bank of contacts which could then be emailed near to election time. These emails ranged from setting out policies to asking for prospective volunteers and donations. Candidates highlighted that getting success out of emails required a pro-active approach on the part of the candidate and their campaign team:

> *"We (Lib Dems) became good at getting donations from the website and that is a crucial thing….. Unless you get people drawn to it you will get two donations a year. I looked at the Obama campaign and I saw the process and I took some of the learning points from the Obama campaign. I sent out emails saying who I am and that I need your help and will you help me, drawing people in"* – Stephen Lloyd (Liberal Democrat, Eastbourne)

Success in strengthening campaign organisation through websites relied on a proactive approach and candidates reported little direct engagement through the designated donate and volunteer sections of their webpages which essentially required users to motivate themselves to get involved with the campaign. Labour party candidates appeared to have a greater degree of assistance from the national party in comparison with those from other parties which benefitted its candidates, at least those contesting marginal seats. The national party, through social media, directed potential supporters to a webpage where they could register their interest and their details would be forwarded to the local party. If a person living in a marginal constituency signed up as a potential volunteer, their details would come straight through to the constituency candidate's website, utilising a form of party-candidate intranet. This was also the case with Liberal Democrat candidates. In campaigns where the internet provided a significant number of volunteers, it was done in

conjunction with the national party, indicating that constituency campaigns, at least online, have a long way to go before becoming organisationally independent in terms of attracting volunteers. While websites acted as an access point at the very least for most candidates, for some it was not a particularly big factor in their campaign. This was especially true amongst Conservative and Labour incumbent candidates, who already had existing grassroots organisation and were in relatively safe seats. For Liberal Democrat candidates, whose fundraising has traditionally come via small, local donations and who were facing an election with low national public support, the necessity of being pro-active and utilising other means of strengthening their campaign was especially important.

Social media provided another platform for candidates to strengthen campaign organisation though making contact with supporters and converting them into volunteers. This became especially useful for challenger candidates in non-marginal seats who in most cases had weak, or even non-existent local level organisation. One candidate in a constituency where there was no local party was able to make contact with potential supporters through social media and turn them into volunteers. These volunteers included a wheelchair-bound person who would otherwise not have been able to participate in an election campaign through traditional campaigning methods. This highlights a new kind of political activist becoming relevant in electoral politics – the online campaigner. While participation in traditional forms of politics, such as party grassroots activism and party membership has been falling overall, online participation through social media has opened up a new form of political activism. The potential exists to get volunteers who may not be willing to go canvassing door-to-door or to cold call voters, active in support of a constituency campaign through social media. This involves activists supporting candidate posts on social media through positive replies or "liking" posts, writing out similar opinions of their own or making counterpoints to candidates from rival parties and their supporters. As with attracting supporters on websites, social media require a pro-active attitude:

> *"For instance there was a young guy in one of the villages I represent who keeps posting positive things. I thought well I have never met the guy, I found his Facebook page and sent him a direct message and I just asked him if he could help me at all and he came straight back to me and said yes…..how would I have got in touch with him otherwise? I would never have known he was a supporter"* – Paul Hodgkinson

The above quote shows that there is a potential untapped source of activist support for candidates to exploit. In most cases it is those candidates who have the necessity to find additional support be it due to weak local organisation or weak party image, who have thus far utilised it. Liberal Democrat candidates appear to have been the most successful in doing this at the constituency level. Where the party label is not enough to attract volunteers, and this has increasingly become the case in UK elections, candidates are required to go out and turn supporters into activists. Social media in particular gives them the opportunity to do so.

Data from Chapter 5 shows that Japanese candidates use online organisational functions to a lesser degree than UK candidates, which is confirmed through candidate interviews. In contrast to UK candidates, Japanese candidate websites are all individually run by the candidate, with unique designs, content and funded by the candidate themselves. While some candidates reported receiving donations online these were limited and made no significant difference to candidates' income. Most financial donations in Japan come from business or, more traditionally, are the responsibility of the candidate's supporter group, which encourages its members to donate, has joining fees and handles the money on behalf of the candidates.

> *"There is usually very little financial support online and very little during the election itself. Most donations come from companies and big business. Small, individual donations are unusual"* – Seiji Osaka (DPJ, Hokkaido 8)

As in the UK, traditional methods of supporter fundraising also proved to be more successful. Donations would be more likely to come through direct bank transfers after a mailing/leaflet campaign. Not even emails were considered to be particularly useful in securing donations. It may be the case that for many candidates, supporter groups are still the main method of getting donations directly from constituents and these organisations have much less of an internet presence compared to the candidates themselves. The same can be said for volunteers. As Chapter 4 shows, only a quarter of candidate in Japan had a website feature which allowed volunteers to sign up to assist with a campaign. While the success rate of volunteer sign-up in the UK was similarly low in most places, a higher proportion of candidates saw the potential for attracting more activists. Amongst Japanese

candidates there was very little evidence of this. Much of the success UK candidates had was based on proactive engagement with users of both websites and social media. During interviews with Japanese candidates, there was little discussion of engaging with people online on even a basic level and no candidate had made a concerted effort to turn supporters into activists. For most, websites and social media act as a noticeboard. The only way in which candidates' new media use could be connected with campaign organisation is the prevalence of *campaign activity* posts. These posts will be covered in detail later in this chapter but for many candidates they provided a way to "activate" their supporters and remind them that there was an election to be fought. In this respect there appears to be a much more passive style of mobilising supporters online in Japan than the UK.

Candidate interviews have shown that online organisation is not regarded as a major factor in most campaigns. However, there is evidence of how direct engagement can allow a local campaign to strengthen itself using online platforms. This requires effort on the part of the candidate and their team. The general incidence of successfully turning supporters into activists is as yet low but it is possible and has had an impact on campaigns, especially where the candidate is under-supported by the national party. It appears as though where there is a need, there is the possibility for candidates to strengthen their own campaign organisation through online campaigning, at least in the UK, although this is a long way from being common practice.

Promotion of national and local policy on new media platforms

Chapters 3 and 4 showed that candidates from the UK and Japan favoured promoting national policies over local policies and that there was a clear difference in the degree to which candidates of both countries engaged in policy debate, with UK candidates much more likely to discuss policy matters during campaigns. This chapter aims to establish the reasons candidates favoured national over local policies in general, where their policy ideas came from and how important policy is in campaigning in elections.

Candidates in the UK discussed national issues (15.56% of social media output) by nearly twice as much as they did local issues (8.27%). The tradition of party-centre campaigning in the UK implies that that candidates have transferred traditional campaign styles onto the

online sphere. Overall this appears to be the case, but there are two factors which can lead candidates to favouring local policy over the national – namely *party* and *experience.* It became apparent through interviews that Liberal Democrat candidates were much more inclined to focus on local issues, in as much as, while not in opposition to the national party manifesto, they sometimes a more unique, personalised policy platform. Social media was particularly suited to this task:

> *"You are not going to suddenly move a load of soft Conservatives in one fell swoop. Voters needed something different to latch onto. So our strategy was purely on a local basis and getting things done….I put (a post on Facebook) up yesterday about potholes and roads and I have already had over two thousand people looking at it. If you put something about Lib Dems or Tories you are down into the low hundreds"* – Paul Hodgkinson[53]

For candidates wishing to differentiate themselves from their party social media gave them a platform with which to do so. This was not just the case amongst candidates wishing to develop a strong personal identity but also amongst those who had successfully campaigned on local issues in the past, had a strong personal identity and a rural constituency where local campaigning was more applicable as opposed to urban areas, where national, catch-all issues were more prevalent:

> *"I think you get the result which is from a local perspective and it is very important that I should have my views rather than the governments views, or for that matter the coalition's views, and I think I know pretty well what they (the voters) want from me"* – Conservative MP

Despite these documented instances where local issues came to the fore, the focus in the 2015 election was on national issues. All interviewees commented that their parties had

[53] Currently a Liberal Democrat councillor

done a good job in producing online campaign literature and for those candidates who had a considerable social media output, much of this was made up of party produced literature or linked to party posts. Candidates recognised that the national party message was both in line with their own ideological stance and that the issues promoted by the national party matched the policies which they wanted to promote in their own constituencies:

> *"I set out who I was and things that mattered to me and that would matter to people like me ….there was an overlap of national policy with how it affected people, young people in Scunthorpe. I tried to make national policy relevant to local people"* – Jo Gideon (Conservative, Scunthorpe)

It was a different case for a candidate who had received more training from the national party. In going to specific training seminars and being in target seats candidates were more exposed to the specifics of the parties manifesto and encouraged to follow the party line to a greater degree:

> *"I think it is true to say, and this was in the party's post-election report, candidates were, I do not want to say encouraged, but we focused on more national stuff....I did talk about local issues on my literature but I think I should have done more than that…local candidates should talk about local issues"* – Louise Baldock

It is interesting to note that 61.33% of candidates from the content analysis featured specific local manifestos or policies on their websites but the amount of focus put on local issues during real-time campaigning was relatively small. UK candidates can be put into two categories when looking at specific policy promotion. In the first category are those willing and able to put local policies at the forefront of their campaign – those candidates trying to differentiate themselves from an unpopular party label and those in a strong position of incumbency who have built a reputation on promoting local issues in more rural areas. For these candidates new media provides an alternative platform to using party produced campaign materials. The second group, and the group most prevalent in the 2015 election,

are those which tried to tailor national messages to their specific constituencies and recognise that the values of the national party are in line with their own policy beliefs and focus on central themes such as economic performance.

The promotion of policy in the 2014 Japanese lower house election was comparatively low, with national policy (7.92% of social media output) being discussed far more than local policy (1.31%) which was barely mentioned by candidates. Candidate interviews focused on why policy output itself was so low and why there was almost no local policy discussion. Amongst some politicians there is a recognition of public scepticism towards the promises made by parties and candidates:

> "*The lack of policy discussion in Japan is embarrassing. Many voters feel that whatever is promised are just lies anyway. In Japanese campaigning it is more important to be seen active and doing something"* – Tsutomu Yoshida (Independent)

It is apparent that campaigning in contemporary Japanese elections still owes much to the traditions established before the 1996 voting reform brought in a mixture of single member districts and proportional representation. Under the previous electoral system promoting policy, national or otherwise was secondary, as in many areas candidates from the same party were fighting against each other to secure a seat (under SNTV rules) and the focus was on a candidate's personal appeal. It appears that little has changed. Where policy was a significant part of a candidate's online campaign, both *constituency* and *party* factors appear to play a part. Seiji Osaka (DPJ), representing the rural Hokkaido 8 constituency used a mixture of local and national focused issues. Osaka also used a number of short video clips (around five to ten seconds long) to get across important policies:

> *"Before becoming a national assembly member, as a (local) mayor both national and local issues were important. For example the fishing industry, renewable energy, soil contamination…on social media people do not watch long videos. I focused on saying my name and a specific policy, for example* datsu genpatsu *(ban nuclear energy)"*

As seen in Chapter 4 both the DPJ and its candidates were more likely to talk about specific policies compared to other parties. Possibly the key explanation for the focus on national policy was the nature of the elections:

> "*National policy, especially education, was important for me. National policy is prevalent because national Diet members deal with national policy. This is what voters expect so the election is fought on national issues"* – Satoshi Takayama

The *rural/urban* divide ties into this. Many candidates, especially those in urban areas feel that national policy reflects the important issues that their constituents care about. In the 2014 election this was centred on Abenomics (the Abe led LDP government's trademark economic policy attempting to spur inflation and economic growth), nuclear power and constitutional revision. 93% of the Japanese population live in urban areas (in comparison to 83% of the UK population)[54]. This may explain the high level of national policy promotion in Japan and why candidates tie in urban campaigning and national issues (not to say this is a specifically Japanese phenomenon). JIP candidates also faced a unique issue when defining policy. As mentioned previously the JIP was a new party formed from representatives based in two major metropolitan areas, Tokyo and Osaka. The party formed in 2014 known in Japanese as *Ishin no Toh* was most closely identified with its Osaka predecessor *Osaka Ishin no Kai* (Osaka Restoration party) and its leader Toru Hashimoto. For residents of Osaka the ethos of the party was well established, the pursuit of greater regional devolution to the Osaka municipality. However, for Tokyo representatives of the JIP it was difficult to establish what the party's core policies were and how they related to their constituency:

> *"In general, in Japan, candidates do not talk about policy. Campaigning is still about making people feel comfortable with you and projecting a "*ganbare" *(do your best!) mood. For people living in Osaka it is easy to understand what the party stands for. For those outside of Osaka it presents a greater problem. People ask 'what are the party's policies'?"* – Miho Takahashi (JIP Tokyo 17)

Evidence from Chapter 4 shows that parties themselves do not put a priority on policy. Policy at the national level was limited to discussing policies that were very simply pro or

[54] WorldBank Data 2015: http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS

anti LDP positions. Neither the DPJ nor JIP had much of a coherent, fully developed manifesto. Thus with no party to lead the policy discussion candidate themselves did not fill this gap and instead focused on personal image promotion.

There was a clear difference at the *country* level in the promotion of policy, in line with findings from earlier empirical chapters. UK candidates were much more likely to discuss policy in general, especially local policy, on new media platforms. This was especially true of candidates representing the Liberal Democrats. There were some similarities to DPJ candidates, some of whom were generally more willing to discuss policy in general and similarly recognised that the unpopularity of their party's brand made local/personalised campaigning more of a viable campaign strategy. There was in both countries evidence that *constituency* factors also play a part, with those in rural areas more likely to talk about specific local issues. What is apparent though is that overall, policy took a back seat in both countries to candidate image and there is little evidence of policy being a means by which candidates are creating more independent campaigns. The next section will explore the reasons behind this.

Candidate image and the personal vote

A factor in judging how candidates pursue the personal vote is to what degree they are using their own image in comparison to the emphasis they put on party affiliation. As has been set out in earlier chapters, the UK has a tradition of party-centred campaigning i.e. that the party candidates represent is more of a determining factor on winning votes than their own personal characteristics. In Japan, with the previous electoral system resulting in intra-party competition between candidates in elections the opposite has been true. Earlier sections have established that for both UK and Japanese candidates there was a great deal of autonomy in how candidates chose to use new media and how they presented themselves. How candidates are using new media to build an individual "brand" and how this relates to their party is vital to the understanding of how internet campaign is affecting the personal vote.

All candidates from both countries were asked specifically for their opinions on the personal vote and how online campaigning could facilitate this. Across all categories of respondents in the UK candidates admitted that there was a growing emphasis on the personal vote in elections and that new media could facilitate this. Three specific case studies stand out from the interviewed candidates, representing the three parties studied and *incumbency, marginality* and *experience*. Jo Gideon was Conservative challenger candidate for Scunthorpe, a marginal Labour-held seat. Gideon was not from the Scunthorpe area, was chosen only three months before the election and had no local Conservative Association in place to provide grassroots support. For her, online platforms were at first the only way to build any kind of identity:

> *"I knew without any social media effectiveness nobody would know me in Scunthorpe. I tweeted everyday 'Oh I am in…' whichever area of the town I was in and it established that I was in town and doing stuff actually in the constituency…..I guess I was going for a personal vote rather than a specifically Conservative (due to the negative image of the party in Scunthorpe) but a personal vote for somebody who thinks the Conservatives are doing it right"*

In this case social media was the only way in which a candidate with no party support could build any kind of personal brand. For candidates not in a target seat, social media has become an important way to get across some kind of message which local constituents and the local press can pick up on. There is no proof that a greater number of tweets or posts equals more votes but without social media, candidates who have very little resources to produce campaign material or get activists out to canvass would have almost no presence in their constituency at all. The nature of the constituency also meant that the candidate believed it was important to build her own credentials rather than rely on the party brand which had negative connotation in the area.

As has been discussed before, many Liberal Democrat candidates felt that they had to play down the party brand and focus on the personal vote. Chris Took was also new to the constituency he was contesting. From previous involvement in council level politics and running in a different constituency he understood the importance of name recognition:

> *"(In previous constituency) The people recognised me because I was the face of Ashford Liberal Democrats and that is the same kind of thing I am trying to garner in Woking. I am certainly going to be using my Twitter, my Facebook page…if I can increase my opportunity to be exposed to the general public then all the better….In 2015 the Liberal Democrat brand was a bit tarnished…(when canvassing people) I would lead in with 'I am a Liberal Democrat', which I was and continue to be proud of, but that was not my main thing. It was 'I am a local businessman. Being a Lib Dem wasn't at the forefront"*

The above excerpts reinforce the idea that candidates cannot rely on just a party label to define themselves. They need to build a personal brand and gain recognition amongst their local constituents, although the *party* factor undoubtedly plays a large part in how candidates present themselves to the electorate. Promoting a personal rather than party brand was a common theme amongst the three Liberal Democrat candidates interviewed.

Building the personal vote is not just a phenomenon amongst challenger candidates. All three incumbent candidates interviewed highlighted the growing necessity of building personal appeal. For Liberal Democrat candidate Stephen Lloyd appealing for a personal vote was not only a necessity due to the weakness of the national party, but was generally the way in which he had always campaigned regardless of national party status. For Con MP, the rural status of his constituency and his multiple previous terms in office meant that he had been able to cultivate a personal vote based upon his track record of representing local interests. For the incumbent Labour MP Jamie Reed (Copeland) the questions of the personal vote and online engagement was not just one of political necessity but a response to changes in technology and the way in which people are receiving news and information relevant to them across a broad range of areas.:

> *"We are living in a formative period. Political discourse in our country is at the very beginning of a new cycle and a new set of rules and conventions…..society is becoming increasingly "Walkmanised". What used to be an aural experience (getting news) where you put something on and everybody has to hear it became an individual experience. Whether it's the BBC, whether it's the NHS or whether it's our political institutions its becoming more and more bespoke, more focused on the user*

rather than the provider. Politics cannot choose whether it follows that route. It has to follow that route."

Technology as a whole and social media in particular has changed the way in which people expect to get their information. Parties have made efforts to target voters based on various demographic categorisations. Increasingly though, if the current trend described by Jamie Reed continues, people will expect politics to engage with them on a more personal level. As people have become less engaged with political parties it has become less likely that they will seek out political information. As with turning supporters into activists, getting people to support a party, even for one election, will require politicians to actively engage voters on a personal level. There is a growing awareness amongst candidates that this trend will continue in future election campaigns.

For Japanese candidates, personal engagement with constituents is a regular feature of elections. Contemporary academic work on Japanese campaigning has described an opposite trajectory for party influence in comparison to the UK (Maeda, 2007). There has been a greater emphasis put on the party brand in the past two decades since electoral reform. Interviews with Japanese candidates showed that that party image can have a direct effect on the electoral strategies of candidates. According to Professor Yoshikadu Iwabuchi party image has played an especially important role in recent elections. This was particularly evident during the premiership of Junichiro Koizumi and continued with public opinion of both the LDP and DPJ playing a major role in many constituencies in both the 2009 and 2012 elections. The image of the LDP as the "safe" party, a legacy of their time as the dominant party in Japanese politics in the post-war 20th century, (on issues such as the economy and national security) and the DPJ as a "risk" was important in both Shinzo Abe's decision to call a snap election in late 2014 and the landslide victory which the LDP won. Without a major change in public perception the DPJ has little chance of winning lower house elections at the national level. The growing importance of the party label is also shared by younger candidates who have never held a SMD seat in the lower house:

"For me party image is more important (than personal image). Since the change in the electoral system in 1994 I need to win near to 50% of the vote. Also there is no

choice between candidates of the same party. Party image has become more important." – Satoshi Takayama

Takayama's view on the importance of the party image, in particular the image of the DPJ contrasted to some extent with an elected DPJ candidate from a rural area in Hokkaido, Seiji Osaka:

"*The image of the party, especially the party leader, has become more important. The DPJ was able to win a majority in 2009 because of a positive image amongst the public. To win in the future the party leader will need a good public image…..but for me personal image is more important, especially because the DPJ was so unpopular (in 2014). Many people said they liked me, but didn't like the party."*

This was apparent on Osaka's website. A cursory glance at the website reveals no evidence of the party symbol being used on his homepage. When this was brought up during the interview he showed me his homepage and with careful examination a small version of the party symbol could in fact be found at the bottom of the webpage but little prominence was given to it. It was certainly the case that in looking at the websites of most Japanese candidates, photos of the candidates almost always played a prominent role at the top of the homepage. Some candidates representing the LDP and JIP had prominent images of themselves with their respective party leaders. Again it is clear the popularity of the party and party leader shapes the way in which candidates campaign on their personal images.

Another factor which differentiates the importance of the personal vote in a candidate centred system with that of a party-centred system is the greater number of independent candidates and especially how often candidates change parties or leave to run as independents. As a local councillor in Machida, Tokyo, Tsutomu Yoshida has run as an independent candidate throughout his political career. He felt that increasing scepticism about political parties has meant that prospective political candidates are more willing to run as an independent relying on the personal vote and that this is facilitated by online campaigning:

"Parties (like the LDP) encourage potential candidates and say 'please join the LDP, let's work together'. But many people are put off by the negative view of the party

> *label……The way of delivering campaign information has changed. It is now much easier to give out information (on the internet) about campaigning and my activities and I am not reliant on supporter networks or party organisation"*

The greater prevalence of independent candidates was also confirmed by candidates in two other interviews. Miho Takahashi was a unique case study as she had previously been a lower house member, representing the Japanese Restoration Party,[55] through regional PR in Hokkaido winning a seat in the 2012 election. She moved to contest a SMD seat in Tokyo (Tokyo 17) in 2014. It is rare for candidates to move constituency as they often rely on personal networks in a local area. Without a great deal of party support in the Tokyo area either, the internet became the only way to publicise her campaign, something which was also true of candidates in the UK:

> *"Of course face to face (communication with voters) is better. The internet is not a great place to interact with people, especially in an area like Hokkaido. But the internet was the only platform where I could introduce myself to people, announce polices, as an alternative to traditional media."*

During the interview with Yokriko Madoka (DPJ), who was at one time a senior member of the DPJ leadership I was shown a letter that she had faxed to her supporters the previous day announcing her withdrawal from the DPJ and her decision to run as an independent in the forthcoming upper house election in June 2015, due to the DPJ putting upper age limits on its candidates and the negative image of the party. As an independent she admitted that fundraising would be the biggest challenge she faced. The internet was not expected to make a big contribution to this but did at least provide an alternative to more expensive traditional campaigning. It was clear that the internet had become a major factor in her campaigning through the use of videos. In a section on her website "Madoka TV" these videos featured, in addition to the campaign speeches used by many candidates, a number of sit down interviews with Madoka and various guest discussing policy issues. There was a clear attempt to engage with viewers in a more relaxed and conversational tone ultimately aiming to build the personal identity of the candidate.

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[55] A precursor to the JIP

Candidate interviews have shown that candidates are using internet campaigning to promote a personal image and build a personal vote. This is viewed as being important for a variety of reasons. In both the UK and Japan less experienced candidates, especially those who are running in a constituency for the first time and have little in the way of organisational support, view new media as an important way to build some kind of personal image and make a connection with voters. This can be especially helpful where candidates are ignored by traditional media. While this is not seen conclusively through content analysis set out in earlier chapters, interviews provide strong support for the hypothesis (H2) set out in Chapter 1, that candidates from unpopular parties, for instance the Liberal Democrats in the UK or the DPJ in Japan, see the internet as a way to define themselves separately from a party label which may be a handicap and downplay the party they represent in favour of promoting their own personal image. In this case there is a negativity factor that parties can create which affects their candidates' chances and subsequently the way in which they choose to use new media. The next section will go into more detail on how candidates are pursuing the personal vote through the promotion of candidate and campaign imagery in both countries.

Campaign activity posts on social media and the personal vote

Chapters 3 and 4 showed that amongst both UK and Japanese candidates, posts which could be categorised as *campaign activity* (CA) made up the highest proportion of social media output. In the UK this was 37.77% of all output on Twitter and Facebook, while in Japan it was well over half of all output (59.80%). CA posts were included in the overall *personal vote index* scores (PVI) given to candidates. This section will set out the candidates' strategies behind using CA posts. In doing so it will justify the inclusion of CA posts as part of candidates' PVI score and show how CA output is related to the personal vote. Strategies behind the use of CA posts can be defined in three core areas: building a local profile, supporter mobilisation and as an additional media/information source for voters.

As has been discussed, there are challenges for less experienced candidates, especially those contesting elections in areas they had not lived in before. However, the desire to strengthen ties with the constituency was not only limited to those candidates. Incumbent

candidates and those who had had some exposure at local level agreed that it was important to be seen out and about in the constituency during the election. Door to door canvassing remains the predominant way for candidates to interact with their constituents in the UK. However, canvassing has its limits. People may not be at home or campaigns may not have enough resources or time to reach everybody. CA posts on social media were a way for candidates to show that they had been into all the communities in their constituency and were at least attempting to interact and engage with their constituents:

> *"Without constraints (from traditional media) on how much is published, we were able to convey how busy Caroline was without having to say it: she had already proved it….we didn't need to say Caroline was working hard for 'X' ward or 'Y' community because there was proof"* - Robert Findon

Documenting candidates' campaigns by showing where they had been and who they had been talking with was aptly described by Liberal Democrat candidate Paul Hodgkinson as "creating a narrative". It was important for all campaigns to shows that their candidate had been working hard and campaigning rather than just relying on the party label to convey their beliefs and what voters could expect from them as an MP. In this respect using CA posts on social media is not much different from door to door canvassing. There is an emphasis on face to face communication. Naturally this is a more effective way to interact with people and perhaps win their vote but social media provides an alternative, built upon the same principles, where this is not possible.

CA posts were also seen as adding to the organisational strength of a campaign, by acting as a notice board, informing followers where and when candidates' events would take place. No candidate reported CA posts as being responsible for attracting a large amount of people to these events but they did at least put the information in the public domain. This function was more useful for incumbent candidates and those with an existing public profile who had a larger number of followers and thus had more chance of getting members of the public to respond. This was also true for what can be described as "troop rallying" style posts. Candidates identified the need to present a vibrant and active campaign in order to get people not just mobilised to vote but also to become activists in a campaign. Many CA posts showed photographs of not just candidates but also their supporters campaigning. Many

posts captioned these photographs with a description, stating how challenging but yet ultimately satisfying a campaign had been. These posts not only display a positive campaign image led by the candidate but also to inspire activist and let them see that they had been playing an important part in the campaign and that their efforts were noticed and appreciated.

The final way in which CA posts were used by candidates ties in to the preceding section, relating to how CA posts offer candidates an additional media outlet. This can result in candidates not just building a profile through social media but reporting their activities which local media may not pick up on. In most cases, especially in non-marginal constituencies, the advantage in media coverage goes to the incumbent. Challengers, often without comparable name recognition, struggle to get similar levels of attention. There is a lot of competition for media space during elections. Social media has by no means replaced traditional forms of media such as newspapers or local television but they do provide a cheap and easy to use alternative which candidates did not have in previous elections.

Changes in technology and the way in which people receive information has been cited earlier in this study as a reason for greater pursuit of the personal vote. The way in which people are informed about politics was certainly at the forefront for many Japanese candidates when considering their use of CA posts. As has been noted in Chapter 5 there is a difference in the way in which CA posts are used. Firstly, they are more numerous, making up a larger percentage of many candidates' social media output. Secondly, whereas many CA posts in the UK feature pictures of candidates and their staff out canvassing door-to-door, electoral rules make this impossible in Japan. Japanese campaigning in public is mostly restricted to making street speeches, candidates greeting commuters at train stations and private members meetings. There was a greater emphasis from Japanese candidates in displaying this activity not just in the form of photographs but also in videos, with many candidates posting full length *gaitou ensentsu* (street speeches) or *eki ensetsu* (train station speeches) on their social media accounts. The purposes of these posts cut across all three strategies of CA posting:

> *"For me the videos (of street speeches) allowed me to tell people where I had been campaigning. Many people would pass by while I was making speeches and stop for*

> *maybe one or two minutes but they would not stay for the whole speech (which could be more than thirty minutes long). It was available online for them (and other supporters) to look at later if they were interested"* – Miho Takahashi

The above quote outlines how videos of CA activity were used by candidates to (i) build a local profile and show that they were active in the local area and (ii) get campaign information into the public domain. All candidates agreed that CA posts contributed to personal image promotion.

CA posts also contributed to campaign organisation in a similar way to the UK by acting as a "noticeboard" for campaign events. Many candidates' social media accounts featured posts which specifically detailed the candidates' itinerary for the day's campaign. Whereas UK candidate CA output was focused on reporting what the candidate had been doing, Japanese candidates often reported what they were going to be doing. The purpose of this was to get supporters out at campaign events. Most people who attended campaign events and speeches made by candidates were registered supporters or members of the press. CA activity of this kind is designed for their consumption more than for members of the general public. It may also impact the way in which candidates organise in the future:

> *"Social media is a good way to create networks between friends and people who know each other and communicate what is going on in a campaign. This is similar to the way in which koenkai work but it is not as effective as koenkai (now)."* – Satoshi Takayama

Candidates also highlighted the limitations of traditional media, both in its ability to cover a wide number of constituency elections in metropolitan areas and in the face a growing proportion of the population looking online for news and information. Japanese candidates were all aware that changes would affect the way in which voters were engaging with politics:

> *"Older voters do not use social media or websites and the best way to contact them is still through leaflets or via the media….for younger people things like telephone*

> *canvassing is not suitable because they are often not at home or do not pick up the phone. Social media is a better way to reach them"* – Yoriko Madoka

As it becomes harder to reach voters through traditional methods of campaigning there will be a greater focus on communication through online media. During elections - when candidates want to get information across to both supporters and to voters, their own social media will increasingly become the driver of this, potentially at the expense of the role which *koenkai* used to play in both organising supporters and promoting the candidate to their constituents.

There are clear strategies behind the use of CA posts which have been confirmed through candidate interviews. CA posts are designed to build awareness of the candidate's campaign, to promote the candidate as being engaged with their constituency and to act as a form of supporter hub, where those with an interest can see what has been happening and what will be happening in the campaign. These posts also allow candidates to present an alternative, positive, discourse to traditional forms of media, which is either out of their control or ignores their campaign altogether. For candidates with weak constituency organisation, CA posts can get information about their campaign into the public domain and create awareness of the candidate amongst voters. For more established candidates it acts as a noticeboard on campaign events for supporters and helps gets supporters invested in the campaign. Before this study there was no explicit academic work done on CA posts and the significant amount of space candidates devote to them. As a campaign strategy the use if CA posts is still evolving but it appears clear that they will play an important role in candidates' online activity in future elections. The next section will examine candidates' opinions on where the future of online campaigning may lie and how this will relate to the personal vote.

The future of Internet campaigning

In both the UK and Japan candidates recognised that the Internet is still an evolving medium. In Japan, the 2014 election was the first in which online campaigning was legal. In the UK many saw the 2015 election as the first where online campaigning could have been

significant. The vast majority of candidates in both countries were using some form of new media during their campaign, very often a combination of more established platforms such as websites or blogs and some form of social media. The general impression from candidate interviews showed that while most were happy to embrace new media, few had a sure strategy about how to utilise it as a campaign tool. When reflecting on lessons learned from the elections included in this study the general consensus was that new media would become increasingly important in future campaigns but that it was as yet difficult to draw any concrete conclusions as to what online campaigning in the future may look like. This section examines the potential changes in communication and organisation highlighted by candidates in the UK and Japan.

Both incumbents and challengers in the UK were looking towards the next general election (which many at the time assumed would be in 2020) and had already had thoughts on how social media in particular would affect campaigning. The quote on page??? from MP Jamie Reed highlights how future political discourse will have to adapt to changes in communication technology. These changes have not greatly affected the way in which UK candidates campaign but there is a general consensus that it will, gradually, become the dominant form of political communication:

> *"…there is a window of opportunity (during an election campaign) where people are interested and want to know what a candidate is like and so if you can capture something that people can engage with in a meaningful way at a human level then I think that is what social media has potential to do. Capture the humanity."* – Jo Gideon

Jo Gideon was not the only candidates to allude to the growing importance of this "human level" and how it is likely to play an important part in future campaigning. Theoretically constituency candidates, as local representatives of their party, are best placed to communicate with voters on a personal level. In the UK especially it will become more and more important for candidates to engage in a personalised way with voters. This provides a challenge to even the best resourced constituency parties. New media platforms can reach anyone with an email or social media account. An online presence is also able to keep the profile of a candidate in the public eye between election campaigns. Constituency level

politics is only usually relevant once every election cycle (now most likely every five years in the UK). For the period in between elections the majority of the public and local media pay little attention to politics and usually only a sitting MP has any kind of local profile. For candidates who have decided to stand in the next general election, or even for those who are considering seeking a nomination, keeping active on social media and having an access point (website) where voters can find out information about their activities is potentially of significant benefit. As an example Stephen Lloyd, an incumbent who narrowly lost in 2015, was considering whether to run again at a subsequent election when participating an interview for this study in April 2016.[56] At the time of the interview he had over 6000 followers on Facebook and 1500 on Twitter. Followers on social media can be reached anytime when a candidate wishes to highlight a local or national issue or show what political activities they have been taking part in, activities which would not usually get any form of local media attention. While there is a natural advantage for candidates who have held office before in having had a higher public profile and as a result more followers, any potential candidate who has some kind of following on social media can keep their name in the public eye between election cycles.

Maintaining a following also has a potential benefit at the organisational level, specifically getting activists involved in a campaign. Chris Took, in an interview conducted approximately one year after the 2015 election, talked about the post-election Liberal Democrat "surge in support" and how that could be utilised in the future:

> *"I continue to speak to those people (2015 volunteers) on Twitter. I was able to engage a couple of months after the election. With 2020 in mind, if I am standing again, I will be engaging with them earlier….In 2020 I expect the Liberal Democrats to return a lot more heavily to local/grassroots campaigning and that social media is going to be an increasingly important in order to achieve this "*

Gaining support through social media has allowed candidates, in some cases, to construct networks of supporters and activists which can be re-engaged with when the candidate stands for another election. It operates in much the same way as email lists did in 2005 and

[56] He announced his intention to run again later that year and subsequently regained the seat in the snap election of May 2017

2010 but has an added element of personalisation. Potential candidates are able to interact with supporters in real time, on an individual level and maintain sense of political consciousness amongst activists who may drift away from politics in between election cycles. In the UK this will be especially useful for candidates with weak grassroots organisation and at best may act as a form of *equalisation* overcoming the advantages held by incumbents of those representing better resourced or more popular parties.

Evidence has shown that online campaigning by Japanese candidates was used in a way which emphasised the personal vote. Candidate interviews supported this and only one candidate, Satoshi Takayama indicated that he felt future campaigning would become more party-centred. Other candidates and experts interviewed agreed that future campaigning would most likely follow the candidate-centred status quo. The real changes in new media use would come from who candidates were engaging with and on what platforms. Similar to UK candidates, Japanese candidates also identified the uses of social media between election periods. Takayama gave anecdotal evidence of "recently" having had 22 people become members of the party after getting in contact with him through Facebook. In this specific instance the benefit of having new members appears to go to the national party. However, it is the candidate/local representative with whom these new members are making contact. This affirms the continuing importance of the candidate in Japanese campaigning, showing that supporters are much more likely to become partisans through making a personal connection with an individual, local representative of the party. Compared to UK candidates, there was less emphasis on interaction with voters and potential new activists, with the core function of online campaigning being that of acting as a noticeboard. No candidates mentioned greater levels of interaction as being a part of their future campaign strategy. A more tangible effect of new media campaigning between election cycles is more likely to come through this noticeboard function, keeping candidates' activities in the public consciousness, whether they be national level elected representatives or those working at local level. Before candidates had an online profile, keeping candidates' names in the public domain would have been the responsibility of the candidates' *koenkai.* While *koenkai* still act as important vote mobilising agents at election time online campaigning has the potential to replace some of their key functions, putting things such as image promotion solely in the hands of the candidate.

This study chose the two most popular platforms globally, Twitter and Facebook to analyse candidates' use of social media. What did become apparent during this research was that Japanese candidates used a greater variety of new media platforms than candidates in the UK. Japanese candidates were more likely to use additional social media platforms, have blogs and accounts on YouTube or Vine to share videos. It is likely that these will continue to factor in to future online campaigning. Multiple candidates mentioned the decreasing popularity of Facebook, especially amongst younger voters, compared to Twitter and the mobile messaging app LINE, which has over 54 million users in Japan.[57] As has been mentioned earlier in this chapter there was no consensus amongst candidates as to a preferred social media platform but the trend of more anonymous, limited communication tools such as Twitter and LINE in comparison to Facebook implies that Japanese campaigning in the future will continue to embrace a wide variety of platforms but that these platforms lend themselves to candidates providing information to users rather than attempting to engage or interact with them.

When asked about the future of new media, capturing the youth vote was the primary concern for Japanese candidates. This was a particularly pertinent issue as the Japanese Diet was in the process of amending the voting age, lowering it from 20 to 18, in June 2015, when interviews for this study were conducted. This change in voting age was due to add approximately 2.4 million new voters to the electoral register. Turnout amongst younger voters, those under 30 years of age, at the 2014 election had been less than 33%[58]. Amongst DPJ candidates especially there was a feeling that the youth vote could be fertile ground for reigniting their electoral fortunes:

> *"Social media is helping to get young people involved. Mass media is dominated by the LDP. Reporters act as gatekeepers. However young people are getting their news and information from smartphones and social media rather than mass media"* – Satoshi Takayama

[57] https://www.statista.com
[58] Wall Street Journal - 17/06/2015

During the 2014 campaign many DPJ candidates promoted anti-war (in the form of opposing constitutional change) and anti-nuclear power policies which according to Professor Yoshikadu Iwabuchi may be more popular amongst younger voters:

> *"Usually campaign issues centre around the economy or welfare reform but 18 year olds are not taxpayers so bigger social issues such, for example anti-war, may be issues which are more important for them"*[59]

With the LDP having been the dominant party for most of the post-war period there are arguments that the party's relationships with media and bureaucracy have given them an institutional advantage in statecraft (Pempel, 2008). Candidates from opposition parties have identified how new media, where any individual user can control discourse, may not just be a way to bypass traditional forms of unfriendly media but to reach out to the next generation of voters who themselves will be getting their information from a greater range of personalised sources.

A general conclusion regarding the future of new media campaigning can be drawn from interviews with candidates in both countries. It is evident that the way in which voters, and indeed society as a whole, is becoming informed about events is changing. Both candidates and parties recognise the need to reach out and capture voters' attention. This has the potential for candidates themselves to create their own narrative to win the support of voters on a personal level, something that parties at the national level are finding increasingly difficult. At this stage the focus is on raising the candidate's profile rather than the potential for organisational change that new media use could bring to constituency campaigns. In the short-term it will be necessary to adapt to the changes in technology and communication. Candidates will continue to embrace new media to a greater degree in future campaigns, even if they are as yet unsure what this will entail and what the optimal utilisation of online platforms could be.

[59] The age of majority in Japan is 20

Conclusion

Evidence from candidate interviews has helped to both clarify and provide additional insights into the conclusions drawn from earlier empirical chapters. In addition to this, interviews have provided a deeper context with which to understand the use of new media by candidates than has been provided by any study in the field thus far. From the initial conclusions, set out on page earlier in this chapter, it is the second, that *party represented* plays a decisive factor in pursuit of the personal vote, which is most strongly supported through the results presented in this chapter. Candidates from weaker parties, most notably the Liberal Democrats in the UK and the DPJ and JIP in Japan consistently stated that they had a greater motivation to pursue independent campaigns and see new media as a way to achieve this. In the case of Japan this was done through promotion of the candidate first and party second, with many candidates pursing separate (but not opposing) areas of policy promotion. UK candidates from weaker parties were also more likely to promote more personalised policies which appealed at the local level. On an organisational level UK candidates were more likely to use new media to attract active supporters, mainly volunteers, especially where local organisation was weak.

There is also clear support for the first hypothesis set out above, that candidates from the UK and Japan use new media in a qualitatively different way and that this takes the form of greater personal vote seeking behaviour amongst Japanese candidates, who are much more concerned with personal image promotion. While both websites and social media are used to notify supporters of upcoming events, this is as far as the organisational aspect is utilised by Japanese candidates. UK candidates were much more likely to use online platforms to attract potential new supporters and thus fully exploit the potential new media has in creating more independent campaigns. While it is the case more experienced candidates were likely to pursue the personal vote through campaigning on local issues and relying on established name value, it is also true to say that candidates with very little experience saw new media as an important platform on which to build a personal image. For some new media was the only way in which they could build any kind of effective engagement with voters. In Japan campaigning restrictions make it difficult for candidates to meet voters in a one to one situation. In both countries, a lack of resources for less established candidates means that traditional forms of engagement, such a leafleting or having a strong public

presence with many campaign staff/volunteers, is difficult. For many, new media filled this *presence* gap and gave candidates a platform to become known. This finding adds another dimension to the third major finding from earlier chapters and shows that it is not just experienced candidates who can be expected to pursue personalised campaigning strategies. Should these less experienced candidates be successful in using new media to create more organisationally independent campaigns going forward, there is a potential for a newer cohorts of elected lawmakers to be less reliant, and even les loyal, to party leadership.

The technological changes highlighted by candidates will have an effect in future elections. Theoretically constituency candidates, who have links with a local area, are best placed to exploit this. Candidates and elected members have never been easier to access. The opportunity exists for both candidates and constituents to build more personal relationships through online platforms. In Japan, the role of personal image will continue to play an important part in individual constituency contests. In the UK candidates are beginning to recognise the potential importance of building a stronger personal profile, especially those representing parties in opposition. While not having replaced traditional campaign methods, it is clear is that candidates consider new media to be an increasingly important part of campaigning. A key issue shared by all candidates is the question of what technology will be available in the next election cycle and how best to respond to rapid changes in internet based communications.

Chapter 7

The effectiveness of new media and the personal vote in increasing candidate vote share

The preceding chapters have established that both UK and Japanese candidates are, to some degree, utilising new media to pursue the personal vote. Not only is there evidence that candidates are seeking the personal vote to further promote established personal brands, in the case of incumbent and experienced candidates, but also where the party brand is weak and candidates feel that the best chance for electoral success comes through a personal connection with voters rather than relying on party endorsement. In summary, where there is an incentive to pursue the personal vote, candidates will. This may not involve explicitly rejecting the party they are officially representing but it does, in its most extreme form, involve the candidate almost ignoring the party – making little or no mention of it or its leadership in their campaigning. This was evidenced especially by Liberal Democrat candidates in the UK in the preceding chapters. For the vast majority of major party candidates, stronger than party ties is the desire to secure office. Wolinetz (2002) sets out how office seeking parties are willing to ignore entrenched policy platforms or traditional bases of support when such behaviour maximises the parties' appeal to voters. It is logical therefore that candidates would do the same, especially during an election campaign where getting into office is for the most part the only real priority. It has been established that candidates see a benefit to pursuing the personal vote through online campaigning. A natural line of enquiry then follows – whether or not this personal vote seeking behaviour through online campaigning is paying dividends. As set out in Chapter 1, this section will answer the secondary research question:

> Does use of new media in seeking the personal vote have a positive impact on candidates' vote shares?

First, this chapter will review the working hypotheses and variables set out in Chapter 1 and continue by setting out in greater detail how variables have been constructed and the sources for relevant information. The chapter will continue by testing the hypotheses through regression analysis to ascertain the effect that online campaigning had on the two elections under study, when compared to the influence of other, more traditional, factors which commonly explain candidate success at elections. Analysis will find that online campaigning does result in a positive effect on candidate vote share, but that this benefit is dependent on candidates having an audience and that other offline campaigning variables

continue to play a significant part in candidates' success. The chapter concludes by discussing the results and, taking into consideration results from statistical analysis, set out lines of future enquiry which could arise from the results.

Notes on methodology

This chapter will investigate three separate independent variables relating to new media use in order to judge their effect on candidate vote share in comparison to the previous elections in both countries (dependent variable = *change in candidate vote share from previous election*). The first relates to *personal vote* use of new media, taking into account candidates' use of websites and social media. The second factor relates to *activity;* how often candidates are using new media. Unlike websites, information distribution on social media does not require an active interest from users. In this case, information about candidates' campaigns can reach followers on social media without the follower themselves actively seeking it out. As such campaign updates posted by candidates during the election campaign itself are much more likely to be done on new media, where content can be sent out and reach followers instantly. The third factor examines candidates' online *presence;* namely how wide the audience which their social media posts may actually reach. The following hypotheses will be tested in this chapter:

H6a: Candidates using personal vote seeking new media will receive, on average, a larger vote share than those who do not, all other effects being equal.

H6b: More frequent use of social media by a candidate will result in a larger vote share, all other effects being equal.

H6c: Candidates with higher numbers of followers on social media will receive a larger vote share, all other effects equal.

To assess H6a (*personal vote*), the *PVI* scores used in earlier chapters, which apply to all candidates, will be used as the measurement. For H6b (*activity*) all but two candidates registered some use of social media. From the UK this left 76 candidates and in Japan all 73 candidates counted. For H6c (*presence*) data on follower numbers during the respective campaigns were collected from 63 candidates in the UK and 55 candidates in Japan. As set out in Chapter 2 both candidate *activity* and *presence* are expected to have a positive effect

on vote share and are important elements to consider when assessing the utility of new media in election campaigns. All candidates included in this study are taken from the existing sample groups from the UK and Japan.

UK and Japanese candidates are analysed separately in order to highlight the differences in country level campaigning. As well as examining the use of new media in both countries, the inclusion of additional variables will provide a useful insight into contemporary campaigning in both countries and may provide further examples of systemic differences (or even similarities) between the two. By finding how voters in each country respond to various campaign factors, this section may also provide an insight into why candidates choose to pursue personalized campaigns, or vice versa. For example, a negative relationship between vote share and candidate PVI scores in the UK, and the opposite in Japan, would imply that the voting public respond to different styles of campaigning, which in turn may help to explain the country level difference in campaign strategies found in earlier chapters. Relevant findings will be discussed in the results section of this chapter.

Descriptive details of offline variables

The additional, non-online factors included in the analysis will help to establish how influential online forms of campaigning are in increasing candidates' vote share. They act as control variables that help to put the impact of online independent impact in context. This section will explain in greater detail how data has been gathered concerning these variables and how they are operationalised in this analysis.

National party vote share: National party performance in the election is expected to be a key indicator of candidate success. This can certainly be expected in the UK, where there is a tradition of party-centered campaigning and studies have shown that national party performance can have a direct effect on constituency vote share, regardless of other factors such as incumbency or marginality (Denver et al, 2001; Pattie et al, 2015; Fisher et al 2016). Earlier chapters have already shown that in online campaigning, candidates' party affiliation is easily identified through their website design. Moreover, 23.03% of candidate social

media output was dedicated to national issues/party focused posts[60]. This is also true of traditional forms of campaigning, with campaign literature featuring the national party logo and often national party policies. National party vote share is used by pollsters and academics as a method of predicting the outcomes of constituency races. It is clear that the majority of voters in the UK still see party affiliation as a key factor in deciding who to vote for (Stanyer, 2008). National party performance is also playing an increasingly important role in Japanese elections. The LDP's success in 2005 was in large part due to the personal popularity of Junichiro Koizumi (Maeda, 2007). In turn the DPJ were able to win the first non-LDP majority in the post-war period in 2009 in large part due to public dissatisfaction with the LDP's time in national government. While Chapter 4 showed that candidates in Japan still put a primacy on personal campaigning, with 63.91% of social media on average devoted to this, the importance of the national party, it's popularity and performance in elections, cannot be disregarded as a key causal factor in constituency level results[61].

Party leader visits: A measure of importance that the national party puts on a given constituency is how much of the national party's resources are put into winning it. Outside of party resources such as money and volunteer coordination, personal endorsement by the party leader can also be a considerable asset in an election campaign. Leaders bring not just part of the party infrastructure with them, but also attract the attention of both local and national media and act as a motivating force for local activists (Carty & Eagles, 2005). For candidates fighting to get media attention for their campaign, the visit of a party leader can provide a boost to visibility and show that they are considered a priority by the national party. In this sense, while it is difficult to gather data on precisely how much direct resource support a candidate receives from the national party, the visit of the party leader acts as a proxy indicator. Constituencies where the party leader visits, can be considered an area of high importance and likely to result in a positive effect on candidate vote share (Middleton, 2014). This variable is dichotomous, with candidates registering a positive score for a party leader visit (1) and negative (0) for none. Data on leader visits has been taken from

[60] See chapter 6

[61] For the growing importance of party leadership in Japan see: Maeda (2007), Krauss and Pekkanen (2011) and academic expert Professor Yoshikadu Iwabuchi (through interview – Chapter 6)

candidate social media use on Twitter and Facebook. Where a candidate reports a visit by their party leader, this is taken as a positive case.

This variable in itself provides an interesting example of the utility of using online campaigning in research on electoral campaigning. As noted by candidates themselves in Chapter 6, social media campaigning provides a campaign narrative. Captured in real time, output provides researchers with a public record of campaign events. Through traditional media a researcher may have to find a published record of a party leader's diary or local media reports from constituencies across a given country. With visits recorded on social media, it is relatively simple to keep track of party leader visits. There remains the possibility that candidates may not document a party leader visit on social media, but with posts relating to campaign activity proving to be so prevalent amongst candidates in both the UK and Japan, it highly seems unlikely that such a potentially high profile media event would be ignored. As such candidates' social media accounts can be considered a reliable source from which to draw this kind of information.

Incumbency: It can be expected that candidates who have served as members of parliament will, in general, have an advantage over their challengers due to the name recognition and achievements in office they can use as part of their campaign platform. Having been established for at least one term in office, the incumbent also has a time advantage – they have had the opportunity to strengthen existing local organisation and had a full term in office to gather resources in preparation for the next election. It is also true that incumbency can have a significant effect on constituency vote share although it is debatable whether this effect is uniformly positive (Pattie et al, 2015 pg. 825; Fisher et al, 2016). *Incumbency* acts as a dichotomous variable. Amongst UK candidates included in the analysis there is an even split, with 39 candidates being incumbents and 39 being non-incumbents (challengers). In Japan, 34 candidates were incumbents, 39 non-incumbents.

Marginality: As the dependent variable is the change in candidate vote share since the last election, it is important to also control for the results of that election. This variable represents the degree to which a constituency can be described as a candidate or party "stronghold". This controls for the level of existing party support within a constituency. *Marginality* is based on the

performance of the candidate representing the same party at the previous election, 2010 in the UK and 2012 in Japan. In the case of Japanese candidates, there was comparatively little turnover of candidates between the 2012 and 2014 elections. Of the 73 candidates included in the sample, 70 ran in the same constituencies in both elections. In the UK candidate turnover was higher, with 41 out of 48 candidates running in both elections. There are two explanatory factors behind this difference. Firstly, the 2014 Japanese election was a "snap" election, leaving parties little time to go through a selection process for new candidates. Secondly, the propensity for candidates in Japan to have local organisations (such as *koenkai*) loyal to them rather than local party branches means that a losing candidate in one election remains an attractive candidate for party endorsement if they bring a strong, largely self-sufficient support base with them.

The following section will set out the analysis of the above variables, firstly through basic descriptive statistics relating to each one and subsequently will present the findings of regression analysis for both the UK (N78) and Japan (N73) individually. This will be followed by discussion of results from a comparative perspective and allow this chapter to establish the effect of new media use between the UK and Japan but also to make some conclusions in general relating to both new media, offline (or more traditional) modes of campaigning and the effects these factors have on vote share.

Details of descriptive statistics

Table 7.1: Descriptive statistics of variables included in this analysis

Dependent Variable	Japan	United Kingdom
Change in candidate vote share from previous election*	5.95% (LDP 5.48%; DPJ 7.36%; JIP 4.78%)	-4.86% (Conservative 2.33%; Labour 0.75%; Lib Dem: -16.41%)
Independent variable – online campaigning		
PVI score	.3313	-.3101
Number of followers	10850.98	5699.98
Number of posts	83.41 (5.91 per day)	242.38 (6.39 per day)
Independent variable – offline campaigning		
National party vote share	LDP 48.10%; DPJ 22.50%; JIP 8.20%	Conservative 36.90%; Labour 30.40%; Lib Dem: 7.90%
Party leader visit	0.21 (dichotomous scale)	0.36 (dichotomous scale)
Marginality	41 (out of 73 total)	38 (out of 78 total)
Incumbency	34 (out of 73 total)	39 (out of 78 total)

Note: Figures are mean values unless otherwise stated.
**Change in candidate vote share* mean percentages calculated from 151 candidates included in analysis

Table 7.1 shows the basic descriptive statistics of the variables under study in this chapter. There are several interesting points to note which add to the direct comparison of campaigning in Japan and the UK. Firstly, the average swing of vote share amongst candidates from the three major parties in Japan (5.95%) was higher than that of the UK, where the candidates made a net loss (-4.86%). The explanation behind this could be both country and election specific. In general, most seats in Japan can be categorised as LDP or

non-LDP. In 2014, where the DPJ were not the main challengers, the JIP were. There were very few races where both the incumbent and nearest challenger were not representing the LDP. This lessens the impact of third (or even fourth or fifth) parties and concentrates more of the vote on the top two vote winners (who made up the data sample for this study based on 2012 results). In the UK, while not common, there is a higher possibility for constituencies to see a "three horse race". In the Liberal Democrat vote collapsed, with traditionally smaller/nationalist parties making significant gains, which contributes to the overall negative percentage of change in candidate vote share. The overall vote share that the three major parties received in both countries may also go some way to explaining this. The *effective number of electoral parties* (at the electoral level) in the 2014 Japanese lower house election was 3.26, in comparison to 3.92 in the UK 2015 general election according to Michael Gallagher's Election indices database.[62] This again highlights how in the two elections under study, votes in Japan were more likely to be concentrated amongst the three major parties and as such their candidates more likely to see an overall increase in their vote share.

Turning to independent variables, Chapters 3-5 have gone through the use of new media in some detail, although it is worth noting considerable difference in *numbers of followers* between candidates in both countries. Japanese candidates (10850.98) have on average far more followers than UK candidates (5699.98). If H6c were to hold true, then it could be expected that Japanese candidates, having a greater presence on social media, would see a greater resulting benefit in their vote share. The *average posts per day* data implies the opposite, with UK candidates (6.39) utilising social media to a greater degree than Japanese candidates (5.91). Therefore, if H6b were accurate, it would be expected that UK candidates would derive the greater positive effect on their vote share from social media output (regardless of content).

Two of the offline variables contain interesting distinctions between UK and Japanese candidates. Firstly, based on the data gathered from social media, more candidates from the UK (36%) received visits from their party leader than those in Japan (21%). It is the case that candidates from both countries received additional visits from other senior members of the

[62] http://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/staff/michael_gallagher/ElSystems/Docts/ElectionIndices.pdf

party, and in the case of Japanese candidates, they were generally more inclined to publicise visits from other elected members of their party, either from neighboring districts or those who are members of the House of Councilors. However as noted above, party leader visits remain a strong indicator of party support for a candidate and are likely to gather much more in the way of media coverage, creating a (hypothetical) net benefit for the candidate. Secondly, it is clear that the Japanese candidates included in the sample base have, in general more experience as parliamentarians as a result of the dual PR list which sees some losing candidates in constituencies elected on the PR list and as such may receive a greater benefit to their vote share through having a more deeply entrenched grassroots organisation and personal brand built up over time within the constituency (or the prefectural/regional area as a whole). There are in addition more candidates in Japan who have experience in contesting electoral campaigns in comparison to the UK.

Results 1: Analysis of effects on candidate vote share in the UK and Japan

This section sets out the results from regression analysis, firstly from both Japanese and UK candidates separately, followed by and analysis of both countries together. Tests show that the variables included do not violate acceptable levels of multicollinearity and auto-correlation (see Appendix I). The results of separate analysis can be seen in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2: Effects of variables on candidate vote share change (OLS regression analysis)

	Japan (N73)	**Japan (N73)**	**United Kingdom (N78)**	**United Kingdom (N78)**

	Model 1 (Coefficient)	Model 2 (Coefficient)	Model 1 (Coefficient)	Model 2 (Coefficient)
Independent variable – online campaigning				
PVI score	.333*	.329**	-.055	.068
Number of followers	-.026	-.020	.075	.198
Number of posts	.009	.014	-.007	-.093
Independent variable – offline campaigning				
National party vote share		.067		7.57*
Party leader visit		-.122		.004
Marginality		-.103		-.198**
Incumbency		.080		.114
Model R^2 (adjusted)	.062***	.012	0.44	0.573*

Note: - *=significant at <0.01, **=significant at <0.05, ***significant at <0.1
Results of multiple regression. Values = Standardised β. Dependent variable = *change in candidate vote share from previous election (constituency)*. Model 1 includes only online independent variables. Model 2 includes the effect of offline campaigning

For Japanese candidates only one of the variables has significant effect on vote share. Model 1 has been constructed to assess online campaign factors only and has a R^2 value of .062 (significant at <.10). Under Model 1 it is candidates' *PVI score* which is the strongest explanatory variable. The standardized coefficient (β = .333) is the strongest predictor variable amongst the three online variables under study. Moreover, it is significant at the <.01 level, the only one of the predictor variables to reach a level of significance. In relation to the stated hypotheses, there is strong support for H6a from amongst Japanese candidates showing that there is a positive relationship between candidates pursuing the personal vote and winning votes, something which may be expected of candidates from Japan. *Number of followers* displays a slight negative impact (β = -.026) but is not significant in Model 1. The *number of posts* variable (β = .009) also has no significant effect on vote

share and there is an indication, amongst Japanese candidates at least, that online *activity* and online *presence* do not translate into votes.

Model 2 includes variables which relate to offline (more traditional) forms of campaigning, alongside the online based variables. In doing so the R^2 value of the model changes to .014, a considerable decrease from Model 1. Including offline variables results makes almost no change on the effect of candidates *PVI score*. The value of candidates' *PVI score* drops (β = .229) showing a very slight decrease in the effect of personal vote seeking on vote share but that this effect still remains significant shows the important role personal vote seeking plays in Japanese campaigning, especially in comparison to other variables included in the model. With offline variables included into the analysis, online *presence*, of which candidates' social media following is taken as an indicator, also sees little change (β = -.020). The *number of posts* coefficient increases slightly (to β = .014) and while the change is nominal, taking model 2 into account, it can be safely concluded that social media *activity* has little impact on vote share. Model 2 provides little concrete evidence about the importance of offline forms of campaigning. *Incumbency* (β = .080) and *national party vote share* (β = .067). are independent variables which have a positive, but non-significant, effect on vote share. The very minor effect of *national party vote share* is interesting in itself though, confirming earlier assertions about the importance of candidate appeal over that of the party. Model 2 also shows a negative effect from the two remaining offline variables, *party leader visit* (β = -.122) and *marginality* (β = -.103) but also to a non-significant degree.

In regards to UK candidates, Model 1 provides contrasting results although neither the online variables by themselves or the overall model itself (R^2 = .044) provide significant data. What can be said, is that the general effect of results in comparison to Japanese candidates is *opposite*. Both *PVI score* (β = -.055) and *number of posts* (β = -007) have a negative effect on candidate vote share whereas *number of followers* (β = .075) is positive.

When taking offline factors into consideration, the effect of online campaigning is still limited although there is noticeable change in the effect of online variables. Model 2 has a value of R^2=.573, significant at <.01. Somewhat surprisingly, Model 2 eliminates the negative effect which *PVI score* has on vote share (β = -.068) but not to significant degree. H6b is the one hypothesis which can be concretely rejected, as Model 2 actually increases the negative

effect of the *number of posts* (β = -.093), although again this is not at a significant level. Offline variables provide a much stronger explanation of candidates' ability to win votes. The most significant of these, and by far the most important to the overall model, is *national party vote share* (β =.757). Considering the campaign tradition of the UK, that voters select candidates based upon party identification, it is not surprising that success for candidates at the constituency level relies on the performance of the national party to such degree and combined with the relative unimportance of this variable amongst Japanese candidates, proves the validity of H1. *Marginality* also provided a significant contribution to candidates' performance (β = -.198) showing greater gains for candidates in non-marginal seats. The other variables included in Model 2 did not provide any significant results, although of interest is the fact that both *incumbency* (β = .114) *party leader visit* (β = .004) had moderate, positive effects on candidate vote share.

Discussion of separate country analysis

This section will conduct a clearer comparison between UK and Japanese candidates by examining in detail the results of regression analysis from a comparative perspective and will argue that the case for differences between the results from both countries rests primarily on the candidate-centred vs party-centred typologies which have already been established. This section will continue by examining each of the significant variables under study in this chapter from a comparative perspective.

Online variables

PVI Score

Tests on candidate *PVI score* confirm conclusions made from previous chapters. It is has been established that Japanese candidates, especially in comparison to UK candidates, will be likely to pursue the personal vote and that this behaviour is being mirrored on new media. It is therefore a logical assumption that the voting public will respond positively to candidates who are willing to campaign on a personal platform. This is certainly the case in Japan, where this effect is both consistently positive and plays a significant role in candidates' electoral appeal. In the UK however, there is evidence that personal vote seeking strategies may actually have a negative effect on vote share, although it is safer to

say that there is certainly no benefit to it. While there is no existing evidence that personal vote seeking in the UK could be detrimental to a candidate's campaign, it is clear that, in terms of branding, the image of the national party continues to play an overwhelmingly significant role. It may be no coincidence that amongst the candidates with the highest *PVI score* in the UK, many were Liberal Democrats (see Chapter 3). As a great deal of candidate new media output is primarily focused on image/brand construction, there is a serious issue that faces candidate campaign strategy in the UK. If the results from Table 7.2 hold true in future elections, it can be argued that personal vote seeking in the UK is an uncertain campaign strategy at best and perhaps even irrelevant. Candidates' willingness to pursue the personal vote is highly reliant on the performance of the national party (see Chapter 6). In these situations, it makes sense for candidates to focus on personal vote campaign tactics. Where the national party brand is not stigmatised to a significant degree, there appears to be little benefit for candidates to do the same. This is reinforced by the results from Table 7.2, which show that personal vote seeking does not have a great deal of electoral benefit. Regardless of the potential of new media to facilitate a greater pursuit of the personal vote, there is no evidence to suggest that online campaigning in and of itself will encourage candidates to adopt more personalised strategies where it makes no strategic sense to do so.

Number of followers

Table 7.2 shows, at least in terms of significance, there is a stark difference in which factors play a decisive role in candidate vote share amongst Japanese and UK candidates. H6c, relating to the effect of followers, is designed to establish the importance of *presence* on social media. As explained above, it is not only direct followers that are exposed to candidate posts. Where followers interact with a candidate's post, through commenting, liking or sharing, this also becomes potentially visible to the followers own network of "friends". It would be expected that this effect would be greater in Japan, where candidates have almost double the number of social media followers than in the UK (see Table 7.2). When taking other campaign factors into account (Model 2) this is not found to be the case. In fact it is suggested, but unconfirmed, that more followers equals less votes in Japan. As *number of followers* could also be seen as a substitute for experience, as more experienced

lawmakers are likely to have more followers, certainly in comparison to those who have never held office before, there is little evidence that either followers or experience is an automatic benefit for candidates. The opposite is true in the UK, where the expected advantage benefits of having more followers plays out. There is no seemingly logical explanation for why there should be opposite findings in between the two countries, and the finding that greater online *presence* is not beneficial to candidates in Japan is somewhat surprising.

Number of posts

If a tree falls in the woods and nobody is there to hear it, does it make a sound? Or to put it in a more appropriate way, if candidates have a high rate of activity on social media, does it make any difference to their campaign if they have few followers? The answer, at least in the latter case, would appear to be no. Certainly in the case of Japanese and UK candidates, more posts do not equal more votes to any appreciable degree. What seems more likely is that, at least amongst candidates who may view social media as being a campaign "equalizer", the utilisation of social media, in and of itself does not result in any benefit to vote share. Conclusively we can say that posts do not equal votes (H6b).

It appears as though a successful online campaign strategy differs markedly between Japan and the UK. In Japan, it is clear that pursuing the personal vote is the best use of new media platforms. For Japanese candidates H6a is a logical and proven hypothesis. In the UK, having a significant online *presence*, an audience to actually see what the candidate is communicating can be of benefit. Of course, this benefit is most keenly felt by candidates who have the standing/name value in order to attract a significant number of users. If a candidate has the audience, pursuing the personal vote can have a positive effect and where this is not the case, and perhaps why the results did not reach a level of significance, the "drag" effect of the UK Liberal Democrat party's national performance may well be an explanatory factor. Can a high level of *activity* actually harm a campaign? This point is not clear, but it does show that rather than trying to prove how active they are on social media and trying to engage with every issue that may be considered relevant to their campaign, candidates are better off targeting their new media use where it may have more impact, content which will differ based on candidate experience and inevitably, the strength of the

national party. What is evident once again, is that traditional voting behaviour, in regards to the importance of the personal vote, continuing to be a key factor in Japan, while not noticeably so in the UK.

Offline campaigning

The results from Table 7.2 allow for a deeper understanding of differences in campaigning between the UK and Japan. How offline factors effect online campaigning has been discussed above. This section will take a brief, but important detour from the main subject of research by taking a closer look at offline campaigning. In doing so it will reinforce why different campaign factors play significant roles in both countries. This provides not just a valuable insight into campaign behaviour but, by extension, explains why Japanese candidates' use of new media is much more likely to be personal vote focused.

In terms of positive and negative effects on vote share, Table 7.2 some clear differences between both sets of candidates. Amongst candidates from both countries *national party vote share* was a positively related to candidate vote share. However, that this was much more pronounced amongst UK candidates (and of a high significance level) goes some way to explaining the expected divide in the way candidates use new media. The importance of national party vote can best be highlighted by the losses incurred by the Liberal Democrats, which lost 15.1% of vote share and saw its number of seats in Parliament drop from 57 to 8. For most Liberal Democrat candidates, many of whom embraced personal vote focused campaigning in 2015 (see Chapter 3) there was no way to overcome the effect of the national parties decline. Conversely in Japan, while the DPJ's SMD vote share declined by 0.31% between 2012 and 2014, the party was able to *gain* 11 constituency seats in 2014. In this case, candidate performance went some way to overcoming low levels of support for the national party. As candidates' success is, to varying degrees, tied in to the performance of the national party to such an extent, it is only natural that candidates will campaign in ways which highlight their relationship with their party and that this will, as we have seen, be mirrored in new media use. That *party leader visits* have a different effect on both UK and Japanese candidates is therefore not surprising. The negative relation between this and vote share amongst candidates in Japan shows that although the role and public approval of

the party leader is becoming more important, it has yet to become a decisive factor and that leader endorsement, though heavily publicised, may not be the boon that candidates hope it will be, at least in comparison to other campaign factors. Perhaps the findings also raise a question over the direct value of party leaders coming to campaign in constituencies. Certainly, their performance on a national level has proven to be important but at the constituency level, this is not seen to be the case. Perhaps the true value lies in the indirect effect that these visits have on local campaigns – namely to rally the troops and encourage locally based campaign teams, an effect which is sadly outside the remit of this study.

Incumbents in both countries experienced a minor, and also not significant benefit. What can be said for candidates from both countries is that incumbency, and the advantages in name recognition and organisation that status may bestow, are not enough to ensure candidates increase vote share at subsequent elections. In Japan especially, this may can be seen in the loss of vote share which candidates from both the DPJ and JIP suffered in 2014. Constituencies which were considered safe, became less so, although this did not negatively affect overall seat share of the DPJ and JIP in the elected parliament to any great degree. In Japan, the significance of vote change from the previous election was the most important determinate in candidate performance. This may be a result of rebalancing after the landslide victory of the LDP in 2012. Indeed, while the 2014 election was considered a success, with its overall majority increasing thanks to the help of its coalition partner Komeito, the LDP actually lost three seats overall, while the DPJ gained 11.

Where levels of significance lay tell the real story behind differences in campaigning in both countries. In the UK, it is national party performance which has the greatest effect on candidate performance. In Japan, it is personal level variables, including social media, which play the biggest part confirming earlier assumptions about campaign styles in both countries. The stronger and more positive effects of new media campaigning in Japan point to new media being a campaign tool which is more likely to be utilised effectively when candidates are pursuing the personal vote. It is questionable whether tailoring their new media output to focus more on the personal vote would actually pay dividends at the ballot box for UK candidates. The comparatively high percentage of social media output which is dedicated to national issues and party promotion, often in the form of retweeting/sharing

posts made by the national party shows UK candidates are much more likely to use new media campaigning to amplify the attraction to voters of the national party. While candidates in the UK may seek to pursue the personal vote when their party is not performing well nationally, there is no evidence that this works as a campaign strategy. Results from this study reaffirm earlier assumptions that in Japan, the personal vote continues to play a decisive factor in successful election campaigning, whereas in the UK the party brand is, in most cases, the key variable. This can be put in to context by examining examples of how successful particular personal vote seeking strategies were in the UK and Japan.

As noted above, the DPJ were able to gain 11 seats in single constituency races despite a decrease in national vote share. DPJ candidate Seiji Osaka (Hokkaido 8) was a challenger in a non-marginal seat. He had been the incumbent in the previous (2012) election but lost to an LDP challenger. To win back his seat in 2014 Osaka needed to overcome the 13.4% majority of LDP candidate, Kazuo Maeda, and to overcome the DPJ's poor national rating. He was able to do this through highly localised campaigning. Amongst Japanese candidates his *PVI score* was 0.08, putting him in the top half of personal vote seeking candidates but it is his social media campaign in particular which can be classed as being strongly personal vote focused. On social media *local policy, personal* and *campaign activity* posts made up 85.09% of all social media output. His status as a former lawmaker in addition to being a former Mayor in his constituency area complimented his personal vote strengths. This strong local presence was evidenced by the fact he had 53487 total followers on social media, one of the highest amongst all Japanese candidates in the study. Osaka's success in retaking the seat, with a +13.2% vote swing, against the national party decrease in vote share highlights not just the importance of the personal vote in Japanese elections, but also adds support to the findings in Table 7.2, that *PVI score* and *total number of followers* has a significant positive effect on candidates' vote share.

The opposite effect can be seen in the UK, especially amongst Liberal Democrat candidates. One example was that of Liberal Democrat incumbent Dan Rogerson (North Cornwall). Rogerson was a two-time incumbent in a seat which the Liberal Democrats had held for the past five elections and was defending a 6.4% majority in 2015. Amongst UK candidates, Rogerson had the third highest *PVI score* (2.43), personal vote focused social media content

made up 85.69% of his output and his website featured almost all of the personal vote functions, including volunteer sign-up, donations and a localised manifesto. However, his personal vote focused campaign was not enough to counteract the sharp decrease in national party popularity. Rogerson suffered a -16.8% swing in vote share, which was in fact more than the national party (-15.2%). This example supports he evidence from Table 7.2 and proves highlights two aspects of campaigning in the UK. Firstly, there is little incentive for candidates to pursue the personal vote. While there are constituency specific exceptions, in general there is little benefit to it. Secondly, the effect of national party performance continues to outweigh any potential benefit personal vote focused campaigning may bestow.

Results 2 - Analysis of candidates combined from UK and Japan

This section will make a brief examination of regression analysis conducted on all candidates from both countries pooled as a single group. This excludes cross country analysis, but by increasing the number of cases in a single test it provides more general information on the impact of some variables. For the sake of brevity, this section will only discuss variables which are of a statistical significance.

Table 7.3: Effects of selected variables on candidate vote share change (OLS regression analysis) for both UK and Japanese candidates combined

	Model 1 (Coefficient)	**Model 2 (Coefficient)**
Independent variable – online campaigning		
PVI score	.173***	.203**
Number of followers	.103	.178**
Number of posts	.088	.062
Independent variable – offline campaigning		
National party vote share		.430*
Party leader visit		.063

Marginality		-.170**
Incumbency		.181**
Model R^2 (adjusted)	.024	.237*

Note: - *=significant at <0.01, **=significant at <0.05, ***significant at <0.1. N=151
Results of multiple regression. Values = Standardised β. Dependent variable = *change in candidate vote share from previous election*. Model 1 includes only online independent variables. Model 2 measures for the effect of offline campaigning. Models are based on the same parameters as the preceding section.

Table 7.3 shows that *PVI score* can, when taken only as part of model which includes online factors, have a significantly positive effect on candidate vote share and that this is strengthened when including Model 2 variables (Model 1: β = .173, Model 2: β = .203). The consistently positive coefficient which relates to candidates *PVI score* indicates that there is a benefit in perusing personal vote strategies online gives support to H6a. Perhaps most interestingly the effect of *followers* (in Model 2: β =.178) becomes a significant online predictor variable under Model 2, supporting H6c. The insignificant effect of *posts per day* remains the same across both models.

Offline campaign variables provide two points worth covering. Firstly, when candidates are combined together national party performance, seen in *national party vote share* (β = .430) has a significant positive effect on candidates vote share, most obviously explained by the high effect seen amongst UK candidates. This shows that the popularity of the national party continues to play a vital part in candidate performance, and as argued earlier, where national party performance is either at the more extreme levels of being good or bad (for example the Liberal Democrats in 2015 or the DPJ in 2012) there may be little that individual candidates can do to resist the tide of public sentiment.

The effect of having more candidates included has increased the importance of candidate *presence* on social media making the *followers* variable both positive and significant in Model 2. To see how this develops future enquiry would benefit from extending the sample size and including candidates from other countries/systems into the mix in order to see how valuable personal vote seeking is in online campaigning.

Conclusion

The data presented in this chapter allows this study to reach conclusions regarding both new media use by candidates and how campaigning differs in the UK and Japan. The key conclusion is that personal vote seeking has a mixed effect, but clearly it does play a significant part in the success of Japanese candidates thus reinforcing the idea that country level campaign styles are being mirrored in social media campaigning. These differences are highlighted by the addition of other variables which show how important the influence of the national party brand is on candidate success in the UK when compared with Japan. In the case of Japanese candidates, there is consistent support for H6a, that personal vote seeking behavior will pay dividends at the ballot box. This cannot be said of UK candidates, where party factors clearly still play a decisive role. It can be argued that *presence* also has an effect on candidate vote share from amongst online factors studied in both countries. As such there is some support for H6c, that more followers may well lead to more votes. Candidates wishing to get the biggest benefit from using new media need to attract followers in the first instance. Online presence may of course be affected by other measures but these are likely to be related to an individual candidate's personal standing. Candidates with more name value will have more followers. Thus, in both countries, although more so in Japan, the personal popularity and strength of image is a vital factor in candidates' success and their ability to use new media effectively. H6b, relating to candidate *activity*, can be rejected outright. There is no evidence that more posts equal more votes. In order to maximize benefits which new media campaigning can bestow upon a candidate, it is clear that *how* it is used, is much more important than *how much* it is used. In Japan, social media can effectively be used to promote the personal vote of individual candidates; in the UK, it is more effective in promoting the appeal of the national parties.

These findings have helped to reinforce conclusions made in earlier chapters and provided some insight into what constituents a successful new media campaign in both countries. That candidates will look towards new media more in the future seems inevitable. Whether it can be utilised in an effective way will continue to depend on a number of campaigning factors highlighted in this chapter.

Chapter 8

Summary of findings and concluding remarks

Central research question: New media and candidate independence

The central research question set out in Chapter 1 was designed to establish how new media is facilitating the creation of independent campaigning amongst constituency candidates, making them less reliant on the national party. The key assumption which underpins this study is that new media, by its nature, allows candidates to pursue independent campaigning. The results of this study have shown that this assumption is entirely justified. Candidate interviews confirmed that in the vast majority of cases, the national party has no control over the way in which candidates use online campaigning. As such, candidates are left to conduct their online campaigns autonomously. In addition, the focus on candidates' image in social media output, shows that they are using new media to promote themselves and their local activities rather than devoting all their campaign output to following or promoting the national party/leader. It has been established that new media does allow for more personalised and independent campaigning. While this is the case, this study has also shown that whether candidates choose to utilise online campaigning in this way still depends on political realities. There is arguably a greater emphasis put on candidates as the figureheads of their own campaigns, but there is no evidence that use of new media automatically causes candidate to run more independent campaigns.

In answering the core research question, there are several key findings which allow us to better understand how new media is being used by constituency candidates and how this can facilitate greater candidate independence.

How new media is used in constituency campaigning: First and foremost, new media is used by candidates to create the image of an active, locally focused campaign, centred on them, rather than their national party. This is achieved in the most part through uploaded photographs and videos on social media accounts. The strategy behind these posts is multifaceted. Firstly, they allow candidates to show that they and their team are putting in a concerted campaigning effort in their constituency. In the UK, this takes the form of door to door canvassing, in Japan street and train station speeches. While the methods of campaigning are different, they communicate the same message through social media; that the candidate is in touch with the local community.

Connected to the first point, these posts often highlight the specific areas which candidates visit. One of the most common interactions candidates have online with members of the public during campaigns is concerned with whether the candidates have visited a voter's town, village or even street of residence. Voters will complain publicly via social media if they believe they are being ignored by a candidate. Social media allows candidates to document where they have been and prove that they have been active in their local area, attempting to come into contact with as many people as possible. While the results from Chapters 3-5 show that personal vote seeking new media use is more common amongst experienced candidates, it also offers a platform for first time candidates to create an identity. Regardless of whether the campaign system is focused on the party or the candidate, it is important for candidates to have some kind of personal identity independent of the party. For candidates in constituencies with little local party organisation, limited funding and facing an incumbent with a comfortable majority, online platforms provide a way for candidates to present themselves, promote their campaign and interact with the electorate.

In addition to image promotion, new media is being used by candidates to enhance their local campaign organisation, by utilising volunteer and donation features on websites and by using social media as a campaign noticeboard. Interviews with candidates in Chapter 6 show there is little evidence that simply having these website features is as yet paying much in the way of dividends. Certainly, they are not seen by candidates as being an alternative to established, offline, forms of fundraising and volunteer mobilisation. But candidates are at least trying/experimenting with these organisational functions and their use by candidates is becoming the norm. The relative high frequency of use, especially amongst third-party candidates, shows that new media is being recognised as a potential alternative source of income and manpower to the national party, that if utilised successfully, will increase candidate independence.

Examples of candidates not using high degrees of personal image promotion were of course present. In these cases, candidates were much more likely to devote new media use to promoting the national party, the party leader and national policies. For these candidates, website functionality was very basic and websites were not used in a way which could enhance the organisational strength of the local campaign. Social media output, instead of

being focused on image promotion of the candidate, was primarily used to relay messages from the national party, make comments on national policies or the national campaign and discuss the performance of party leaders in either a positive or negative light.

In summary, when looking at how new media gives candidates independence from the national party, it is clear that social media in particular gives candidates a way to build and promote a personal brand rather than just relying on party affiliation. However, we must take care not to exaggerate the impact of social media in this regard. The degree to which candidates are doing this is dependent on several factors, of which traditional campaign behaviour is the most important. There is no evidence of new media changing candidate behaviour in a party-centred campaign system (UK) to the degree that would see candidates pursuing a personal vote to the same extent as those in a candidate-centred system (Japan). This study shows that the "effects" of new media on candidate behaviour, at least in relation to conducting more independent campaigns are in fact very slight. It is in fact campaign traditions which have an effect on how candidates use new media and not vice versa. New media may well have been embraced by politicians, with great gusto by some, but is not, as of yet, a decisive factor in convincing candidates to pursue independent campaigning to a greater degree than has been previously apparent. Any hypothesised, revolutionary change brought about by new media has not, at least in the case of constituency campaigning, materialised.

Country level differences: We have seen how new media is being used by candidates. What then is the main driver behind candidates' willingness to use online campaigning to pursue the personal vote? The reason for comparing campaigning in the UK and Japan is to establish whether new media encourages candidates to pursue more personalised campaigns and whether existing campaign behaviour, seen in established, offline modes of campaigning, have an impact on how relatively new campaign tools are utilised. Results from Chapters 3-5 show that campaign traditions continue to have a determining effect on how candidates campaign and how willing they are to pursue independent campaign strategies. Candidates in Japan continue to pursue the personal vote to a much greater degree than those in the UK. While high levels of campaign personalisation, independent organisation and localised policy promotion does happen amongst UK candidates, it is significantly lower than their Japanese counterparts. In the case of Japanese candidates,

personalisation is done almost at the complete expense of policy discussion, highlighting another notable difference between them and UK candidates. A key finding of this study is that while new media does undoubtedly provide candidates with more options in how to campaign, it is not, as yet, proving to be a game-changer in terms of how candidates choose to campaign.

How websites are used provides an interesting example of country level differences. Japanese websites are geared towards the putting the candidate front and centre, with obvious links to party affiliation seemingly optional. In the UK, websites are clearly designed based on party affiliation. In Japan, the donate function is much more common than in the UK (and is usually connected to a candidate's own supporter group), while in the UK the volunteer function is more prevalent. These different features reinforce the different styles of campaigning in both countries (see Chapter 5).

Other factors which influence new media use: Chapters 3 and 4 showed that non-country level factors also affect the way in which candidates use new media and to what degree they pursue the personal vote. In general, candidates are more likely to pursue the personal vote through new media if they are incumbents. They are less likely to pursue the personal vote if they are first time or young candidates or if they represent the party in power at the time of election. Candidate interviews in Chapter 6 support and add another dimension to these findings; that of party popularity. Third party candidates (from the Liberal Democrats and JIP) and those from the DPJ stated that the relative unpopularity of their parties was a major contributory factor behind their pursuit of the personal vote. This was necessary both to overcome a negative national party image and to try and overcome the advantage held by candidates supported by a better resourced governing party. In the context of existing personal vote literature these findings are not surprising. It has been established that *party* (Burnham, 1975; (Russell & Fieldhouse, 2005, Primo & Snyder, 2010) *incumbency* (Miller & Stokes, 1966; Curtice & Steed, 1980; Golden, 2003; McAllister, 2015) and *experience* (Burnham, 1975; Cain, Ferejon and Fiorina 1978) and determining factors behind personal vote seeking behaviour. This study confirms that behavioural factors which influence personal vote seeking have transfered over to online campaigning. This brings into question

how much of a motivating factor new media is in encouraging candidates to pursue the personal vote.

Sub-research question: The effectiveness of pursuing the personal vote through new media

The advantage of pursuing the personal vote in electoral systems featuring single member districts is well established (Carey & Shugart, 1995; Stanyer, 2008; Zittel, 2015). At the same time there are studies which show a positive relationship between electoral success and the use of new media media (Hansen & Kosiara-Pedersen 2014; Boulianne 2015; Jacobs & Spierings 2016). This study adds to both fields of enquiry with findings from Chapter 7. The effect of personal vote seeking new media use, as expected, is dependent on country level factors. Comparatively, there is a distinct advantage for Japanese candidate pursuing the personal vote, while no such advantage exists in the UK, where party level factors still have the greatest effect on a candidate's chances of success. It should be noted though that while, in a comparative sense, personal vote seeking behaviour in the UK is not as beneficial to vote share as in Japan, this is not to say that personal vote seeking behaviour is a strategy which never pays dividends. At least in the UK, studies have found a positive relationship between a strong personal vote based on factors such as candidate experience (Middleton, 2018) and higher levels of campaign intensity during election campaigns which focus on the candidate (Fisher et al, 2011). Using only new media output to judge the degree to which candidates pursue the personal vote obviously has limitations when taken as part of a single country study. As evidence of a systemic difference between the UK and Japan the findings have validity. The evidence on the UK alone is not strong enough to draw a definitive conclusion as to whether personal vote seeking behavior is, in general, of benefit to constituency candidates. In the case of Japan, evidence from Chapter 7 shows the continuing importance of personal vote seeking behavior in winning votes, again supporting the conclusion that traditional campaign practices continue to determine campaign behavior, rather than technological advances. In both countries however, online *presence* was a clear contributory factor. As such a clear advantage lies with more experienced, higher profile candidates who are able to attract more followers in the first place. It is intuitive, but Chapter 7 shows that in order to positively utilise social media, users must have a wide enough base to be able communicate with, on a personal level in Japan and on

a party representative level in the UK. This again points to an advantage held by incumbent and more established candidates who have served multiple terms in office. These are the candidates most likely to be able to attract followers. Online platforms may be a way for candidates with little name value or experience to build a profile, but the advantage in winning actual votes still lies with better recognised, better resourced and better established candidates.

Achievements and limitations of this study

Research conducted in this study adds to existing knowledge in the areas of the personal vote, online campaigning and cross-country analysis between the UK and Japan (and by extension party vs candidate style models of campaigning). A summary of its contribution is set out below.

Contribution to the understanding of personal vote seeking behaviour

By utilising the personal vote seeking behaviour as a measure of candidate independence, this study contributes to the understanding of how online technologies have affected personal vote seeking behaviour. Findings from this study broadly support established personal vote theory. The reasons why candidates pursue the personal vote and how they do so are largely the same when campaigning through new media as they have been using more traditional, offline forms of campaigning. The core findings of this two-country comparison prove that, as expected, campaign traditions play the greatest factor in why candidates pursue the personal vote. However, other factors linked to existing literature also play a significant role.

It can be expected that the performance and popularity of the national party will affect the degree to which candidates pursue the personal vote (Burnham, 1975; Carey & Shugart, 1995; Russell & Fieldhouse, 2005). Chapters 3 and 4, and especially candidate interviews in Chapter 6, confirm that this is indeed the case when examining online campaigning. Very simply, candidates representing weak parties will seek the personal vote in order to

counteract the perceived unpopularity of the national party. Online campaigning is not changing candidate behaviour, although it is adding new weapons to their armouries.

The area of personal vote theory which candidates seem to have embraced the most is that of *visibility*. Personal vote literature has continuously stressed the importance of candidates being visible to the public, to be seen in action, not simply a name next to a party symbol on a ballot paper (Miller and Stokes, 1966; Curtice 1995; Evans, 2011). The high proportion of candidates social media use which relates to this, seen through *campaign activity* posts shows that many candidates have embraced this strategy in their online campaigning. For many, if not the majority of candidates, new media is being used to enhance their own visibility. It should be noted that this rarely takes the form of candidates *personalising* their campaigns i.e. talking about themselves outside the realm of politics or attempting to relate to voters on a personal level, especially amongst Japanese candidates. It is more the case that candidates highlight their *political visibility* as potential members of parliament and people wishing to work on behalf of their constituency.

In addition, the expectation that incumbent candidates, having a record in office and tangible achievements to highlight in their campaigning, will be more likely to do this (see Norton and Wood, 1993), is borne out in the results in Chapters 3 and 4, which show that incumbent candidates in both the UK and Japan are more likely to pursue the personal vote (to a statistically significant degree in the UK)

Understanding online campaigning

In line with findings from pre-Web 2.0 studies, candidate websites, regardless of country, electoral system or campaigning style, continue to be used primarily for top-down communication from candidates to voters (Stromer, 2000; Hooghe and Vissers, 2009; Sudlich, 2013). This study also confirms that social media is allowing candidates to pursue greater levels of personalisation (see Zittel & Gschwend, 2008; Hermans & Vergeer, 2013; Thamm & Bleier, 2013; Kaczmirek, 2014). The paper by Zittel and Gschwend (2008) was highlighted in Chapter 1 as being particulary influential for the methodological framework of this study. It bears repeating that the authors concluded that while candidates in Germany

were still campaigning in SMD constituencies on a party platform, not all candidates were willing to rely solely on the party brand or party assited organisation. This study confirms that the same is happening in the UK (and naturally in Japan too). Candidates are turning their backs on the party label when it is unlikely to pay electoral dividends; in such case, high levels of candidate personalisation can be observed (see Chapters 3 and 4).

One of the key claims to originality this thesis makes is its study of multiple online platforms being used in the same election. Chapter 1 sets out how studies of online campaigning have most commonly been divided between early studies of candidate websites, which are less common with the advent of new media, and social media platforms, most commonly Twitter and Facebook, which are themselves studied separately. It was the intent of this study to assess candidates' overall new media strategy. Not only has it achieved this, but by examining data from three separate online platforms it has been able to better explain what candidates are using different platforms for.

When looking at the specific use of different platforms, further conclusions can be drawn. Candidate websites act as a gateway where voters can find information about candidates and at least register interest in their activities/campaign, but are not places which encourage interaction between candidates and voters. On Twitter and Facebook candidates do interact with voters, often to refute negative claims and debate with users supporting a candidate from an alternative party. This kind of interaction is mostly found on Twitter and shows that this platform is perhaps the one which is most likely to lead to direct engagement between candidates and voters. As stated in earlier chapters, Facebook is more likely to feature longer and more detailed posts, designed to provide information on a candidate's activities rather than encourage debate, with a more localised audience in mind. Chapter 7 shows there is no discernible preference for one platform over another. Clearly, in terms of developing an overall new media strategy, candidates recognise that different platforms have different strengths and weaknesses and are best utilised for different tasks. To what extent candidates put an effort into using each platform depends on what style of campaigning they wish to pursue and to what degree they wish to interact directly with voters. Table 8.1 below gives an overview of different strategies commonly followed by candidates depending on their typology (not including *country* level differences):

Table 8.1: Summary of candidate behavior based on new media strategy

	Style of campaigning	
	Personal vote focused	**Party vote focused**
Candidate type	-Incumbent -Multiple-terms served, -Third/weak party	-Challenger -Young/first-time candidate -Ruling party or major opposition (in UK)
Website strategy	-High levels of extra content (incumbent activity, personalised manifesto) -Personalised biography -Organisational functions (*volunteer, donate*)	-Limited content -Link to or downloadable party manifesto -Prominent placement of party imagery (logo, leader etc.)
Social media strategy	-Focus on candidates' campaign activity -Promotion of local policies/discussion of local issues	-Focus on party leader's activities (leader debates, campaign appearances) -High percentage of social media output given to retweets/shares of national party messages

Comparison of campaigning in the UK and Japan

Perhaps the strongest claim to originality that this study makes is that it is the first direct comparison on the subject of election campaigning between the United Kingdom and Japan. A comparison between two affluent, politically stable, liberal democracies allows us to determine the effect of recent electoral history and how this results in different *styles* of campaigning. The high levels of personal vote-seeking behaviour amongst Japanese candidates show that the legacy of post-war one-party dominance still shapes campaign behaviour. From 1955 until 2009, no other party except from the LDP, which greatly benefitted from the SNTV voting system used prior to 1996, won a majority in the Japanese parliament. Aside from the LDP, a strong, stable, ideologically mainstream party has not been able to establish itself as a long-term viable alternative governing party, as the Labour party did in the UK from 1945. The relative weakness of political parties in Japan continues

now, with the largest opposition party, the now reformed Democratic Party, polling in single figures. As such, the rationale behind the differing degrees to which candidates in both countries are willing to pursue the personal vote is readily apparent.

This is seen in the way in which candidates campaign both online and offline. Online, Japanese candidates focus on their personal image and activities. Discussion of policy, outside of rural candidates, is rare and often limited to those representing opposition parties making criticism of the government. The same behaviour is common amongst UK candidates, but is more likely to include details on their own party's policies. UK candidates devoted a comparatively large amount of social media output to promoting the party leader, their activities and national party policy statements. In Japan, unless the party leader came to visit a candidate's constituency, there was little talk about them either positively or negatively. Leader appearances and activities were largely ignored by candidates.

This study also provided a comparative insight into offline campaign conduct (documented through new media use). For UK candidates, campaigning is still based upon door-to-door canvassing and attending local hustings. For Japanese candidates, the core of their campaigning takes the form of street speeches and shaking hands with commuters at train stations, and attending meetings of support groups. This marks an interesting contradiction between campaign styles and how close candidates actually are to voters. While Japanese campaigning puts more emphasis on the candidate rather than the party, it appears as though it is UK candidates who are able to make more of a "personal" connection with voters. The majority of candidate-voter interaction in the UK comes through doorstep/public meetings where candidates or their campaign team directly engage with voters, talking about relevant issues. In Japan, the majority of candidate-voter interaction takes place through speeches, which involves the candidate talking at, rather than to voters. This lack of direct accessibility is evident even with elected members of parliament, whose email addresses are often not readily available to the public (see Chapter 6). While new media does facilitate a greater degree of *personalisation*, complementing existing campaigning in Japan, this does not appear to be resulting in making Japanese candidates more *accessible* to the public. It is UK candidates who appear to be much more accessible to the public through both online and offline campaigning. UK campaigns make an effort to reach out to voters, while Japanese campaigns appear to focus on mobilising the base

(through speeches and supporter meetings) and just making sure the candidate's name is out in the public domain. This is not to say Japanese candidates ignore voters. The equivalent to door to door campaigning in Japan is visiting local companies, high streets and train stations. The tactic of getting out in front of voters exists. But the difference, and this has much to do with existing campaign laws in Japan, is that personal, one-to-one, candidate-voter relationships are much more likely to be built during a campaign in the UK.

Limitations to the study

This paper provides a valuable insight into both online campaigning and comparative studies of electoral behaviour. However, as a study of candidate behaviour in election campaigning and as a study into the use of new media in electoral campaigning, there are two limitations which, while certainly do not call into question the validity of this study's findings, should be highlighted here.

Firstly, this study is limited in making generalisations about online campaigning and the personal vote due to its focus on only two countries, both of which feature SMD constituencies. That candidates have incentive to pursue the personal vote in SMD constituencies seems self-evident. In this respect the findings from this study, finding greater levels of candidate personalisation, are a confirmation of earlier findings. Conclusions about candidate behaviour would certainly be strengthened by the inclusion of other countries which utilise different electoral systems. If greater levels of personalisation were found in countries using, for example, national list proportional representation, the claim that new media campaigning is having a transformative effect on campaigning would have a much stronger validity. However, while the inclusion of more cases is almost always to be welcomed, the fact that findings from this study do, broadly support existing theories behind pursuit of the personal vote does validate a key finding, that traditional campaign behaviour is affecting use of new media. The effects may not be transformative, but this study can state with confidence that the findings, within a broad theoretical framework, are correct and logical. Moreover, while the study would benefit from the inclusion of other countries and electoral systems, the constraints of investigating and coding such a large volume of social media output, and the limitations language constraints would have on this

in regard to non-English speaking countries, make this very difficult. As a direct comparison of campaigning in two countries, again, the findings of this study prove both valid and insightful.

Secondly, while the conclusions drawn from this study have been tested against logical hypotheses and the findings are robust enough to draw valid conclusions about candidate behaviour, said conclusions cannot be described as *definitive* when answering questions relating to candidates' campaign behaviour in the new media. The qualitative nature of both the coding of candidates' new media output and the selection of cases was, for reasons set out below, determined to be the best way of answering the research question. Due to the constraints of manual coding, it was necessary to limit the number of candidates included to ensure a manageable workload. It would naturally have been preferable to take data from every candidate which stood for the parties under study, and even widen the collection to all candidates from all parties. Collecting data, at least online data, has never been easier. Various programmes exist to collect social media output and can be combined with a variety of data mining and classification methods. Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan (2013) set out a useful framework which shows the uses of different methodologies in collecting and classifying data collected from social media. Different analytical approaches can be applied to different research questions. For example, a *issues based approach* allows researchers to determine what issues are being widely talked about by users and for politicians this is particulary useful in deciding which issues will resonate with voters. A *sentiment based approach* can determine how users feel about a certain topic – whether it be positive, negative or neutral. An example of the big data approach can be seen in Nulty *et al's* (2016) study of social media use in the 2014 European elections. The authors are able to determine *pro*/*anti* semtiment amongst candidates, volume of output and key issues/themes discussed by candidates at the country level. Big data approaches, with the ability to target specific messages at specific groups, are becoming vitally important in political campaigning, especially at the national level, the UK's vote to leave the European Union and success of Donald Trump in the 2016 US Presidential election being pertinent examples of this. However, in the early stages on this study, it was decided that manual coding, and thus a limited sample base, woud be an appropriate approach. The use of "big" data analytics is not as suitable for a complex study of induvidual politicians behaviour. Chapters 3 and 4

feature some classification of issues discussed based on party affiliation. However the majority of this study relies on a more subtle classification of social media output. For example, it was impotant not just to decipher what issues candidates were discussing, but whether these issues related to national or local interests. By sorting data based on keywords or hashtags, a large amout of *campaign activity* posts would have remained unclassified. It was also important to investigate the imagery, photogrpahs and videos, associated with these posts which could not be analyised by "big" data collection. The growing prevalance of videos especially provides a challenge to social media analytics. The content of the message is often in the image rather than the text. As such, when looking at elite subjects, who are more likely to use more professionalised social media posts featuring videos and links to blogs/websites, manual coding remains a valid and arguably the most effective method of data analysis.

Discussion: Final thoughts on the use of new media in political campaigning

The findings of this study have clearly added to our understanding of how candidates in the UK and Japan are campaigning online and how this relates to the personal vote. Through the detailed research which has conducted during the course of this study, findings which are of interest in the areas new media campaigns and comparative electoral styles have become apparent. This section gives an overview of the author's observations.

It became apparent through candidate interviews that, aside from those in party targeted seats, candidates were left to formulate and execute online campaign strategies by themselves. With online technology constantly developing between election cycles, a set model of how to campaign online has yet to be adopted by any candidates, although this study has given some indication of how candidates are going about this and how effective this is. National parties themselves are recognising the value of online campaigning and devoting resources towards ever more complex methods of targeting and segmenting voter groups. The results of this do cut across constituency campaigns. Limited party resources will be focused on marginal areas where they can derive the most benefit. The important point is that candidates not in these areas, have the *choice* to pursue as personal or as party

focused campaign as they wish. Parties have neither the time or manpower to monitor what their candidates are saying on social media. Candidates are left to “get on with it”, as they often were using only traditional forms of offline campaigning. How candidates choose to conduct campaigns, what issues they focus on, how closely they wish to be identified with the national party, is all down to subjective choice. The original assumption made in Chapter 1, that new media gives candidates the *opportunity* to campaign more independently holds true based on the findings of this study.

What potential effects could this then have on candidate-party relationships? In a situation where candidates have their own personal communication with voters, there is real potential for voters to feel an allegiance to the candidate rather than the party. Amongst Japanese candidates this is not an unusual phenomenon. Personal support exists through supporter associations which reach out to non-members in their work and social circle and promote the virtues of the candidate they support. Social media acts in a similar way, with an individual’s support being visible through social networks and potentially reaching all the other people in their “social network”. While candidates in the UK have relied on either leafleting, or more likely the power of the national party message to get through to voters, now it is much easier for people to see exactly what their local candidate is doing and saying during their campaign. There is anecdotal evidence (Chapter 6) of not just voters but potential activists being reached on social media. While turning potential supporters into activists through online registration has thus far been mainly the remit of the national party, it is becoming more common for candidates themselves to reach out and recruit supporters online. These are gradual changes and they are having the greatest effect on UK candidates, who are traditionally defined by party allegiance. What new media can do for sure, is give candidates a way to differentiate themselves from the party when it is desirable to do so. As seen already in Japan, where a candidate has the name recognition and organisational capability, party affiliation is not a decisive factor. Where candidates are not reliant on party affiliation to get elected, there is a greater freedom for them in both the way they campaign and how they behave as lawmakers. Undoubtedly the way in which new media strengthens candidate image has the greatest, potentially transformative, effect in countries with strong party-centred electoral systems like the UK.

This creates something of quandary for parties. There are clear benefits to candidates becoming more independent organisationally. The cost for parties to support candidates materially, especially smaller, less well financed ones, is ever increasing. If candidates can become more efficient at utilising online platforms to attract financial and activist supporter, this takes a great deal of pressure away from the national party. However as set out above, this has the potential to greatly alter candidate-party relationships. As of yet parties have shown little interest in how their candidates campaign online. It makes sense that whichever method candidates use to appeal to voters, as long as it is successful then it does not make a great deal of difference to the party. Perhaps ironically it is easier than ever for parties to track what their candidates are doing and saying in the course of campaigning. A record is created on social media for all to see. How parties treat online campaigning in the future will clearly play a part in deciding how likely candidates are to pursue more personal vote seeking strategies. If parties choose to enhance, or in the case of Japan actually instigate, candidate training in social media use, there is a greater likelihood of developing a cohesive, party-wide strategy of campaigning based on promoting and sharing national party messages on social media. The seeming ambivalence of the party towards this so far suggests that new media campaigning in the future is likely to result in more candidate, rather than party, focused campaign strategies, at least through online platforms.

Implications for future research

There are two obvious steps to take in future research which would further compliment the findings of this study and throw more light on the subject of candidates use of new media in political campaigning.

The first would be to instigate a longitudinal study of the two countries under study. Analysis has shown that there is a significant difference in the way UK and Japanese candidates campaign, especially in relation to the personal vote. To see how these styles of campaigning develop over different elections and what resultant effects this may have on candidate behaviour in each country is logically the best way to ascertain just how much of a role new media can be said to have in encouraging candidates to pursue more independent campaigns. Especially important to this will be how candidates adopt new

technological innovations. Current platforms may become obsolete in future campaigns, while others become more important. Greater use of media such as videos may become more widespread and put candidates even more to the front of campaigns. While the current organisational functions of websites, such as donations and volunteer functions on websites, have yet to play a significant part in any campaigns, the potential exists for these to become more important in the future. The sheer speed with which technology is changing makes longitudinal study an essential part of understanding the effects of new media on campaigning. Moreover, it has been shown that new media is an effective way to measure how much candidates are willing to pursue the personal vote. Generally speaking, there is little evidence that political parties are likely to see a resurgence of membership or activism. Where parties are enjoying an increase in support, with the UK Labour party for example, many supporters are being attracted to non-party supporter organisations, such as Momentum, and there is no evidence that this support will remain "hard" over multiple election cycles. If the influence of the national party continues to wane, as it has in the UK, then we might expect to see greater degrees of personal vote seeking behaviour over time. If such behaviour occurs, it will be evident in candidates' new media use. There is also the consideration of personal support groups, something that is common in Japan and the United States, but not in the UK. Again, this is a question of potential. There was evidence from candidates in the UK of informal activist organisation achieved through social media, which could hypothetically be activated in future elections. An avenue of study would be to investigate through further interviews with candidates how successful they have been in keeping together supporters, election to election through social media contact and mobilising them either online or in actual physical campaigning at subsequent elections.

The other obvious area of future investigation would be increasing the number of countries under study. Findings from Japan and the UK show that there is a difference in the way candidates from two different countries, but which both contest elections under SMD systems, campaign. Investigating other countries using similar systems would help to strengthen the claims made in this study about what factors, aside from country level differences, affect the way in which candidates pursue the personal vote. Findings about party popularity or incumbency could be tested against other countries such as the Unites States or Australia. Could there be a regional difference between European/"Western"

democracies and those in Asia (such as South Korea and Taiwan)? How does candidate behaviour differ between SMD systems and those which are in theory likely to be more party-focused? Extending the study has time and specifically language barriers. However, with new media campaigning so widespread, and the fact that it is publicly available to any researcher in any country, using platforms which are commonly used around the world, the potential certainly exists to create a wider comparative study on how candidates use new media to campaign and how this acts as an indicator of different campaign styles. Information on candidates has never been so accessible or easy to find for researchers and it is hoped that this study can act as a starting point for other cross-country comparisons on electoral campaigning.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Complete list of UK candidates included in this study (Chapter 3)

Table A.1: Complete list of UK candidates featured in study

Candidate	Constituency	Marginal	Incumbent
Conservative			
Glyn Davies	Montgomeryshire	Yes	Yes
Graham Evans	Weaver Vale	Yes	Yes
Steve Brine	Winchester	Yes	Yes
Iain Stewart	Milton Keynes South	Yes	Yes
James Wharton	Stockton South	Yes	Yes
Mark Isherwood	Delyn	Yes	No
Derek Thomas	St Ives	Yes	No
Caroline Ansell	Eastbourne	Yes	No
Julie Marson	Dagenham and Rainham	Yes	No
Jo Gideon	Scunthorpe	Yes	No
Kit Malthouse	North West Hampshire	No	Yes
Stephen Crabb	Preseli	No	Yes
Graham Stuart	Beverley and Holderness	No	Yes
Chris Heaton Harris	Daventry	No	Yes
Andrew Turner	Isle of Wight	No	Yes
Stephen Kerr	Stirling	No	No
Peter Heaton Jones	North Devon	No	No
Richard Short	Warrington North	No	No
Finlay Carson	Dumfries and Galloway	No	No
Ann Steward	Norfolk North	No	No
Simon Kirby	Brighton Kemptown	Yes	Yes
Scott Mann	North Cornwall	Yes	Yes
Merion Jenkins	Bridgend	Yes	No
Kelly Tolhurst	Rochester and Strood	Yes	No
Flick Drummond	Portsmouth South	No	Yes
Nick Herbert	Arundel and South Downs	No	Yes
Zehra Zaidi	Makerfield	No	No
Pauline Latham	Mid Derbyshire	No	Yes
Labour		Yes	Yes
Roberta Blackman-Woods	Durham	Yes	Yes
Jamie Reed	Copeland	Yes	Yes
Jon Cruddas	Dagenham and Rainham	Yes	Yes
Ian Murray	Edinburgh South	Yes	Yes
Nic Dakin	Scunthorpe	Yes	Yes
Julia Tickridge	Weaver Vale	Yes	No
Julie Cooper	Burnley	Yes	No

Andrew Pakes	Milton Keynes South	Yes	No
Lousie Baldock	Stockton South	Yes	No
Imran Hussain	Bradford East	Yes	No
Huw Irracana Davies	Ogmore	No	Yes
Johanna Boyd	Stirling	No	Yes
Helen Jones	Warrington North	No	Yes
Russell Brown	Dumfries and Galloway	No	Yes
Kate Green	Stretford	No	Yes
Paul Miller	Preseli	No	No
Chris Conniff	Ross, Skye and Lochbar	No	No
Abigail Campbell	Daventry	No	No
Mike Robb	Inverness	No	No
Ruth Jones	Monmouth	No	No
Clair Hawkins	Dover	Yes	No
Naushabah Khan	Rochester and Strood	Yes	No
Gerry McGarvey	Orkney & Shetland	No	No
Nicola Heaton	Mid Derbyshire	No	No
Liberal Democrat			
Gordon Birtwistle	Burnley	Yes	Yes
Andrew George	St Ives	Yes	Yes
Stephen Lloyd	Eastbourne	Yes	Yes
David Ward	Bradford East	Yes	Yes
Tessa Munt	Wells	Yes	Yes
Jane Dodds	Montgomeryshire	Yes	No
Craig Martin	Durham	Yes	No
Jackie Porter	Winchester	Yes	No
Ros Kayes	West Dorset	Yes	No
Robin Meltzer	Richmond Park	Yes	No
Charles Kennedy	Ross, Skye and Lochbar	No	Yes
Nick Harvey	Devon North	No	Yes
Danny Alexander	Inverness	No	Yes
Norman Lamb	Norfolk North	No	Yes
Bob Russell	Colchester	No	Yes
Chris Took	Woking	No	No
Kirsten Johnson	Chesham and Amersham	No	No
Paul Hodgkinson	The Cotswolds	No	No
Jeanie Falconer	North Hereford	No	No
David Goodall	Isle of Wight	No	No
Lauren Keith	Brent Central	Yes	Yes
David Rendel	Somerset and Frome	Yes	Yes
Dan Rogerson	North Cornwall	Yes	Yes
Gerald Vernon Jackson	Portsmouth South	No	Yes
Alistair Carmichael	Orkney & Shetland	No	Yes
David Laws	Yeovil	No	Yes
Sweta Kapadia	Arundel and South Downs	No	No

John Reid	Manchester Central	No	Yes

Appendix B: Twitter post from campaign of Kit Malthouse (Chapter 3)

"Big team out in BAUGHURST and TADLEY NORTH last night. Rob Tate leading the charge" – Kit Malthouse (Conservative North West Hampshire, Twitter 06/05/2014

Appendix C: Search terms used in Nvivo analysis of parties Twitter posts (Chapter 3)

Economy: economy, tax, welfare, deficit, debt, pension, jobs, employment, investment, business, work

Government / Scotland: constitution, Scotland, reform, independence, devolution

Education: education, schools, university, teacher, pupil, childcare, student

Healthcare: NHS, healthcare, hospitals, care, doctors, nurses, mental health, patient

Defence / Foreign: Trident, army , navy, RAF, troops, Iraq, Syria, foreign, UN, defence, China, terrorism

Art/Sport: art, sport, culture

Transport / Infrastructure: HS2, roads, train, rail(way), transport, infrastructure, traffic, cars, airport, station, energy, utilities

European Union: EU, Europe, European Union, Brussels, referendum, borders

Environment: environment, pollution, green, sustainable, climate, solar, wind, renewable

Immigration: immigration, borders, migrant, refugee

Crime: crime, prison, offender, jail, punishment, offence

Agricultural / Rural: agriculture, rural, farm, farmer, fish, fishing

Housing: house, housing, homes, rent, landlord

Appendix D: List of Japanese candidates (Chapter 4)

Table A.2: Complete list of Japanese candidates included in study

Candidate	Constituency	Marginal	Incumbent
Liberal Democratic Party			
Takao Ochi	Tokyo 6	Yes	Yes
Hideki Murai	Saitama 1	Yes	Yes
Yoshitaka Ikeda	Aichi 3	Yes	Yes
Nobuhide Takemura	Shiga 3	Yes	Yes
Hiroyuki Yoshiie	Kanagawa 16	Yes	Yes
Hitoshi Kikawada	Saitama 3	Yes	Yes
Tsukasa Akimoto	Tokyo 15	Yes	No
Yutaka Komatsu	Nagano 1	Yes	No
Yasuhide Nakayama	Osaka 4	Yes	No
Naokazu Takemoto	Osaka 15	Yes	No
Hideki Makihara	Saitama 5	Yes	No
Takaaki Katsumata	Shizuoka 6	Yes	No
Isshū Sugawara	Tokyo 9	No	Yes
Saichi Kamiyama	Saitama 7	No	Yes
Shigeru Ishiba	Tottori 1	No	Yes
Mineyuki Fukuda	Kanagawa 8	No	No
Takashi Nagao	Osaka 14	No	No
Kiyoto Tsuji	Tokyo 2	Yes	Yes
Tadayoshi Nagashima	Niigata 5	No	Yes
Kenya Akiba	Miyagi 2	No	Yes
Yoshiaki Harada	Fukuoka 5	No	Yes
Akimasa Ishikawa	Ibaraki 5	Yes	Yes
Hiromichi Watanabe	Chiba 6	Yes	Yes
Takeru Yoshikawa	Shizuoka 5	No	No
Hiroyuki Togashi	Akita 1	No	Yes
Masatoshi Ishida	Wakayama 2	No	Yes
Katsuei Hirasawa	Tokyo 17	No	Yes
Hiroshi Imazu	Hokkaido 6	No	Yes
Democratic Party of Japan			
Takeshi Shina	Iwate 1	Yes	Yes
Kaname Tajima	Chiba 1	Yes	Yes
Shūhei Kishimoto	Wakayama 1	Yes	Yes
Yūichirō Tamaki	Kagawa 2	Yes	Yes
Sumio Mabuchi	Nara 1	Yes	Yes

Kōichi Takemasa	Saitama 1	Yes	No
Naoto Kan	Tokyo 18	Yes	No
Kenta Izumi	Kyoto 3	Yes	No
Kiyomi Tsujimoto	Osaka 10	Yes	No
Junya Ogawa	Kagawa 1	Yes	No
Tōru Kikawada	Iwate 3	No	Yes
Gōshi Hosono	Shizuoka 5	No	Yes
Manabu Terata	Akita 1	No	No
Kenji Tamura	Shizuoka 4	No	No
Seiji Ōsaka	Hokkaido 8	No	No
Hiroshi Kawaguchi	Kagoshima 1	No	No
Takako Nagae	Ehime 1	No	No
Yoshikatsu Nakayama	Tokyo 2	Yes	No
Daizon Kusuda	Fukuoka 5	No	No
Akira Nagatsuma	Tokyo 7	Yes	Yes
Yuichi Goto	Kanagawa 16	Yes	No
Akihiro Oohata	Ibaraki 5	Yes	Yes
Yukio Ubutaka	Chiba 6	Yes	No
Tajahiro Sasaki	Hokkaido 6	No	No
Yoshihiko Noda	Chiba 4	No	Yes
Japanese Restoration Party			
Kenji Eda	Kanagawa 8	No	Yes
Kazuhiko Shigetoku	Aichi 12	Yes	No
Takayuki Ochiai	Tokyo 6	Yes	No
Yasuto Urano	Osaka 15	Yes	Yes
Takashi Ishizeki	Gunma 2	No	No
Miho Takahashi	Tokyo 17	No	No
Tomohiko Kinoshita	Osaka 8	Yes	Yes
Kenta Matsunami	Osaka 10	Yes	Yes
Yasushi Odachi	Osaka 9	Yes	Yes
Mito Kakizawa	Tokyo 15	Yes	Yes
Yosei Ide	Nagano 3	Yes	No
Mitsunari Hatanaka	Hyogo 7	Yes	No
Ikuta Takasa	Kyoto 1	Yes	No
Takashi Takai	Okayama 1	No	Yes
Naoto Sakaguchi	Wakayama 2	No	No
Mikio Shimoji	Okinawa 1	No	No
Itsuki Toyama	Miyazaki 1	No	No
Shinji Oguma	Fukushima 4	No	No
Yoichiro Aoyagi	Kanagawa 6	Yes	No
Hiroki Hayashi	Miyagi 2	Yes	No

Appendix E: Search terms used in Nvivo analysis of parties Twitter posts (Chapter 4)

Economy: economy (経済), Abenomics (アベノミクス), tax (税金), welfare (厚生), deficit (赤字), national debt (国債), pension (年金), employment (雇用), work (仕事)

Government: Article 9 (日本国憲法第 **9** 条), constitution (国憲), reform (改革), decentralisation (分権), revision (改正)

Education: education (教育), schools (学校), university (大学), teacher (教員), student (生徒), childcare (託児), parental leave (育児休業)

Healthcare: seniors healthcare (後期高齢者医療制度), hospitals (病院), doctor (医者), nurse (看護師), mental health (精神保健), patient (患者)

Defence / Foreign: Article 9 (日本国憲法第 **9** 条), armed forces (軍隊), ASEAN, UN, defence (防衛), China (中国), terrorism (テロリズム), North Korea (北朝鮮), pacifism (平和主義)

Art/Sport: art (美術), sport (スポーツ), culture (文化), Tokyo Olympics (東京オリンピック /東京 2020)

Transport / Infrastructure: roads (道路), rail(way) (鉄道), transport (輸送), traffic (交通量), airport (空港), utilities (公共料金), nuclear power (原発), reconstruction (再建)

Environment: environment (環境), pollution (公害), sustainable (地球に優しい), climate change (気候変動), solar power (太陽光発電), wind power (風力発電), renewable energy (再生可能エネルギー), Fukushima(福島県), tsunami (津波), 3/11

Crime: crime (犯罪), prison (刑務所), offender (犯人), jail (留置所), punishment (罰則)

Agricultural / Rural: agriculture (農業 0, rural (田園), farm (農場), farmer (農家 0, fishing (漁業), rice farming (米作り)

Housing: housing (住宅), housing shortage (住宅難), rent (賃料), landlord (地主)

Appendix F: Examples of new media use by candidates (Chapter 5)

Stephen Lloyd

Visited Grove Rd @RecordUK, perfect oppo to pull out my rick god pose, another great indy store for Eastbourne - 20/04/2015

Isshu Suguwara

This is a part of the biography from Isshu Suguwara's website in the form of a maga (cartoon strip). It depicts the birth and early life of Suguwara, lays out his commitment to helping the poor and disadvantaged. The bottom two panes are perhaps the most personal, showing that Suguwara's father failed to be elected to the lower house (bottom right) and a young

Suguwara's determination to achieve what his father could not (bottom left) (http://www.isshu.net/story.html)

その人々の声を
国政のど真ん中に
届けねば
政治とは弱者の
ためにあるのだから
すがわら一秀の
人に寄り添う真摯な姿勢
それはどこからくるのか
1962年
1月7日
すがわら一秀は
東京都練馬区に
生まれた
小学校1年生の時から
野球に励み
軟式野球
リトルリーグ・
シニアと活躍
そんな彼が
小学4年生の時……
父親が秋田県から
衆議院選に挑戦したのだ
しかし
惜しむらくも落選
父が出来なかった事を
僕が必ずやってやる
すがわら少年は
その時
そう誓ったのである

Appendix G: Examples of core questions (Chapter 6)

Examples of core questions from candidate interviews. These questions were asked to every candidate. Other questions specific to each candidate were also asked:

Role of the national party

1. What role did the national party play in your new media campaign strategy? Was any training offered/provided?
2. Did the national party give guidelines on which policies to promote on social media?

Websites

3. In your opinion what is the most important function of your website?
4. *(If relevant)* Your website offered users the opportunity to donate and/or volunteer to help with your campaign. How useful were these functions?

Social media

5. In general, candidates used *campaign activity* posts more than any other on their social media accounts. What was the strategy behind these posts and why do you think they were so prevalent?
6. During the general election campaign do you feel that it was more important to promote *local* or *national* policy issues?
7. What are you opinion on both Twitter and Facebook as campaign platforms? Do you feel that one has the advantage over the other? *(If both platforms used)* Is there a difference in the way you utilised both platforms?

General thoughts/opinions on future use of new media

8. Overall how useful do you think websites and social media were to your campaign, especially compared to traditional campaigning?
9. In your opinion how do you think online campaigning will be utilised both in the next general election and in the longer term?

Appendix H: List of candidates and political experts interviewed (Chapter 6)

Name of candidate	Country	Party represented	Constituency status
Baldock, Louise (Stockton South)	United Kingdom	Labour	Marginal/Challenger
Conservative MP	United Kingdom	Conservative	Non-marginal/Incumbent
Gideon, Jo (Scunthorpe)	United Kingdom	Conservative	Marginal/Challenger
Hodgkinson, Paul (The Cotswolds)	United Kingdom	Liberal Democrat	Non-marginal/Challenger
Jenkins, Merion (Bridgend)	United Kingdom	Conservative	Marginal/Challenger
Lloyd, Stephen (Eastbourne)	United Kingdom	Liberal Democrat	Marginal/Incumbent
Madoka, Yoriko (Tokyo 8)	Japan	DPJ	Marginal/Challenger
Osaka, Seiji (Hokkaido 8)	Japan	DPJ	Marginal/Incumbent
Reed, Jamie (Copeland)	United Kingdom	Labour	Marginal/Incumbent
Sekiguchi, Kentaro[63] (Tokyo 7)	Japan	DPJ	Marginal/Incumbent
Takahashi, Miho (Tokyo 17)	Japan	JIP	Non-marginal/Challenger
Takayama, Satoshi (Saitama 15)	Japan	DPJ	Non-marginal/Challenger
Took, Chris (Woking)	United Kingdom	Liberal Democrat	Non-marginal/Challenger

[63] Aide to Akira Nagatsuma

Toyama, Itsuki (Miyazaki 1)	Japan	JIP	Non-marginal/Challenger
Robert Findon[64] (Eastbourne)	United Kingdom	Conservative	Marginal/Challenger

Additional interviews

Name	Institution
Professor Yoshikadu Iwabuchi	Nihon University, Japan
Tsutomu Yoshida	Machida Metropolitan City Council

Appendix I: Collinearity tests from OLS regression (Chapter 7)

Table 8.3: Durbine-Watson test for auto-correlation results

Test	Durbine-Watson score
Japan 2014	2.273
United Kingdom 2015	1.679
Comparison (Table 35)	1.579

[64] Campaign manager of Caroline Ansell

Table 8.4: VIF test for multicollinearity results

	Japan	Japan	United Kingdom	United Kingdom	Japan and United Kingdom	Japan and United Kingdom
	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 1**	**Model 2**	**Model 1**	**Model 2**
	VIF	**VIF**	**VIF**	**VIF**	**VIF**	**VIF**
Independent variable – online campaigning						
PVI score	1.080	1.187	1.073	1.073	1.011	1.043
Number of followers	1.036	1.633	1.176	1.176	1.000	1.194
Number of posts	1.076	1.083	1.116	1.116	1.011	1.015
Independent variable – offline campaigning						
National party vote share		1.379		1.111		1.029
Previous election vote share (constituency)		2.752		2.099		1.979
Party leader visit		1.163		1.209		1.042
Incumbency		1.776		2.733		1.806

Figure A.1; P-P Plot of dependent variable included in regression analysis for Japanese 2014 candidates (N=73)

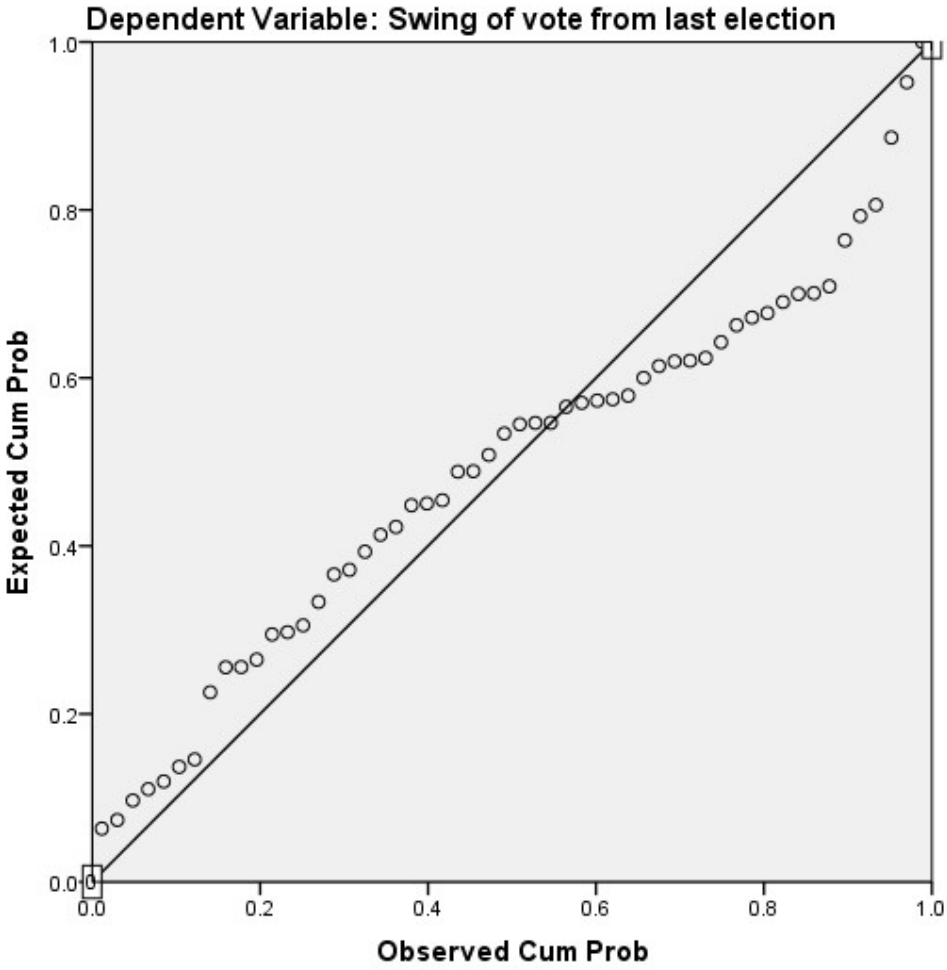

Figure A.2: P-P Plot of dependent variable included in regression analysis for UK 2015 candidates (N=78)

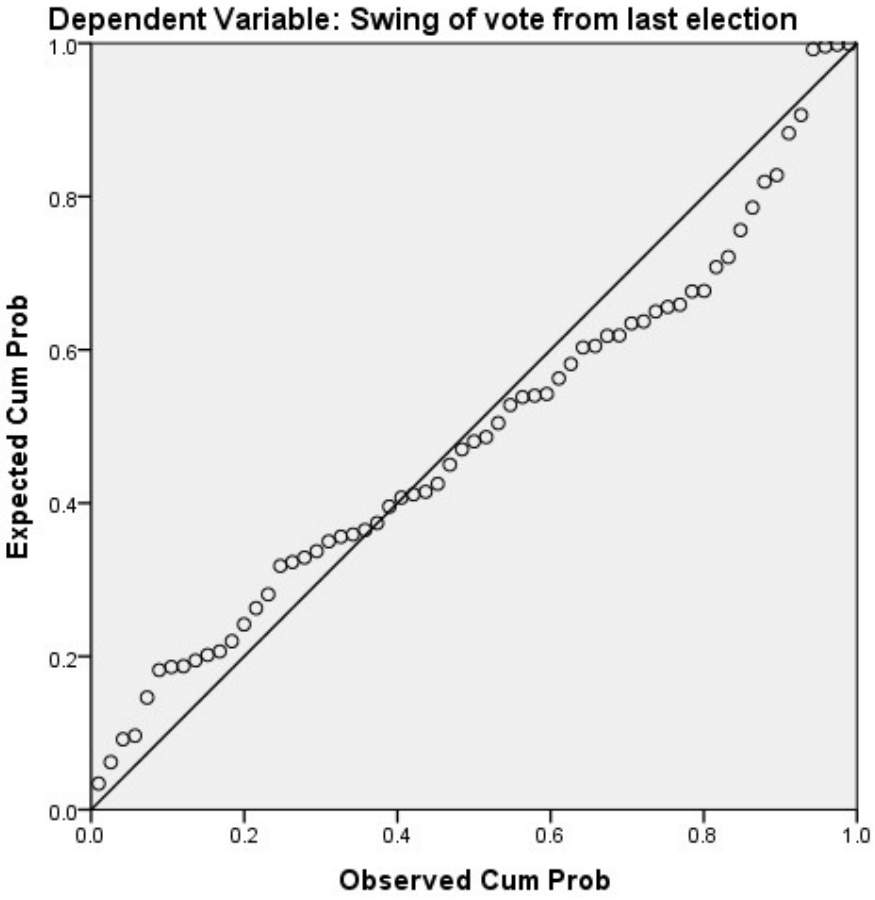
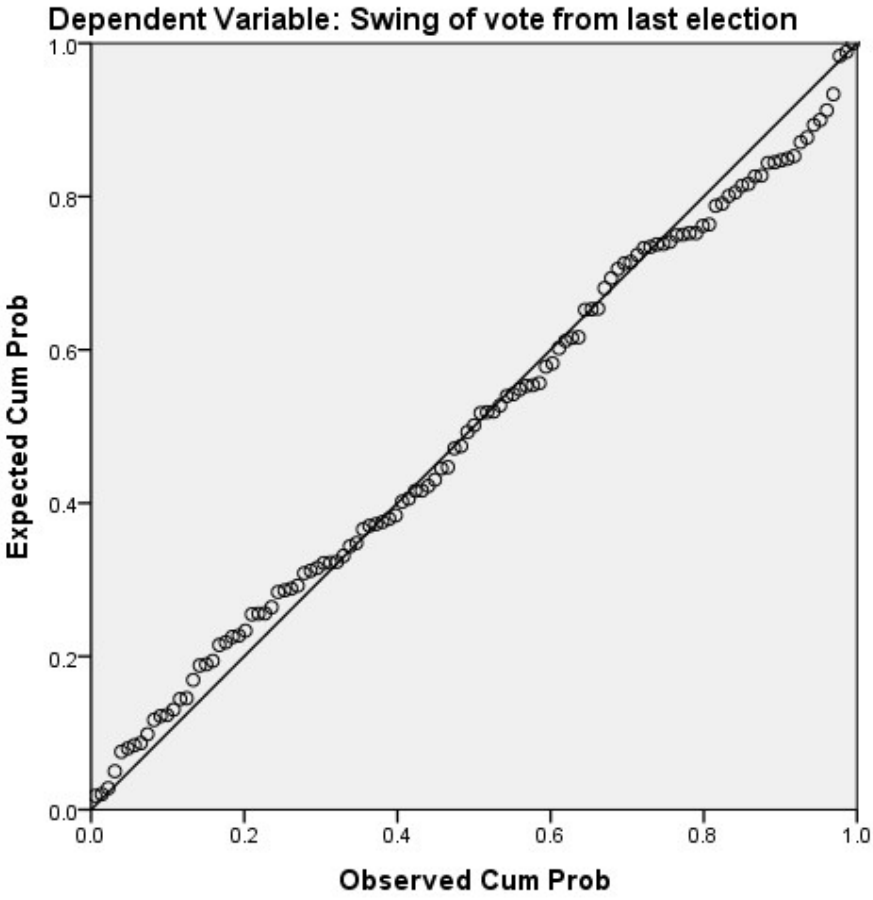
Figure A.3:P-P Plot of dependent variable included in regression analysis for Japan and UK candidates (N=151)