Abstract Submission

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Abstract

The use of social media platforms such as Facebook has grown in the Republic of Ireland and elsewhere over the past number of years. At the same time the Republic of Ireland's political system has undergone significant changes both in response to local and world events. Both have obviously influenced election campaigns. As can be seen from the case studies by Babac and Podobnik (2018), Chou and Fu (2017), and Ktoridou et al. (2018) analysing elections in Croatia, Taiwan, and Cyprus respectively, this increased usage of social media platforms are playing an ever-greater role in election campaign strategies in many countries around the world. To date there has been little analysis of this within the Republic of Ireland. At the same time there have been several historic election campaigns and referendums in recent years that have utilised social media platforms such as Facebook for their campaigns. This study gathers information and analyses the use of Facebook as a campaign tool for several elections and referendums between the years 2011 to 2018. The methodology used for this study was a quantitative analysis of Facebook post data. The analysis of this data showed a growth in the use of Facebook as a campaigning tool between the years 2011 to 2018 and a clear rise in the level of engagement between parties using the platform for the purposes of political campaigning and the public. It also shows a shift in usage from the beginning of the decade where Facebook was used by parties and candidates to direct users to their websites, to the latter years where they began hosting more and more content on the Facebook platform itself in order to maximise engagement with the public.