The Evolution of District-Level Campaigning in Britain: The Resilience of Traditional Campaigning?

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District level campaigning has evolved considerably over the last quarter of a century, from the 'fax election' of 1992 to individually targeted Facebook advertisements in 2015. Using data collected at each of the last six British general elections (1992, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2010 & 2015), this paper will demonstrate how district-level campaigns have evolved with the increasing incorporation of campaigning methods focussed on individual types of voters via methods such as direct mail, telephone voter identification and a growing use of social media. The paper will show how campaigning styles have developed but also test whether these developments in campaign techniques have been electorally effective, and if not, over how many elections, it takes new techniques to become so. The paper will also test whether, despite the significant technological advances, more traditional approaches still deliver the most in the way of electoral effects.

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Introduction

It's now nearly 25 years since Denver and Hands studied constituency campaigning at the 'fax election' – the British General Election of 1992 (Denver & Hands, 1997). The 2015 election was for many, the Facebook election. As technology develops at such a fast pace, there is almost no doubt that Facebook will seem as quant as the fax, and probably in a shorter timeframe. But quaintness aside, it neatly illustrates how technological developments can have a significant effect on political campaigning. This is not a new phenomenon, of course. Denver, Hands, Fisher & McAllister (2003) and Fisher & Denver (2008) show extensively how campaigns have increasingly adopted ever more modern methods of campaigning, and these adoptions have continued with the increasing use of e-campaigning. Given that Bill Gates was predicting that electronic mail might start to catch on back in 1992,[1] and the first website (CERN) went online in 1991, the possibility of extensive change in campaigning styles during the period is significant. However, the development of the technology does not automatically imply that it will be enthusiastically adopted or critically, that it will be electorally

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[1]   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MbJbj_LcP78

effective. Certainly, numerous studies of campaigning have struggled to find significant positive electoral effects of e-campaigns to date (Fisher, Fieldhouse & Cutts, 2011b; Fisher, Johnson, Pattie, Fieldhouse & Cutts, 2016; Hansen & Kosiara-Pederson, 2014).

In this paper we examine two things. First, we assess how campaigns have changed in terms of the balance of campaign approaches over six British general elections between 1992 and 2015. Second, we test whether the developments in campaign styles have been electorally effective, and whether older, more traditional styles have diminished in effectiveness.

There is already some evidence in the literature of changes in styles over time, often at the national level, but also at the district or constituency level (Carty, Eagles & Sayer, 2003; Denemark, 2003; Denver & Hands, 2002; Denver, Hands, Fisher & MacAllister, 2003; Farrell & Webb, 2002; Fisher & Denver, 2008, 2009; Marsh, 2004; Norris, 2002, Ward, 2003) and indeed a framework for comparative analysis has been developed by Fisher & Denver (2008) (see Table 1). Broadly speaking, what has become clear is that parties have developed new techniques drawing upon new technology to mobilize voters and also focus attention on individual target voters as per Stages 2 and 3 of the process identified in Table 1 below. These approaches have become progressively more significant over time and in the last two elections in particular (2010 and 2015) there has been the development of e-campaigning, which has accentuated this approach (Fisher, Cutts & Fieldhouse, 2011b). However, what is equally clear is that parties have continued to engage in traditional campaigning – generally labour intensive activities, which in many ways are little changed over time - suggesting that parties' campaigns are still at stage 2 in terms of development in the technical sphere (traditional and modern techniques coinciding) rather than at stage 3 (traditional approaches effectively replaced).

Table 1: Three Stages in the Development of District-level Election Campaigning

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Technical	• Short-term campaign preparations • Sporadic use of technology. Campaigning is largely traditional and labour intensive	• Longer-term preparations including specialist campaign committee at centre • Technology widely used alongside traditional campaign techniques	• Permanent campaign with specialist campaign department at centre • Technology replaces traditional campaign techniques
Resource	• Decentralized with little standardization • Voluntary activity and use of traditional party bureaucracy • Impressionistic feedback based mainly on canvassing	• Centralized and standardized • Voluntary workers directed by party professionals • More scientific sources of feedback, including opinion polls	• Decentralization of operation with central scrutiny • Professional staff on short-term contracts • Greater range of polling techniques making greater use of feedback
Thematic	• Whistle-stop tours by party leaders • Focus on mobilising the vote of supporters	• Tours by party leaders focussed on target seats • Mobilizing voters across all categories	• Party leaders concerned only with target seats • District campaigns become more important than the national campaign • Targeting of individual voters

Source: Fisher & Denver, 2008

Data and Method

The data presented here are derived from studies of the six British general elections from 1992 to 2015. Immediately after each election, the electoral agents of the candidates of all three main parties in Britain (Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrats) – as well as from the national parties in Scotland and Wales - were surveyed and responses detailing the campaign techniques in which they engaged were collected (see Denver & Hands, 1997; Denver & Hands, 2002; Denver, Hands, Fisher & MacAllister, 2002;
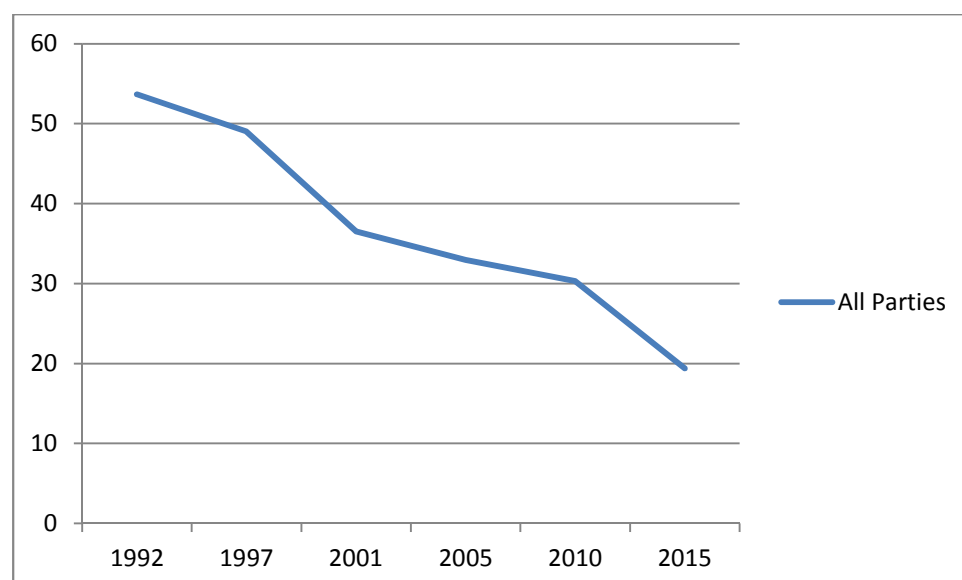
Fisher & Denver, 2008; Fisher, Cutts & Fieldhouse, 2011a). Data are representative for each party in each election (see Appendix for details of responses) with one exception – Conservative responses in 2005. Findings for this case should therefore be treated with caution. Clearly, techniques develop over time and some questions will not feature in the earliest surveys. However, to deliver comparability over time, we have used an identical set of variables to capture trends over all six elections after pooling the six datasets. Inevitably, this may mean that the degree of technological development may be understated, but this is a necessary loss to ensure that changes in campaign styles are comparable over time in these analyses.

We begin by creating two indexes of campaign styles: traditionalism and modernisation. Traditionalism - effectively 'manual' work - captures the following activities: leafleting, doorstep canvassing, workforce and polling day activity (see Appendix for full details), while modernisation captures the incorporation of technology: use of computers, specialist software and telephones (see Appendix for full details). To create scales that are both comparable between parties and over time, datasets for all six elections were pooled and Principal Components Analyses undertaken. Using conventional cut-off criteria, they revealed that one factor is sufficient to represent the variance in the original variables in the indexes for traditionalism and modernisation (see Appendix for details). For ease of interpretation, the scores are standardised around a mean of 100. This allows us to do three things; first, we can examine trends in traditional and modern campaigning over time and between parties; second, we can focus our analysis on target seats, where changes may be different compared with trends overall; third, we can examine the relative balance between traditional and modern campaigning.

Expected Trends

There a number of trends that we expect to observe as a result of more wider developments. First, parties generally have a declining number of volunteers involved in election campaigns. Figure 1 shows how, over the six elections, the mean number of campaign workers per constituency for the three parties has declined significantly. This is, of course, in part a function of declining membership (Fisher & Denver, 2008: 803), though as Fisher, Fieldhouse & Cutts (2014) show, significant numbers of campaign workers are not themselves members. Notwithstanding, a small campaign workforce may make it more difficult to accomplish the manual labour associated with traditional forms of campaigning. Second, as Fisher & Denver (2008) observe, not only has new technology become more widely available, but its relative cost has declined significantly. This is obviously a positive prompt for a growth in more modern campaigning techniques. However, a third reason is associated with the first. As Ward (2003) and Denemark (2003) show in Australia and New Zealand respectively, technology is also likely to be adopted as a response to a decline in the availability of manual campaign labour.

Figure 1. Mean Number of Campaign Workers per Constituency (Con, Lab & Lib Dems)

Coupled with these broader developments, analyses (see, for example, Fisher & Denver, 2008; Fisher, Cutts & Fieldhouse, 2011a) have also revealed that parties are increasingly targeting their efforts on key seats (and key voters within them). In other words, parties' campaigns are differentiated in terms of intensity by whether or not a seat is one that a party wishes to target; either to gain the seat or to seek to retain it where the opposition parties are likely to present a credible threat. We may well expect to see, therefore, an accentuated degree of change in campaign styles in target seats compared with seats overall.

With these developments in mind, we therefore develop a series of hypotheses. These are as follows:

H1   *The mean level of traditional campaigning will decline over time*

H2   *The mean level of modern campaigning will increase over time*

H3   *The resource-intensive nature of traditional and modern campaigning will mean that levels of traditional and modern campaigning will be highest in parties' target seats*

H4   *The change in relative balance between traditional and modern campaigning will be most accentuated in target seats*

The results from our first two analyses are shown in Figures 2-7 and feature the mean scores for each campaign approach based on calculations in each district or constituency. These illustrate changes in the levels of traditional and modern campaigning for each of the three main British parties between 1992 and 2015. For each party, we illustrate the overall level of traditional and modern campaigning and that which was conducted in target and non-target seats. We hypothesise that over time levels of both modern and traditional campaigning will be higher in target seats. [2] Thus, we expect the more labour intensive activity associated with traditional to be more likely to continue in seats where parties are focussing most attention. Equally, we would expect

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[2]   The designation of target seats for 1992, 1997, 2001, 2005 and 2010 are derived from elite interviews with national officials from the political parties. In 2015, a target seats is defined as one where the majority following the 2010 election in seats the party holds is below 10%, or where the party's vote share was within 10% of the winning party in 2010.

the financial investment that accompanies modern campaigning to feature most heavily in target seats.

Figures 2-4 show the changes in traditional campaigning over time. For all parties, it is clear that the level of traditional campaigning has declined. But, as predicted, it continues at a higher level in target seats for all three parties. Beyond these general trends, there are three points to note. First, it is worth noting the upturn in traditional campaigning undertaken by Labour in 2015, which tallies with the 'one million conversations' approach taken by the party in that election. In January 2015, then Labour leader Ed Miliband declared that Labour would seek to have four million face-to face conversations with voters in advance of the elections.[3] We test whether this aspiration was achieved utilising the British Election Study Wave 6 to establish the proportion of voters contacted in person (at home or in the street) and the mean number of personal contacts (Table 2). The results show that Labour contacted 11% of electors face-to-face (compared with the Conservatives' 8%) and the mean number of face-to-face contacts was similarly higher. The 11% contact rate by Labour suggests that the four million conversations did indeed take place (in fact, the figure equates to nearly five million). So, this illustrates two things. First, traditional forms of campaign activity have declined, but they remain an important part of any party's campaign. Indeed, the level of SNP contacts – albeit in a remarkable election – was very high. Second, the upturn in Labour's traditional campaign appears to have been a partial result of a deliberate campaign approach, which urged a focussing on face-to-face contacts.

The second point of note concerns the Liberal Democrats. Here, traditional campaigning declined particularly significantly in 2015 in target seats – a function of the party's unpopularity at that election (Fisher, Fieldhouse, Cutts & Rottweiler, 2015). By way of contrast, the change in non-targets is less pronounced over time. Finally, the Conservative graph shows a 'blip' on 2005. This is almost certainly a function of very poor response rates for the
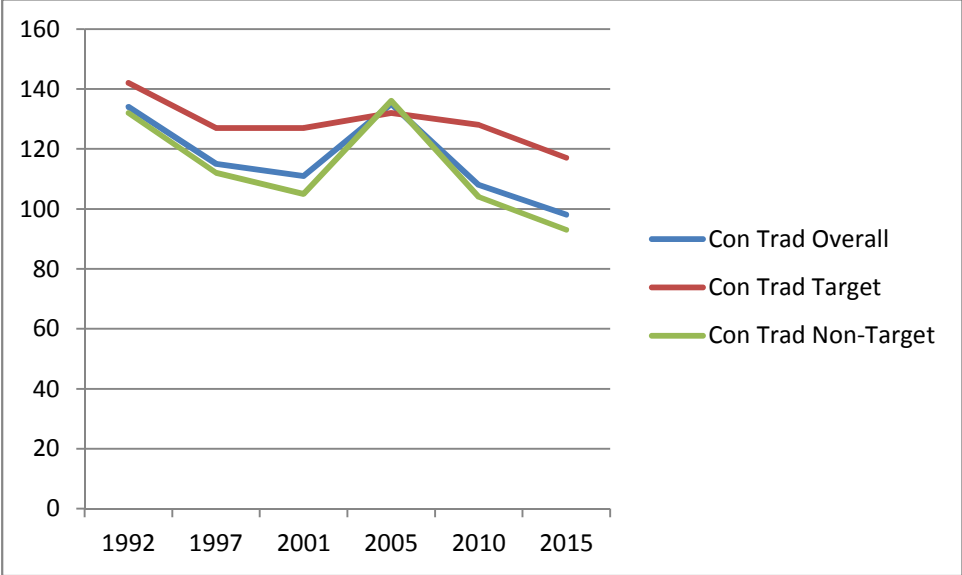
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[3]   http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/general-election-2015/11324239/Ed-Miliband-wants-to-have-four-million-conversations-with-voters-to-win-general-election.html   Accessed 26/11/15
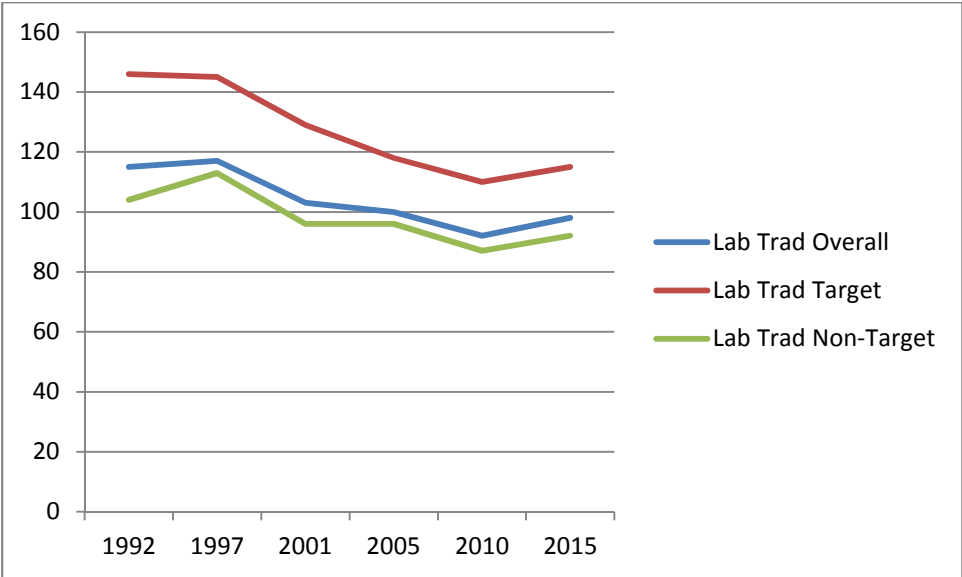
Conservatives in this study, and a skewing of responses towards safer seats. Thus, 2005 aside, the downward trend is very clear.
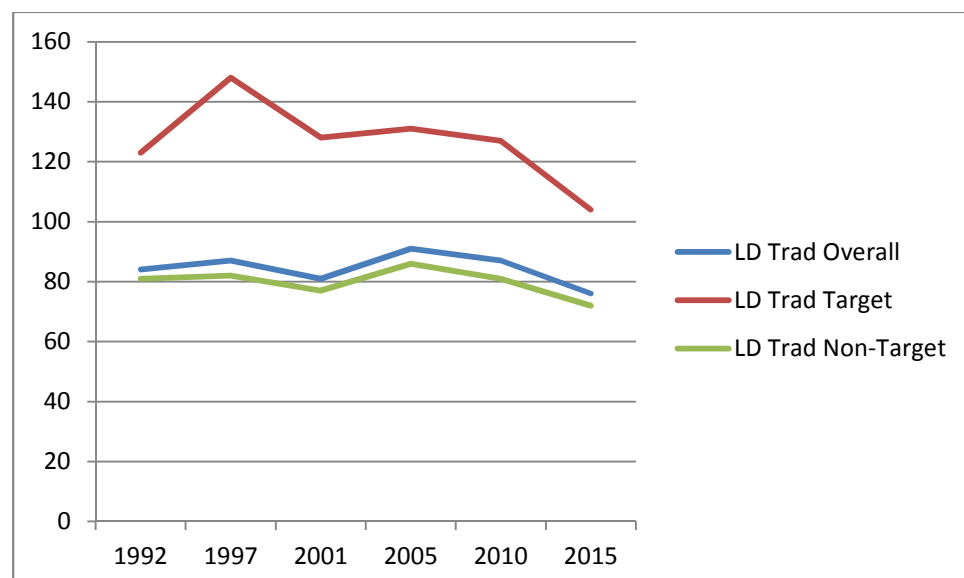
Figure 2. Conservative Traditional Campaigning 1992-2015

Figure 3. Labour Traditional Campaigning 1992-2015

Figure 4. Lib Dem Traditional Campaigning 1992-2015

Table 2. Individual Level Personal Contact over Last Four Weeks of Campaign in 2015

|	Con	Lab	Lib Dem	SNP	PC	UKIP
% Personal Contacted	8	11	4	21	5	2
Mean Personal (Max 2)	.21	.30	.15	.48	.22	.09
n	30,013	30,013	30,013	2,651	1,556	30,013

Source: British Election Study Wave 6

H1 is therefore largely confirmed – traditional campaigning has declined over time, albeit with an upturn for Labour in 2015. H3 in respect of traditional campaigning is also confirmed. The resource intensive nature of traditional campaigning means, that while it has declined largely in line with overall levels of traditional campaigning, it is still most prevalent in parties' target seats.

We examine changes in respect of modern campaigning in Figures 5-7. Our hypotheses are partially confirmed. First, as predicted, modern modes of campaigning are most prevalent in target seats (H3). As with traditional campaigning, the resource intensive nature of modern campaign techniques means that parties concentrate their campaigning in this mode in the seats in which they are focussing most attention. Second, in respect of the growth of

modern campaigning (H2), the picture is more mixed. For both the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats the trend is shaped more as an 'inverse U'. Rather than representing a steady growth in modern campaigning, there has been something of a 'tailing off'. For Labour, the picture is slightly different. In target seats, there was a significant growth in modern activity between 1992 and 1997. However, since then, modern techniques have flat-lined, despite growth of their use in non-target seats, reflecting in part a decline in the cost of the related technology (Fisher & Denver, 2008). This pattern (in respect of non-targets) is also true of the Liberal Democrats up until 2010. But as with traditional campaigning, there was a drop in 2015 reflecting the party's changed electoral status.
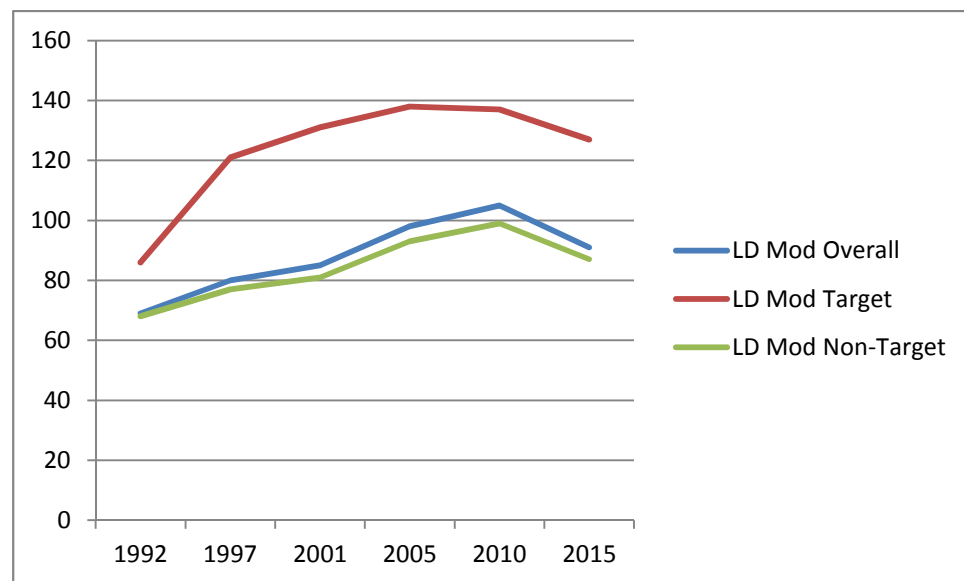
Figure 5. Conservative Modern Campaigning 1992-2015
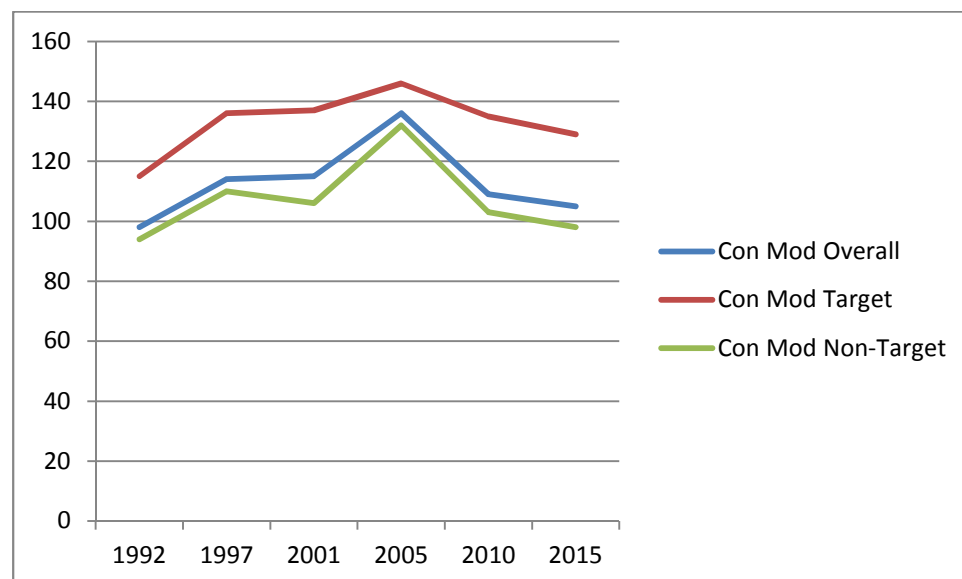
Figure 6. Labour Modern Campaigning 1992-2015
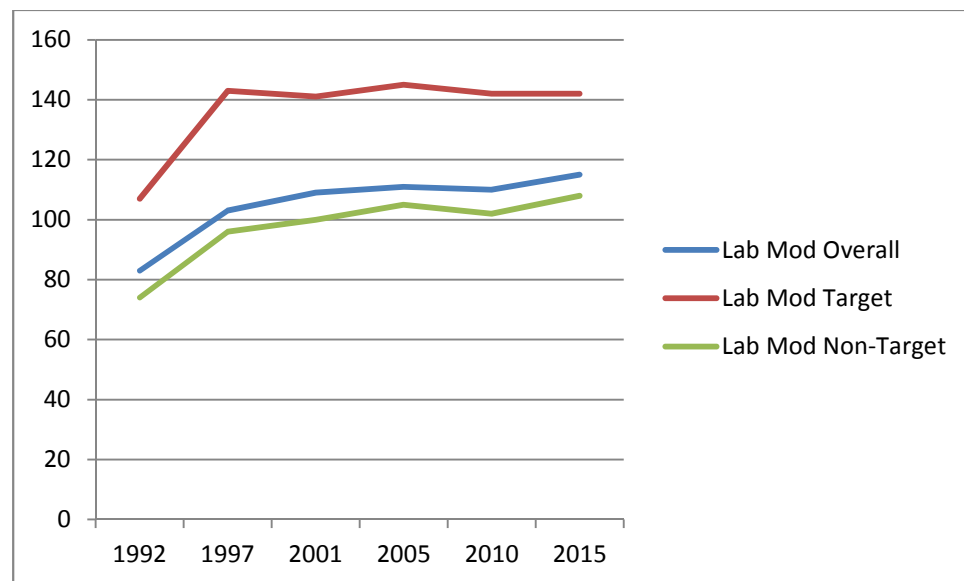
Figure 7. Lib Dem Modern Campaigning 1992-2015

A third test is the relative balance between traditional and modern campaigns (H4). We hypothesise that over time, the balance between traditional and modern campaigns will move towards more modern approaches and that this shift will be more pronounced in target seats. As both indexes are standardised in the same way, we can calculate this by subtracting the traditionalism score in each constituency from that of modernisation. Thus, a positive score indicates a greater relative emphasis on modern campaign techniques, while a negative one suggests more traditionalism on average.

The results are shown in Figures 8-10. All three figures show that as suggested by the previous analyses and as hypothesised, the balance has shifted from traditional towards modern campaigning. Furthermore, the balance has been most pronounced for Labour and least for the Conservatives, despite the latter moving earliest towards more modern approaches.

But, we do observe differences when comparing campaigning which takes place in target seats and that which does not. While the Conservatives were the first to become more modern than traditional in their campaigning, the balance thereafter largely flat-lined. Thus, while campaigning is more modern than traditional in target seats as hypothesised, the difference is not as large as one might expect. By way of contrast, the change for Labour – particularly in target seats – was very pronounced as hypothesised. And, the decline in 2015 in target seats is more to do with a re-growth of traditional campaigning in those seats, rather than a decline in modernisation. In the case of the Liberal Democrats, we also observe a continual growth in the balance towards modern campaigning in target seats. However, in all but two years, the level balance towards modern campaigning is higher in non-target seats than in target ones, counter to our hypothesis. The explanation for this is the nature of Liberal Democrats campaigns and the party itself, which has fewer resources. The Liberal Democrats target fewer seats than the other two parties and have fewer resources, including members. Thus, greater modernisation is prevalent in non-target seats, not necessarily because the party is poor at targeting, but because the use of modern approaches is an effective substitute for relatively low levels of traditional activity as shown in Figure 4, mirroring the findings in Australia and New Zealand (Ward, 2003; Denmark, 2003).

Campaigning then is generally becoming more modern relative to traditional campaigning. But this begs two questions. First, why has modern campaigning apparently declined or flat-lined in recent years? And second, does the growth of less traditional techniques mean that traditional campaigning is less electorally effective?
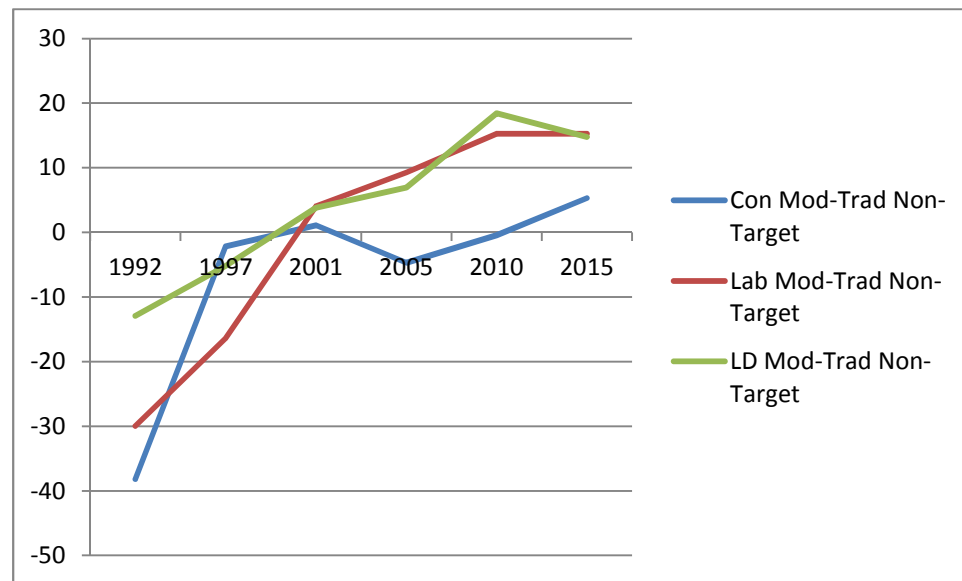
Figure 8. The Balance of Modern and Traditional Campaigning 1992-2015
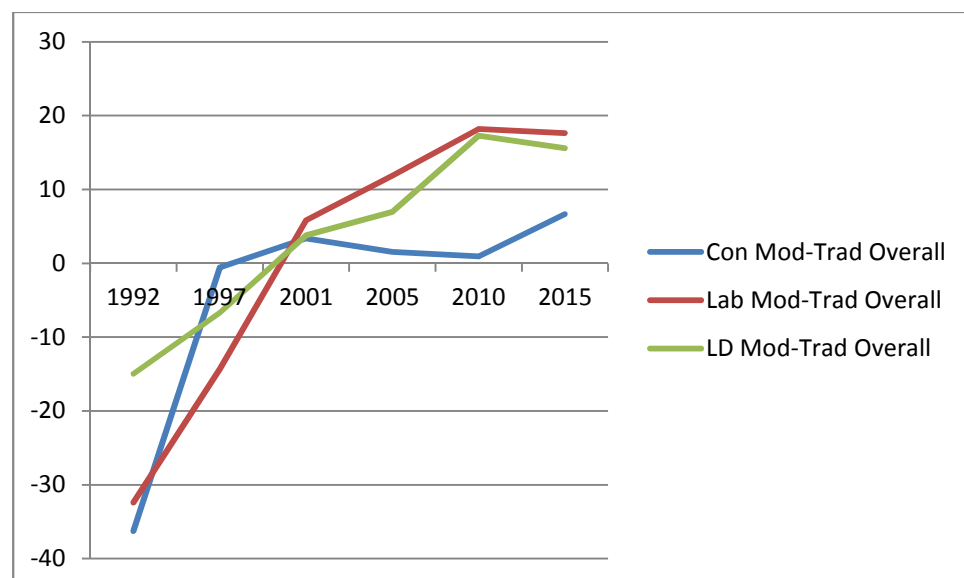
Figure 9. The Balance of Modern and Traditional Campaigning in Target Seats 1992-2015
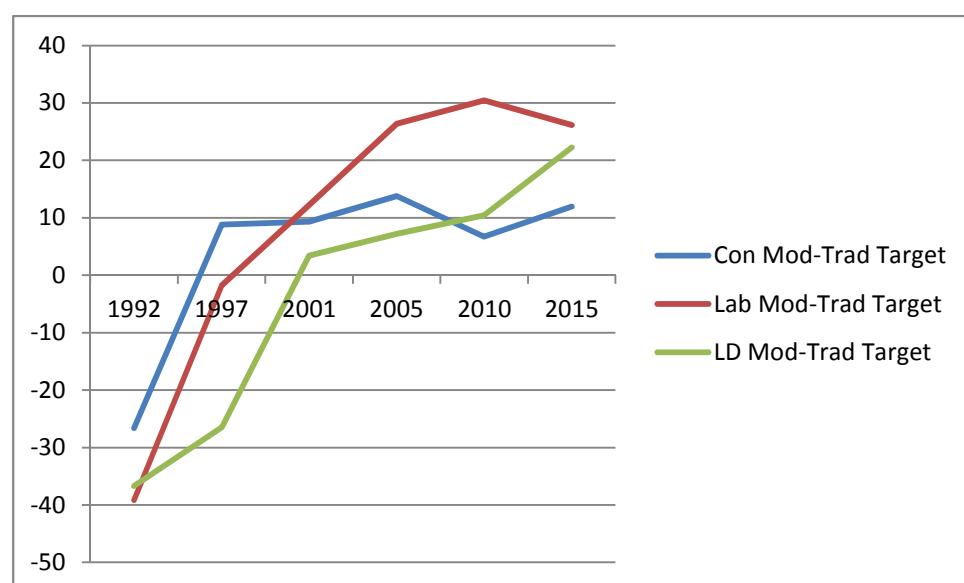
Figure 10. The Balance of Modern and Traditional Campaigning in Non-Target Seats 1992-2015
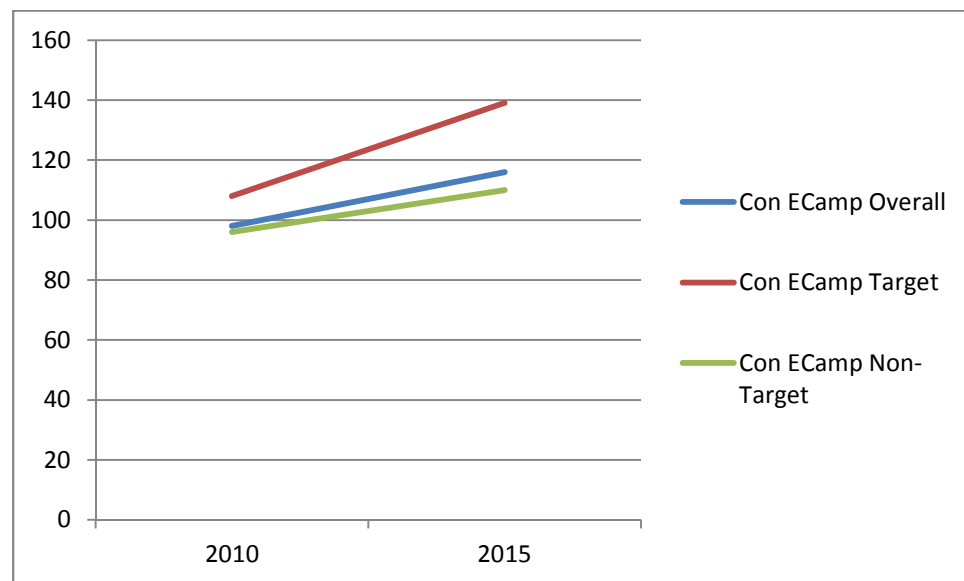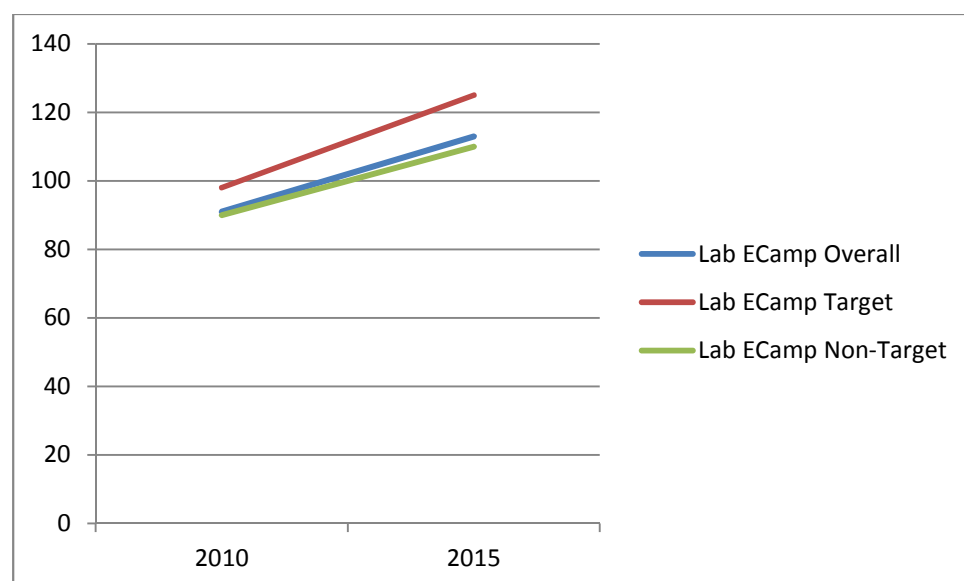

The Decline of Modern Campaigning?

One explanation for the tailing-off or even decline in modern campaign methods is simply that that what was once modern, may not be so modern anymore, or that there are more modern techniques available. Again, it is worth reflecting on the idea of the fax being the height of modernity in 1992, and how other forms of communication have become more common. Equally, with the growth of near universal mobile phone ownership over this period (often at the expense of landlines) it is likely that modern methods will become potentially less widespread, since for example, telephone contact may be less easy to make. Certainly, one of the key areas of development has been e-campaigning, using email, web technology, and social media. In the last two elections (2010 and 2015) this has been much heralded but in 2010 at least, there was little evidence that parties or voters took it as seriously as punters predicted (Fisher, Cutts & Fieldhouse, 2011a; Fisher, Johnston, Pattie, Fieldhouse & Cutts, 2016). However, after two elections we may see evidence that the use of e-campaigning is increasing, and if that is the case, if it is increasing in use relative to modern campaigning. We examine this first question in Figures 11-13, which shows mean levels of e-campaigning in 2010 and 2015.

As is evident, the level of e-campaigning has increased in all types of seat in the case of Labour and the Conservatives, with the growth in target seat activity being slightly more pronounced. For the Liberal Democrats, however, while e-campaigning in target seats has grown, the level of activity in non-targets has flat-lined.

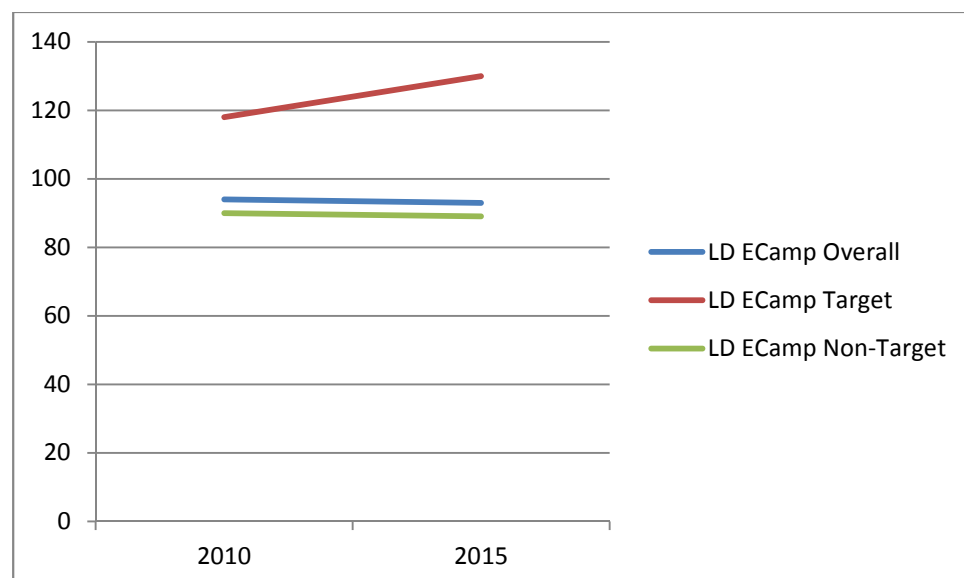**Figure 11.** Conservative ECampaigning 2010-2015

Figure 12. Labour ECampaigning 2010-2015

Figure 13. Lib Dem ECampaigning 2010-2015

To compare the relative emphasis of e-campaigning with modern campaigning, we use a more comprehensive definition of modern, reflecting the fact that what was 'modern' in 2010 will include additional items that did not feature in the early studies from the 1990s. To assess the balance, we subtract the modern index from the e-campaigning index to produce a mean score, whereby a positive net score indicates a balance towards more e-campaigning and a negative one, a balance towards more modern campaigning. The results are shown in Figures 14-16.

We hypothesise the following:

H5   *E-campaigning will grow relative to modern campaigning*
H6   *The relative balance between e-campaigning and modern campaigning will be most accentuated in target seats*

The results confirm that the relative balance between e-campaigning and modern campaigning is changing, with e-campaigning becoming increasingly important (H5). And, that change in balance is most pronounced in the case of the Conservatives and least pronounced for Labour. However, there is clear difference when comparing the relative move towards e-campaigning compared with the balance between modern and traditional campaigning. In the latter, we saw the most pronounced shift in target seats. In respect of the

balance between e-campaigning and modern campaigning, however, the shift is much more pronounced in non-target seats. Thus, for target seats, Labour campaigns still produce a negative net score (indicating a continuing balance towards modern campaigning), while in the case of the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, the net scores are only just positive. In non-target seats, however, all parties' net scores are positive, and higher than in target seats. This runs directly counter to H6 and on the face of it, seems counter intuitive – why would new campaign techniques feature more heavily in seats that parties were not focussing most attention upon?

The explanation can be found in the study of the 2010 election, where a similar pattern was found. Fisher, Cutts and Fieldhouse (2011b: 2010-1) argued that the balance towards e-campaigning relative to modern campaigning in seats that parties were not targeting could be explained both by the fact that e-campaigning required less resource and so differentiation between seats was not so vital as for more resource-intensive forms of campaigning, and that parties did not take e-campaigning as seriously as modern campaigning. The growth in the use of e-campaigning would suggest that parties are taking e-campaigning more seriously than was the case in 2010; but equally, it is still clear that modern techniques are still seen as being ones that are required in target seats. E-campaigning will no doubt continue to grow and with that the balance with modern approaches will change. But, for now, while there has been growth, the hyperbole surrounding e-campaigning continues to represent an exaggeration.

However, the patterns we observe also suggest that understanding developments and patterns of distribution for e-campaigning may require a different approach. Explanations for varying intensity of traditional and modern campaigning are based on resource allocation. Both approaches are resources intensive (human and financial resources) and so activities of these types will be focussed on specific seats in which parties have most strategic interest. The patterns in Figures 14-16 suggest that this explanation is not so applicable to e-campaigning, where relative low cost means that targeting is less necessary. Of course, e-campaigning can incur significant cost, through

targeted posts on Facebook, for example. Certainly, at national level in 2015, the parties spent considerable sums of these techniques (Fisher, 2015). If techniques such as these were to apply at constituency level, then we would expect the resource allocation principles to apply and for activity to increasingly be focussed in target seats, such that the balance between modern and e-campaigning would change. Indeed, there is some evidence of this. In 2015, respondents were asked if they took out paid adverts or promoted posts on Facebook or Twitter. As Table 3 shows, there was a clear difference in the likelihood of doing so depending upon whether the seat was a target or not (and in the case of both the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, to a statistically significant degree). Overall, however, the low cost of most e-campaigning at constituency level means that existing explanations of campaign resource allocation are not currently so applicable.

Figure 14. The Balance of Modern and E-Campaigning 2010-2015
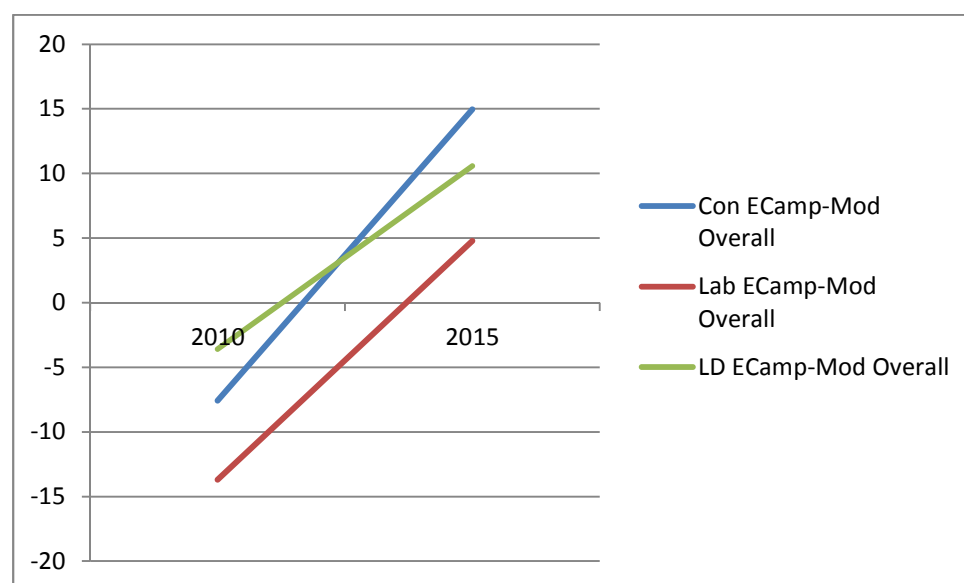
Figure 15. The Balance of Modern and E-Campaigning 2010-2015 in Target Seats
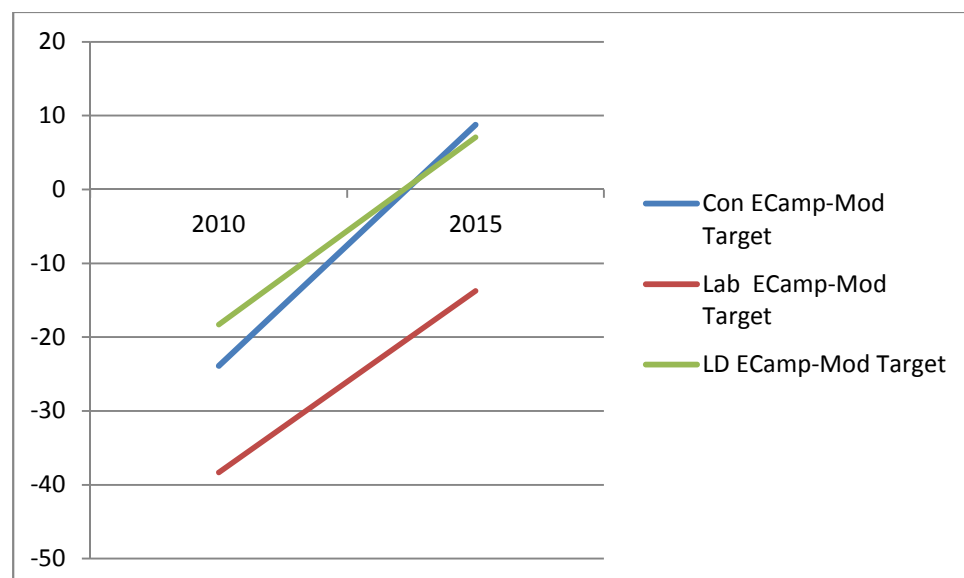
Figure 16. The Balance of Modern and E-Campaigning 2010-2015 in Non-Target Seats
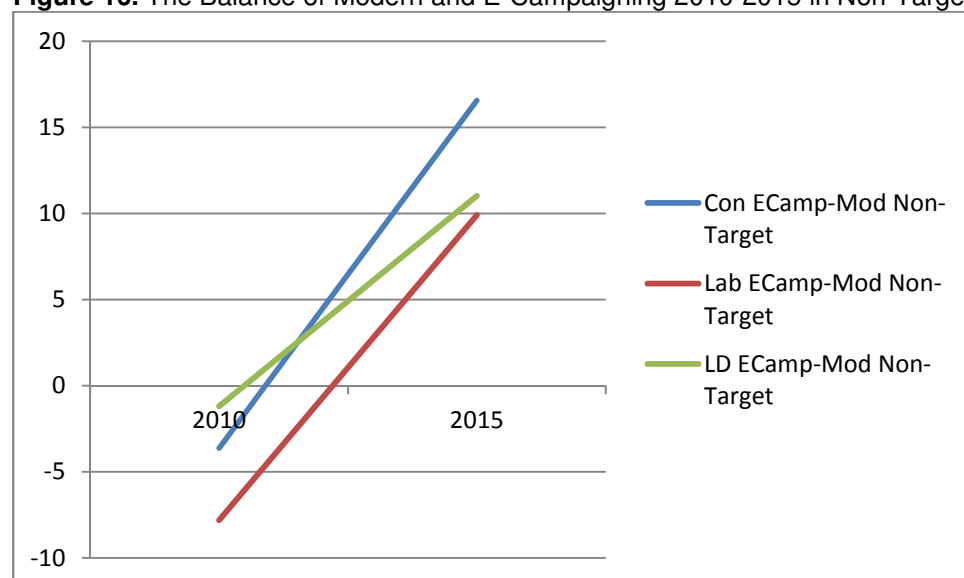
Table 3. Use of Paid Advertising/Promoted Post in Social Media at Constituency Level 2015

% saying yes	Conservative	Labour	Liberal Democrat
Target	48	27	54
Non-Target	21	20	15
p (Chi-Square)	.000	.192	.000

The Resilience of Traditional Campaigning

We turn finally to the question of whether traditional campaigning remains electorally effective, given the developments in campaigning over these six elections. As forms of political communication develop, we might anticipate more traditional campaign methods to become less effective. This would be a function both of parties paying more attention to newer methods of campaigning, and because voters themselves become more accustomed to communicating through these same new means. Campaigning does not exist in a vacuum; so of course, voters will become increasingly used to newer forms of interaction. However, several analyses have suggested that more traditional approaches, based on human contact, may still be effective in electoral terms (Fisher, Johnston, Cutts, Pattie & Fieldhouse, 2014; Fisher, Fieldhouse, Johnson, Pattie & Cutts, 2016) Our hypotheses are therefore as follows:

H6   *Modern and E-Campaigning will become more electorally effective over time*

H7   *Traditional campaigning will continue to be electorally effective*

We evaluate these hypotheses by running models to assess the impact of traditional and modern campaigning for each party in each election. For comparability, all models are run as follows. Each party's share of the vote for each election is regressed on the indexes of traditionalism and modernisation in the respective year, controlling for share of the vote in the previous election and personal incumbency. Given that campaigns in the real world are not delineated between traditional and modern (and that parties will do more or less of both), we test for multi-collinearity and find that there are no issues in any models meaning we can assess whether one, both (or neither) has a positive bearing on a party's share of the vote.

Given that this test involves running eighteen separate regressions, we show only the *b* coefficients for the traditionalism and modernisation Scores together with an indication of whether the impact they have is statistically significant at least at the 0.05 level (in bold). Where both traditionalism and

modernisation have statistically significant effects, we also test for whether the effects are significantly different from each other (indicated using two asterisks). The results are shown in Table 4.

What is very clear is that traditional campaigning continues to deliver positive electoral benefits, confirming H7. In every election for the Liberal Democrats, all but one (2005) for Labour, and two elections (1997 and 2015) for the Conservatives, traditional campaigning delivers positive electoral payoffs. For modernisation, however, the effects are patchier. Modernisation delivers payoffs in four of the six elections for the Liberal Democrats, but only two for Labour and none for the Conservatives. This runs counter to H6, as we would have expected modern campaigning to become increasingly important. So, despite the relative decline of traditional campaigning, it continues to deliver electoral payoffs. Indeed, it delivered payoffs for all three parties in the most recent election. Where both approaches have an impact, however, there is only one circumstance where the relative impact is different to a statistically significant degree – in 2001 for the Liberal Democrats - where traditional campaigning had a more positive impact.

Of course, this is not to suggest that modern approaches have no or little impact – their integration into campaigns have become increasingly important, and of course are not unrelated to some traditional activities (such as the use of telephones to assist in targeting voters on the doorstep). And, of course, to preserve comparability over time, the variables in the modern index reflect the variables available in the 1992 dataset. But the key issue is that despite the growth of other communication techniques, traditional approaches continue to deliver electoral payoffs as predicted in H7.

Table 4. The Electoral Effects of Traditionalism and Modernisation 1992-2015

	Conservative		Labour		Liberal Democrats	
	Trad.	Mod.	Trad.	Mod.	Trad.	Mod.
1992	-.010	.004	**.033**	**.040**	**.087**	**.037**
1997	**.020**	-.003	**.034**	**.036**	**.072**	.019
2001	.001	.006	**.027**	-.007	**.044****	**.021**
2005	.002	.009	-.017	-.003	**.038**	**.032**
2010	.010	.008	**.056**	-.014	**.051**	.018
2015	**.030**	.006	**.064**	-0.28	**.046**	**.021**

Note 1: Coefficients in bold are statistically significant at least at the 0.05 level
Note 2: ** The impact of the larger coefficient is greater than the other key coefficient to a statistically significant degree

We test this further by comparing the effects of traditional campaigning and e-campaigning in 2010 and 2015. The results are shown in Table 5. The modelling is the same as for Table 4, and again, we test for (and do not find) any instances of collinearity. Again, we simply show the relevant *b* coefficients for traditionalism and e-campaigning as the results are drawn from six separate regressions. There are three observations to note. First, traditional campaigning had positive electoral effects in all but one case and it is worth noting again that it had positive effects for all three parties in the most recent election (2015). This further confirms H7. Secondly, there are some positive electoral effects for e-campaigning – for the Conservatives in 2015 and for the Liberal Democrats in both elections. This confirms H6 in respect of e-campaigning. Third, in the case of the Liberal Democrats, the positive effects of traditional campaigning were greater than those of e-campaigning to a statistically significant degree. The key message is therefore that e-campaigning appears to have some positive electoral efforts (though not for Labour), but that once again, traditional approaches have a more consistently positive effect.

Table 5. The Electoral Effects of Traditionalism and E-Campaigning 2010-2015

	Conservative		Labour		Liberal Democrats	
	Trad	ECamp	Trad	ECamp	Trad	ECamp
2010	.011	.008	**.047**	-.004	**.052****	**.023**
2015	**.026**	**.013**	**.039**	.012	**.054****	**.019**

Note 1: Coefficients in bold are statistically significant at least at the 0.05 level
Note 2: ** The impact of the larger coefficient is greater than the other key coefficient to a statistically significant degree

Conclusions

Campaigns do not exist in a vacuum. They reflect broader trends in society. Thus, if technological developments are increasingly available and over-time, at a falling relative cost, we would expect such trends to be reflected in the development of campaigns. Equally, over time, voters become accustomed to different modes of communication. But critically, different types of voters may use different modes. Thus, while middle-aged voters may find email to be ubiquitous where previously the telephone dominated, younger voters may well communicate more via social media. And indeed, there may not be such a linear trend in terms of age. In the 2015 election, for example, the Conservatives at a national level made considerable use of Facebook, since they established that older voters (who are more likely to vote) are high users of Facebook as a means of communicating with grandchildren.

Of course, the existence of differing forms of communications does not imply that it will be automatically adopted in political campaigns. Parties have to be particularly careful of the potential for backlash with some approaches. Labour, for example, was criticised for a text message campaign sent to young voters in the 2005 just before closing-time indicating its support for longer pub opening hours. But, these obstacles aside, we would expect developments in communications to be reflected up to a point in campaigns. Of course, the wider adoption of technology can lead to more traditional methods being appreciated. Thus, the ubiquity of electronic mail can make a letter or a personal contact potentially more valued. Again, this mirrors wider trends whereby, for example, just as a world of music is available via streaming services such as Spotify, consumers have re-discovered (and indeed discovered) the joy of vinyl. All of which is to say, that campaigns will reflect broader developments, but will not automatically adopt the latest technology, or abandon existing methods of voter contact.

What we show in the paper is that the use of traditional campaign methods has declined. And this may be expected given the declining pool of human resource available to parties, together with the greater potential reach of different technologies. And, during the period, the relative balance compared

with modern approaches has changed, particularly in target seats. This is to be expected as these modern approaches are, like traditional methods, resources intensive, and a strategic and targeted approach is therefore necessary. But, technologies also change. It's clear that after a sharp rising in adoption, the use of modern techniques 'peaked' in the mid-2000s. This may be partly to do with saturation – as availability increases and relative costs fall, there will be limits to the extent to which modern approaches can grow, not least since these methods also require some labour (to staff the computers and to telephone voters, for example). So such developments are not themselves immune from the decline in campaign workers.

But another reason for the peaking and even decline of modern campaigning is the development of e-campaigning. This has become increasingly popular. But critically, allocation of resource does not appear to follow the patterns we have seen in traditional and modern approaches. It is more prevalent in target seats, but its adoption relative to modern approaches suggests that e-campaigning does not necessarily lend itself so easily to the traditional model of understanding the distribution of campaign activity. The shift towards e-campaigning has occurred much more strongly in non-target seats than in target ones, which is different from the patterns we observed in the shift from traditional to modern campaigning.

For all these changes, however, there is a near constant – the electoral effectiveness of traditional modes of campaigning. These effects are not uniform – traditionalism in Conservative campaigns has delivered only patchy results. But overall, this approach delivers positive payoffs more often than not. This is not so much the case with either modern or e-campaigns. Now of course, as we have stressed, in the real world campaigns are a combination of all three approaches. But these findings do suggest three possibilities. First, it is entirely possible that voters do not respond so well to impersonal contact, or of course, that the impersonal contact may not be very good. Relatedly, they may just prefer the more human touch. Secondly, as suggested above, the development of a variety of different modes of communications, may make the more traditional approach more valued by voters – perhaps even

more valued than it was the case when traditional approaches dominated. Thirdly, and counter to the projections in stage 3 of the development of district-level communications (see Table 1), it's entirely possible that technology will never replace traditional campaign techniques. Approaches such as modern and e-campaigning may not be alternatives to traditionalism, but rather, they will always play a supporting role to the enduring positive impact of campaign approaches that have far longer roots.

Appendix

Responses

| | Conservative | | Labour | | Liberal Democrats | |
	All	Target	All	Target	All	Target
1992	265	45	356	95	383	33
1997	434	64	455	65	411	29
2001	375	103	443	96	432	33
2005	68	23	334	51	212	24
2010	287	56	388	75	353	50
2015	244	50	336	73	332	37

Variables used in calculation of indexes

Traditionalism (1992-2015)
- Number of regional or national leaflets delivered
- Number of local leaflets delivered
- Percentage of electorate canvassed on doorstep
- Number of campaign workers
- Number of polling day workers
- 'Good morning' minute leaflets delivered on polling day
- 'Knock up' voters on poll day
- Proportion of electorate covered by number-takers

Component Matrix[a]

	Component
	1
Leaflets	.324
Doorstep Canvassing	.776
No. of Workers	.730
Polling Day Activity	.744
Proportion of electorate covered by number-takers	.811

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 1 components extracted.

Modernisation (1992-2015)
- Use of computers
- Use of computerised electoral register
- Used party software
- Used computers for 'knocking-up'
- Use of computers: Targeted direct mail
- Use of computers: Keep records of canvass returns
- Used telephones for 'knocking-up'
- Telephone canvassing

Component Matrix[a]

	Component
	1
Computer Use	.818
Voters Contacted By Telephone On Polling Day	.863
Use Telephone Canvassing	.852

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 1 components extracted.

E-Campaigning (2010 - 2015)
- Pre-Election Campaign – Operating and maintaining website
- Pre-Election Campaign – Using social networking sites
- Contact voters in constituency by text message
- Make use of Twitter to communicate with voters
- Campaign effort – Maintaining website
- Campaign effort – Emailing voters
- Campaign effort – Social networking sites (Facebook)
- Campaign effort -Video/image sharing sites (Youtube/Flickr)
- Use of computers: Emailing voters
- Local party or candidate own website
- Used text message for 'knocking-up'
- Used email for 'knocking-up'

Component Matrix[a]

	Component
	1
Pre-Election E-Campaigning	.797
E-Campaigning Contacts	.700
E-Campaigning Effort	.871
Mean E-Campaigning Activities	.719

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 1 components extracted.

Modernisation (2010 - 2015)

- Use of computers
- Use of computerised electoral register
- Used party software
- Used computers for 'knocking-up'
- Use of computers: Targeted direct mail
- Use of computers: Keep records of canvass returns
- Used telephones for 'knocking-up'
- Use of direct mail
- Percentage canvassed by telephone

Component Matrix[a]

	Component
	1
Computer Use	.743
Voters Contacted By Telephone On Polling Day	.824
Direct Mail Used To Target Individual Voters	.805
Telephone Canvassing	.665

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 1 components extracted.

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