E-campaigning: An Empirical Study of the Utilisation of ICTs for Election Campaigning in the 2008 New Zealand General Election

by

Xiaoyi Gong

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In loving memory of my father Gong Xinfa (1948-2014), who firmly believed the pursuit of knowledge to be the most noble of all. I also dedicate this thesis to my mother Wang Haijian.

Abstract

E-campaigning refers to the utilisation of information and communication technologies (ICTs), predominantly the Internet, and related applications for election campaigning. At present, scholarly research in this social phenomenon chiefly focuses on how e-campaigning is utilised by political parties or candidates. Also, there is growing research interest in factors that influence e-campaigning utilisation. However, political parties' or candidates' e-campaigning utilisation is largely unexplored and unexplained. This is attributable to several factors, notably, restricted access to the phenomenon, the narrow and geographical concentration of existing e-campaigning research, the accessibility of political parties' or candidates' campaign teams as research participants, and a dearth of multidisciplinary research. To that end, this study empirically explores and explains e-campaigning utilisation with a multidisciplinary, multiple-case research approach. Further, this study is situated in the 2008 New Zealand general election, involving six of eight parliamentary parties. Based on existing e-campaigning research, this study proposes a new theoretical framework to understand, describe, and compare e-campaigning utilisation. This e-campaigning framework has been empirically applied. Notably, the findings suggest that political parties' e-campaigning utilisation varied markedly beyond information dissemination; although social media was introduced in most parties' e-campaigning, its interactive nature was barely exploited; and innovative e-campaigning appeared to be the exception rather than the norm. From political science and information systems literature, this study identifies ten factors, encompassing both external and internal aspects as well as various perspectives, to explain e-campaigning utilisation. The findings suggest that those factors in general are empirically relevant, accurate, and adequate. This study concludes that e-campaigning is a complex, contextual, diverse, and dynamic phenomenon. As such, it is difficult, if not impossible, to generalise or predict e-campaigning utilisation; also, a multidisciplinary approach is pivotal to investigating the phenomenon.

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The pursuit of a doctorate is a lone journey, they say. I disagree. I believe that in a doctoral journey, every step leading to the successful completion is inseparable from others' dedication, inspiration, and encouragement. It is therefore my greatest pleasure to acknowledge them here.

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Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction **1**
1.1 Chapter introduction 1
1.2 Research motivation 1
1.3 Research objectives and research questions 4
1.3.1 Research objectives 4
1.3.2 Research questions 5
1.4 Definition of key terms 5
1.5 Delimitations 6
1.6 Thesis outline 6

Chapter 2 Literature review **9**
2.1 Chapter introduction 9
2.2 An overview of e-campaigning in practice and the literature 9
2.2.1 E-campaigning in practice 9
2.2.2 E-campaigning in the literature 11
2.3 Theorising e-campaigning utilisation 14
2.3.1 How e-campaigning is theorised in the literature 14
2.3.2 Issues with existing theoretical frameworks in the literature 15
2.3.3 Towards a new theoretical framework 17
2.4 Factors influencing e-campaigning utilisation 33
2.4.1 Prevalent factors in e-campaigning research 33
2.4.2 Issues with the prevalent factors 41
2.4.3 Factors influencing e-campaigning utilisation: an IS perspective 42
2.4.4 Summary 49
2.5 Chapter summary 50

Chapter 3 Research design **51**
3.1 Chapter introduction 51
3.2 Research questions 52
3.3 Research paradigm 52
3.3.1 Prevalent research paradigms 53
3.3.2 The research paradigm endorsed in this study 57

3.4 Research approach 57
3.4.1 Prevalent research approaches 57
3.4.2 The research approach adopted in this study and the roles of the researcher 60
3.5 Research method 61
3.5.1 Prevalent research methods 62
3.5.2 The research method employed in this study 65
3.6 Case research design 65
3.6.1 Unit of analysis 65
3.6.2 Single-case or multiple-case research 66
3.6.3 Case selection 67
3.7 Procedures for data collection 68
3.7.1 Data collection for the first research question 68
3.7.2 Data collection for the second research question 69
3.8 Procedures for data analysis 71
3.8.1 Data analysis for the first research question 71
3.8.2 Data analysis for the second research question 73
3.9 Addressing research rigour 76
3.10 Chapter summary 78

Chapter 4 National's e-campaigning utilisation 79
4.1 Chapter introduction 79
4.2 Case background 79
4.3 National's e-campaigning utilisation and its extent 81
4.3.1 Information dissemination 81
4.3.2 Voter interaction and engagement 83
4.3.3 Support mobilisation 85
4.3.4 Targeted campaigning 87
4.3.5 Resource generation 89
4.3.6 Summary 90
4.4 The factors influencing National's e-campaigning utilisation 91
4.4.1 Election type 92
4.4.2 Electoral regulations 94

4.4.3 Voters' technology access 95
4.4.4 Resource availability 96
4.4.5 Subjective norm 99
4.4.6 Image 100
4.4.7 Job relevance 103
4.4.8 Output quality 104
4.4.9 Result demonstrability 105
4.4.10 Perceived ease of use 107
4.4.11 Summary 109
4.5 Chapter summary 110

Chapter 5 Labour's e-campaigning utilisation 111
5.1 Chapter introduction 111
5.2 Case background 111
5.3 Labour's e-campaigning utilisation and its extent 113
5.3.1 Information dissemination 113
5.3.2 Voter interaction and engagement 118
5.3.3 Support mobilisation 120
5.3.4 Targeted campaigning 122
5.3.5 Resource generation 125
5.3.6 Summary 125
5.4 The factors influencing Labour's e-campaigning utilisation 127
5.4.1 Election type 127
5.4.2 Electoral regulations 128
5.4.3 Voters' technology access 130
5.4.4 Resource availability 132
5.4.5 Subjective norm 138
5.4.6 Image 140
5.4.7 Job relevance 142
5.4.8 Output quality 144
5.4.9 Result demonstrability 146
5.4.10 Perceived ease of use 148
5.4.11 Summary 149

5.5 Chapter summary 150

Chapter 6 The Greens' e-campaigning utilisation 151

6.1 Chapter introduction 151

6.2 Case background 151

6.3 The Greens' e-campaigning utilisation and its extent 153

6.3.1 Information dissemination 153

6.3.2 Voter interaction and engagement 154

6.3.3 Support mobilisation 156

6.3.4 Targeted campaigning 159

6.3.5 Resource generation 160

6.3.6 Summary 161

6.4 The factors influencing the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation 163

6.4.1 Election type 163

6.4.2 Electoral regulations 164

6.4.3 Voters' technology access 165

6.4.4 Resource availability 166

6.4.5 Subjective norm 168

6.4.6 Image 170

6.4.7 Job relevance 172

6.4.8 Output quality 173

6.4.9 Result demonstrability 175

6.4.10 Perceived ease of use 176

6.4.11 Summary 177

6.5 Chapter summary 178

Chapter 7 ACT's e-campaigning utilisation 179

7.1 Chapter introduction 179

7.2 Case background 179

7.3 ACT's e-campaigning utilisation and its extent 180

7.3.1 Information dissemination 181

7.3.2 Voter interaction and engagement 182

7.3.3 Support mobilisation 184

7.3.4 Targeted campaigning 185

7.3.5 Resource generation 187
7.3.6 Summary 188
7.4 The factors influencing ACT's e-campaigning utilisation 190
7.4.1 Voters' technology access 190
7.4.2 Resource availability 191
7.4.3 Subjective norm 193
7.4.4 Image 194
7.4.5 Output quality 195
7.4.6 Summary 196
7.5 Chapter summary 197

Chapter 8 The Progressives' e-campaigning utilisation 199
8.1 Chapter introduction 199
8.2 Case background 199
8.3 The Progressives' e-campaigning utilisation and its extent 201
8.3.1 Information dissemination 201
8.3.2 Voter interaction and engagement 202
8.3.3 Support mobilisation 203
8.3.4 Targeted campaigning 204
8.3.5 Summary 205
8.4 The factors influencing the Progressives' e-campaigning utilisation 206
8.4.1 Electoral regulations 206
8.4.2 Resource availability 208
8.4.3 Image 210
8.4.4 Job relevance 211
8.4.5 Output quality 213
8.4.6 Summary 215
8.5 Chapter summary 215

Chapter 9 United Future's e-campaigning utilisation 217
9.1 Chapter introduction 217
9.2 Case background 217
9.3 United Future's e-campaigning utilisation and its extent 219
9.3.1 Information dissemination 219

9.3.2 Voter interaction and engagement 220
9.3.3 Support mobilisation 222
9.3.4 Targeted campaigning 223
9.3.5 Resource generation 224
9.3.6 Summary 225
9.4 The factors influencing United Future's e-campaigning utilisation 227
9.4.1 Voters' technology access 227
9.4.2 Resource availability 228
9.4.3 Subjective norm 229
9.4.4 Image 230
9.4.5 Output quality 232
9.4.6 Result demonstrability 233
9.4.7 Summary 234
9.5 Chapter summary 234

Chapter 10 Cross-case analysis 235
10.1 Chapter introduction 235
10.2 The political parties' e-campaigning utilisation 235
10.2.1 Information dissemination 235
10.2.2 Voter interaction and engagement 236
10.2.3 Support mobilisation 236
10.2.4 Targeted campaigning 237
10.2.5 Resource generation 237
10.2.6 Summary 237
10.3 The factors influencing the parties' e-campaigning utilisation 239
10.3.1 Election type 239
10.3.2 Electoral regulations 239
10.3.3 Voters' technology access 240
10.3.4 Resource availability 240
10.3.5 Subjective norm 241
10.3.6 Image 241
10.3.7 Job relevance 241
10.3.8 Output quality 242

10.3.9 Result demonstrability 242
10.3.10 Perceived ease of use 242
10.3.11 Summary 242
10.4 Chapter summary 246

Chapter 11 Discussion 247
11.1 Chapter introduction 247
11.2 The political parties' e-campaigning utilisation 247
11.2.1 Information dissemination 247
11.2.2 Voter interaction and engagement 248
11.2.3 Support mobilisation 249
11.2.4 Targeted campaigning 250
11.2.5 Resource generation 252
11.2.6 Summary 252
11.3 The factors influencing the parties' e-campaigning utilisation 254
11.3.1 Election type 254
11.3.2 Electoral regulations 255
11.3.3 Voters' technology access 256
11.3.4 Resource availability 257
11.3.5 Subjective norm 259
11.3.6 Image 260
11.3.7 Job relevance 262
11.3.8 Output quality 262
11.3.9 Result demonstrability 263
11.3.10 Perceived ease of use 264
11.3.11 Summary 265
11.4 Chapter summary 266

Chapter 12 Conclusion 267
12.1 Chapter introduction 267
12.2 Research contributions 267
12.2.1 Contributions to academic research 267
12.2.2 Contributions to e-campaigning practitioners 269
12.3 Research limitations 270

12.4 Avenues for future research 270
12.5 Concluding remarks 272

Appendix 1: An example of an e-campaigning framework 275

Appendix 2: List of instruments for data collection and analysis 277

References 279

List of figures

Figure 2.1 McCain's e-campaign targeted at Obama (Stirland, 2008) 30
Figure 4.1 The home page of National's campaign website (part 1) 80
Figure 4.2 The home page of National's campaign website (part 2) 81
Figure 4.3 National's NTV 83
Figure 4.4 National's tax calculator 84
Figure 4.5 National's 'Send an Ecard' 87
Figure 5.1 The home page of Labour's campaign website (part 1) 112
Figure 5.2 The home page of Labour's campaign website (part 2) 112
Figure 5.3 Labour's use of tag cloud 115
Figure 5.4 Helen's diary 116
Figure 5.5 Labour's tax calculator 118
Figure 5.6 Labour's KiwiSaver calculator 119
Figure 5.7 Labour's use of Web 2.0 services for sharing its campaign blog 121
Figure 5.8 Labour's policy comparison on the home page 123
Figure 5.9 Labour's dedicated web page for a full policy comparison 123
Figure 5.10 An alternative form of Labour's policy comparison 123
Figure 6.1 The home page of the Greens' campaign website 152
Figure 6.2 An entry on frogblog 156
Figure 6.3 An entry on g.blog mobilising voter support 158
Figure 6.4 The Green Shop 161
Figure 6.5 A sticker sold in the Green Shop 161
Figure 7.1 The home page of ACT's campaign website 180
Figure 7.2 ACT's ‘Media’ page 182
Figure 7.3 ACT's 'Blog' page 183
Figure 7.4 An invitation from Hide 185
Figure 7.5 ACT's e-campaign targeted at Chinese-speaking voters 187
Figure 7.6 ACT's election advertisement on Facebook 187
Figure 8.1 The home page of the Progressives' campaign website 200
Figure 8.2 The 'Dialogue' page on the Progressives' campaign website 203
Figure 8.3 The website for supporting the Progressives 204
Figure 9.1 The home page of United Future's campaign website 218

Figure 9.2 A current poll conducted by United Future 221
Figure 9.3 United Future's discussion forum 222

List of tables

Table 2.1 The proposed e-campaigning framework 33
Table 2.2 The factors influencing e-campaigning utilisation considered in this study 50
Table 3.1 Initial code list 74
Table 3.2 Final code list 75
Table 4.1 National's e-campaigning utilisation and its extent 91
Table 4.2 The factors influencing National's e-campaigning utilisation 109
Table 5.1 Labour's e-campaigning utilisation and its extent 126
Table 5.2 The factors influencing Labour's e-campaigning utilisation 149
Table 6.1 The Greens' e-campaigning utilisation and its extent 162
Table 6.2 The factors influencing the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation 178
Table 7.1 ACT's e-campaigning utilisation and its extent 189
Table 7.2 The factors influencing ACT's e-campaigning utilisation 196
Table 8.1 The Progressives' e-campaigning utilisation and its extent 206
Table 8.2 The factors influencing the Progressives' e-campaigning utilisation 215
Table 9.1 United Future's e-campaigning utilisation and its extent 226
Table 9.2 The factors influencing United Future's e-campaigning utilisation 234
Table 10.1 The six political parties' e-campaigning utilisation in the election 238
Table 10.2 The factors influencing the parties' e-campaigning utilisation (part 1) 244
Table 10.3 The factors influencing the parties' e-campaigning utilisation (part 2) 245
Table 11.1 Revised e-campaigning framework 253

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter is concerned with the introduction of this thesis. It proceeds as follows: section 1.2 pertains to the research motivation; section 1.3 articulates the research objectives and questions in light of the research motivation; section 1.4 defines the key terms in this study; section 1.5 indicates the scope of this study; and last, section 1.6 outlines the structure of the remainder of this thesis.

1.2 Research motivation

Political elections, especially at the national level, are a core component of representative democracies, as governments are born as a result of securing sufficient votes cast by legitimate voters (LeDuc, Niemi, & Norris, 2014). Moreover, the outcome of an election determines different governmental policies, which ultimately affect the future of society and the lives of citizens (Brady & Stewart, 1991; Nogee, 1991; Powell, 2014). For this reason, elections are regarded as a key indicator of a nation's democratic health or vital instruments of democracy (LeDuc et al., 2014; Powell, 2014).

In every election cycle a long-standing ritual commonly occurs that sees campaign teams representing political parties or candidates 'wage battles for votes and political office' (Farrell & Schmitt-Beck, 2002, p. 2). Farrell and Schmitt-Beck refer to that as *election campaigning*. Norris (2002, p. 128) further defines it as 'organised efforts to inform, persuade and mobilise'.

Traditionally, election campaigning had been associated with in-person engagement with voters, television advertising, newspaper coverage, radio talks, campaign billboards, and printed materials – such as pamphlets and letters (Bimber & Davis, 2003; Denver & Hands, 2002; Norris, 2002; Wlezien, 2014). In 1992, former US President Bill Clinton and his campaign team deployed a website for Clinton's first presidential election campaigning, which is considered as the genesis of a new form of election campaigning, also referred to as *e-campaigning* (Owen & Davis, 2008). Shortly after Clinton, an increasing number of parties or

candidates started to adopt e-campaigning and take it to a new level by integrating various ICTs, applications, and electioneering practices (D'Alessio, 2000; Gibson, Ward, & Lusoli, 2002). This has eventuated in a global phenomenon (e.g., Copeland & Rommele, 2014; Dezelan, Vobic, & Maksuti, 2014; Gibson & McAllister, 2008; Koc-Michalska, Gibson, & Vedel, 2014; Mirandilla, 2007; Tekwani & Shetty, 2007; Vergeer & Hermans, 2013).

The e-campaigning phenomenon has also captured political scientists' attention. Scholarly research in e-campaigning started soon after its debut in practice. The early wave of e-campaigning research chiefly pertains to debating the potential consequences of e-campaigning or *e-democracy* – the utilisation of ICTs, particularly the Internet, in democratic processes, resulting in mixed views (Bimber, 1998, 2001; Gibson & Ward, 2000a; Margolis, Resnick, & Levy, 2003; Norris, 2001; Sunstein, 2002).

While the debates continue (e.g., Gibson & McAllister, 2014; Schweitzer, 2008b; Sunstein, 2007), Norris (2002, p. 143) responds to those with a negative view of e-campaigning by contending that e-campaigning, or election campaigning in general, is not to blame for 'more deep-rooted ills of the body politic'. Further, it is increasingly pointed out that the consequences of utilising ICTs in democratic processes are contextual, complex, and often not immediately observable; therefore, assessments and conclusions should not be made on the basis of limited observations and contexts (Farrell & Schmitt-Beck, 2002; Gibson, Nixon, & Ward, 2003; Gibson, Rommele, & Ward, 2004; Schmitt-Beck, 2004). It is further argued that the consequences of e-campaigning are contingent on how it is utilised by political parties and candidates (Smith, 1998). Another wave of e-campaigning research has since commenced and become dominant in the literature, which focuses on exploring e-campaigning utilisation (e.g., Bentivegna, 2008; Bimber, 2014; Dader, 2008; Gibson, Margolis, Resnick, & Ward, 2003; Hameed, 2007; Hooghe & Vissers, 2008; Koc-Michalska et al., 2014; Schweitzer, 2008a; Small, Taras, & Danchuk, 2008; Strandberg, 2009; Vergeer, Hermans, & Sams, 2013; Voerman & Boogers, 2008; Ward, Gibson, & Lusoli, 2008). However, it is recognised that knowledge relating to how e-campaigning is utilised by political parties or candidates is limited, despite an increase of research engagement in the

area (Ward, Owen, Davis, & Taras, 2008). Some political scientists point out that the quickening pace of technological advancement, and the narrow and geographical concentration of e-campaigning studies are the main contributing factors (Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). Restricted access to the e-campaigning phenomenon can also be considered as another important factor. More specifically, e-campaigning is contingent on elections; they occur only periodically with considerably long intervals in between. For instance, in the US a presidential election occurs every four years and in the UK the interval between general elections is set at five years.

From observing and comparing political parties' or candidates' utilisation of e-campaigning within elections or across democracies, it is found that e-campaigning utilisation varies markedly despite the underlying technologies and applications being largely identical (Gibson, Margolis, et al., 2003; Jankowski, Foot, Kluver, & Schneider, 2005; Small, 2008; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). Further, the potential of ICTs and related applications has not been fully exploited (Anstead & Chadwick, 2009; Gibson & McAllister, 2008). These together have led to a new stream in e-campaigning research that pertains to explaining e-campaigning utilisation by uncovering factors that influence political parties' or candidates' e-campaigning utilisation (e.g., Anstead & Chadwick, 2009; Lilleker & Vedel, 2013; Marcinkowski & Metag, 2014; Small, 2008; Tkach-Kawasaki, 2007; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). This research stream is still in its infancy and is mostly theoretically-based only.

Thus far, e-campaigning research has been almost solely conducted by political scientists. It is suggested in the political science discipline that cross-disciplinary collaboration is extremely beneficial to research in the political use of ICTs and information systems (IS) is a recommended discipline (Norris, 2001). Some IS scholars concur (e.g., McGrath, Elbanna, Hercheui, Panagiotopoulos, & Saad, 2012; Wattal, Schuff, Mandviwalla, & Williams, 2010). However, there is an overwhelming lack of enthusiasm and participation from the IS community in research pertaining to the political use of ICTs, or *e-politics* (McGrath et al., 2012; Wattal et al., 2010). Wattal et al. are particularly concerned. By using US President

Barack Obama's e-campaigning in the 2008 presidential election as an example in their feature article in MIS Quarterly, Wattal et al. (2010, p. 680) stress that

> the field of Information Systems can move beyond the traditional focus on business and the organisation and tackle larger societal issues.
>
> Political science is one area in which IS's deep understanding of the effect of technological systems, and information creation, use, and management can be of great value.

Put succinctly, political parties' or candidates' e-campaigning utilisation is largely unexplored and unexplained. Further, calls for multidisciplinary research from the political science and IS disciplines remain unanswered.

1.3 Research objectives and research questions

1.3.1 Research objectives

Four main objectives are defined for this study. First, this study intends to respond to calls from both the political science and IS disciplines to employ a multidisciplinary approach. More specifically, this study intends to draw on political science and IS perspectives. Second, this study intends to deliver a comprehensive empirical understanding of e-campaigning utilisation within an election. Third, this study intends to provide an empirical understanding of factors that influence e-campaigning utilisation within an election.

Last, albeit limited, there are a few empirical studies of e-campaigning utilisation in New Zealand, take Pedersen's (2005) and Chen's (2009) studies, for instance. Pedersen (2005, p. 107) explores both parliamentary and non-parliamentary parties' e-campaigning in the 2005 New Zealand general election, which 'contributes to an increased understanding of how parties apply the new information and communication technology [to election campaigning]'. However, e-campaigning in an election is contextual and also, in e-campaigning, technology is constantly evolving, and political parties and candidates are continuously learning, experimenting, and innovating (Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). This accordingly jeopardises the applicability of the findings and conclusions of Pedersen's study to a subsequent New Zealand general election; in other words, the landscape of New Zealand political parties' e-campaigning in the 2005 election

as observed by Pedersen is anticipated to differ considerably from that in a subsequent election. Although part of Chen's study pertains to some parliamentary parties' e-campaigning in the 2008 New Zealand general election, it chiefly focuses on the two major parties. Since MMP (mixed member proportional) replaced FPP (first past the post) in 1996 as the electoral system for New Zealand general elections, New Zealand's political landscape has become increasingly diverse (Miller, 2010; Mulgan, 2004). Yet, this characteristic is not reflected in Chen's study due to the primary focus on the major parties; thus, the representativeness and comprehensiveness of the empirical understanding offered by Chen's study is restricted. Moreover, little research is present in the literature that attempts to empirically explain New Zealand political parties' e-campaigning utilisation. Taken together, the present empirical understanding of New Zealand political parties' e-campaigning utilisation and factors that influence the utilisation is insufficient, warranting the need for further empirical research. To that end, this study intends to be situated in a New Zealand context.

1.3.2 Research questions

Based on the research objectives, two questions are to be answered in this study:

1. How do political parties' campaign teams utilise ICTs for election campaigning in New Zealand?
2. What are the factors that influence those campaign teams' utilisation of e-campaigning and why?

1.4 Definition of key terms

Three terms feature prominently in this study, namely, election campaigning, e-campaigning, and campaign team. They are defined as follows.

Election campaigning. Based on the views of Farrell and Schmitt-Beck (2002), Norris (2002), and Wlezien (2014), election campaigning in this study is defined as collective, orchestrated efforts in a political election in order to influence voting preferences and the election outcome.

E-campaigning. Consistent with the views of Bentivegna (2008), Lilleker and Vedel (2013), and Schweitzer (2008b), e-campaigning in this study is defined as the utilisation of ICTs, predominantly the Internet, and related applications for election campaigning. In the literature, e-campaigning is also referred to as *online campaigning* (e.g., Small et al., 2008; Strandberg, 2009), *Internet campaigning* (e.g., Gibson, Rommele, & Ward, 2003), or *cyber campaigning* (e.g., Gibson & McAllister, 2006).

Campaign team. It is pointed out that a political party's or candidate's election campaigning is often conducted by a team that usually consists of party members (in party campaigning), the candidate (in candidate campaigning), permanent or temporary campaign staff, external campaign consultants, and volunteers (Farrell & Schmitt-Beck, 2002; Wlezien, 2014). Also, campaign teams focus on only short-term goals, they dissolve at the conclusion of the election (Farrell & Schmitt-Beck, 2002).

1.5 Delimitations

The main boundaries of this study are defined as follows. First, this study focuses on campaign teams' perspectives only, it does not incorporate voters' perspectives. Second, this study is situated in a New Zealand general election, which is party-led. Therefore, this study focuses on political parties' e-campaigning instead of electoral candidates'. Third, this study is not concerned with e-campaigning conducted by citizens as noted by Gibson (2015). Fourth, this study focuses on parliamentary parties only; that is, it does not consider e-campaigning of parties that were not represented in the 48th New Zealand Parliament and participated in the 2008 general election. Last, this study investigates e-campaigning to the voting public only, it does not include e-campaigning within a political party as noted by Anstead and Chadwick (2009).

1.6 Thesis outline

The remainder of this thesis proceeds as follows. Chapter 2 reviews both political science and IS literature in order to establish a theoretical lens for each research question. Chapter 3 details the design of this empirical study. Chapter 4-9 relate

to the main empirical findings from the case studies. Then, Chapter 10 presents a cross-case analysis. Following that, Chapter 11 provides a discussion based on the findings from academic literature and the empirical data. Last, Chapter 12 concludes this thesis.

Chapter 2 Literature review

2.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter reviews academic literature in relation to the research questions. It proceeds as follows: section 2.2 presents an overview of e-campaigning in both practice and the literature; section 2.3 pertains to the theorisation of e-campaigning utilisation; section 2.4 is concerned with factors that influence e-campaigning utilisation; and last, section 2.5 summarises this chapter.

2.2 An overview of e-campaigning in practice and the literature

2.2.1 E-campaigning in practice

The debut of e-campaigning can be traced back to the 1992 US presidential election, when the first-time presidential candidate Clinton and his campaign team deployed a website containing some basic information of Clinton's candidacy. Although the website was static and simple, it started to attract public attention (Gibson, 2004; Owen & Davis, 2008).

By the end of the 1990s, the continuous development of e-campaigning in practice was observed, reflected in three main areas, namely, the increase in e-campaigning adoption; the increase in the breadth and depth of campaign information provided through e-campaigning; and the utilisation of e-mail technology for direct-mailing in order to reach and communicate with voters (D'Alessio, 2000; Gibson, 2004; Gibson et al., 2002).

From the year 2000 onwards, e-campaigning has significantly increased in prominence. This is reflected in three areas. First, e-campaigning has expanded beyond the US and eventuated in a widespread global phenomenon (e.g., Copeland & Rommele, 2014; D. T. Hill, 2008; Kim & Park, 2007; Lilleker & Jackson, 2013; van Os, Hagemann, Voerman, & Jankowski, 2007). Second, e-campaigning is no longer associated with a single form of ICT, such as email or the World Wide Web; instead, it has become increasingly integrative of various ICTs and applications (Gibson,

2012; Gibson & Cantijoch, 2011; Gibson, Rommele, & Williamson, 2014; Vergeer, 2012). Third, e-campaigning is no longer confined to merely disseminating campaign information; rather, it has evolved from an information kiosk in cyberspace to a vehicle facilitating different electioneering practices as a supplement to, and overcoming barriers in, traditional election campaigning (Foot & Schneider, 2006; Gibson et al., 2014; Lilleker et al., 2011). Also note that the development of e-campaigning has entered a new phase since the late 2000s with the advent of social media, such as YouTube (Ceron & d'Adda, 2015; Gibson, 2012; Lilleker & Jackson, 2013; Macnamara & Kenning, 2014; Vergeer & Hermans, 2013).

It is clear that e-campaigning in practice has been undergoing a maturing process – from narrowly focusing on a single ICT and electioneering practice to seamlessly integrating a myriad of technologies and practices. This is largely expected from an IS perspective. On the basis of his empirical observations, Nolan (1979) identifies that IT utilisation within an organisation generally experiences a process of growth – from being isolated and ad hoc towards becoming organisation-wide, cross-functional, and highly standardised and integrated.

Nevertheless, e-campaigning utilisation across democracies is markedly uneven. Most instances of advanced, creative e-campaigning utilisation are situated in the US (Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). Other democracies, including developed democracies – such as the UK, are found to be trailing far behind their US counterpart in e-campaigning utilisation (e.g., Anstead & Chadwick, 2009; Bentivegna, 2008; Gibson & McAllister, 2008). Accordingly, e-campaigning in the US is considered to be the exception rather than the rule (Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). It is also found that uneven e-campaigning utilisation occurs within the same election (e.g., Small, 2008). Furthermore, scholars observe that the full potential of e-campaigning is largely unfulfilled in practice (Gibson & McAllister, 2008; Larsson, 2013). This is echoed by practitioners. For instance, Joe Trippi, a well-known US campaign consultant, claims that 'the 2008 US presidential election is the *first real* [emphasis added] Internet campaign … [because] there are all these amazing ways for people [voters] to connect with a campaign, to follow it, or create their own mini-campaigns, things that *didn't exist* or *barely existed* [emphasis added] last time.' (as cited in Cone, 2007, para. 1) However, Trippi further asserts

that despite Obama's remarkable e-campaign, in general, the practice of e-campaigning is still far from its pinnacle.

2.2.2 E-campaigning in the literature

Shortly after the inception of e-campaigning, scholarly research dedicated to the phenomenon began. Three major streams can be identified in present e-campaigning research. They pertain to assessing the consequences of e-campaigning, exploring the utilisation of e-campaigning, and explaining the utilisation of e-campaigning. Those streams focus on different aspects of e-campaigning but are interconnected. Also note that e-campaigning research is almost solely conducted by political scientists.

The first wave of e-campaigning research chiefly focuses on assessing as well as debating the consequences of e-campaigning or e-democracy in various aspects, notably, political parties or candidates themselves, democratic structures and processes, and civil society at large (e.g., Bimber, 1998, 2001; Gibson & Rommele, 2005; Norris, 2001; Sunstein, 2002). Two distinctive types of claim, optimistic and sceptical, are generated as a result.

Optimistic claims hold that the utilisation of ICTs in democratic activities, such as election campaigning, can yield positive impacts. And such impacts can be reflected on two levels: organisational and societal. For instance, at the organisational level, ICTs are regarded as a catalyst for the evolution of election campaigning. The technologies will provide political parties and candidates with a new platform to reach more or new voters, renew the interaction and engagement with voters, mobilise voter support and, for small parties and candidates in particular, increase exposure (Bimber, 1998; Gibson et al., 2004; Gibson & Ward, 2000a). At the societal level, it is believed that e-campaigning is able to strengthen civic engagement and improve voters' decision-making process, resulting in empowered and more informed voters (Bimber, 2001; Owen, 2006).

Sceptical claims, on the other hand, argue that utilising ICTs in democratic activities will lead to potentially chaotic political and social environments, reinforce the current political structures and practices, or create a digital divide

within society. More specifically, the Internet environment is highly unregulated, any person is able to circulate rumours and conduct smear campaigns, thereby leading to potentially chaotic political and social environments (Sunstein, 2002, 2007). Also, e-campaigning increasingly requires a considerable amount of scarce resources, small parties or candidates are inevitably disadvantaged compared to their large counterparts. As a result, the current political structures and practices, and the divide concerning resources between small and large parties or candidates will be reinforced; in other words, 'politics as usual' (Greer & LaPointe, 2004; Margolis et al., 2003). Besides, e-campaigning requires voters to have access to technologies, such as the Internet or mobile phones. This means that those without access to the required technologies will be neglected. Consequently, a divide between those with access to ICTs and those without will be created and likely deepen as e-campaigning becomes more prominent (Norris, 2001; van Dijk, 2009). Further, compared to the technologies in traditional democratic activities, such as radio or television, new ICTs, particularly the Internet and mobile phones, provide people with greater power of information personalisation; in other words, retrieving information that is only in consensus with one's own ideology and establishing relationships only with the like-minded. This therefore will mainly result in preaching to the converted (Norris, 2003; Norris & Curtice, 2006) and group polarisation in cyberspace (Sunstein, 2002, 2007) respectively.

Amid the assessment and debates of the consequences of e-campaigning or e-democracy, Norris (2002, p. 143) contends that e-campaigning or election campaigning in general is not to blame for 'more deep-rooted ills of the body politic'. Also, it is increasingly pointed out that the consequences of e-campaigning are highly complex, contextual, and often not immediately observable, it is therefore rather simplistic to assess or debate them primarily based on speculation with limited empirical evidence (Farrell & Schmitt-Beck, 2002; Gibson, Nixon, et al., 2003; Gibson et al., 2004; Gibson & Ward, 2012; Schmitt-Beck, 2004). It is further suggested that the potential impacts of e-campaigning are contingent on how it is utilised (Smith, 1998). Another stream of e-campaigning research has since commenced while assessing and debating the consequences of e-campaigning continues in the literature (e.g., Gibson & McAllister, 2014; Gibson &

Rommele, 2005). This research stream pertains to exploring, analysing, and comparing e-campaigning utilisation within an election or across democracies (e.g., Anstead & Chadwick, 2009; Bentivegna, 2008; Bimber, 2014; Gibson, Margolis, et al., 2003; Kluver, Jankowski, Foot, & Schneider, 2007). It is currently prominent in the literature. Seven characteristics are noteworthy. First, national or federal is the most common level of elections being studied (e.g., Bimber, 2014; Boas, 2008; Dezelan et al., 2014; Gibson & Cantijoch, 2011; Gibson & McAllister, 2008; Macnamara & Kenning, 2014; Small et al., 2008; Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008). Second, most studies are based on a single election (e.g., Dezelan et al., 2014; Vergeer & Hermans, 2013; Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008). Third, almost all studies focus on e-campaigning conducted by political parties or candidates as opposed to citizens (e.g., Gibson & McAllister, 2008; Hooghe & Vissers, 2008; Macnamara & Kenning, 2014; Small et al., 2008; Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008). Fourth, the narrow and geographical concentration is apparent; more specifically, many studies exploring e-campaigning utilisation are situated in the US and Europe (Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). Fifth, political parties' or candidates' official campaign websites are the primary empirical object of investigation (Dougherty & Foot, 2007; Gibson & Ward, 2000b; Lilleker & Vedel, 2013). Sixth, both quantitative and qualitative approaches are employed (Gibson & Rommele, 2005; Lilleker & Vedel, 2013), Gibson and Rommele favour a qualitative approach in particular. And last, web content analysis is the main method of data analysis (Dougherty & Foot, 2007; Lilleker & Vedel, 2013).

It is noted that knowledge relating to political parties' or candidates' e-campaigning utilisation is limited, despite a strong focus on this area in the literature at present. Three main factors are considered to be attributable (Ward, Owen, et al., 2008): first, the quickening pace of technological advancement; second, 'political parties, interest groups, and of course citizens are still learning, experimenting and innovating;' (Ward, Owen, et al., 2008, p. x) and third, the narrow and geographical concentration in many e-campaigning studies. It can also be contended that restricted access to the e-campaigning phenomenon forms another salient factor. More specifically, e-campaigning is contingent on elections. They occur only periodically with a considerably wide interval in between. For

instance, US presidential elections occur every four years and in the UK, the interval between general elections is set at five years.

From observing and comparing political parties' or candidates' e-campaigning utilisation within elections or across democracies, it is found that e-campaigning utilisation varies markedly despite the underlying technologies and applications being largely similar (e.g., Gibson, Margolis, et al., 2003; Jankowski et al., 2005; Small, 2008; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). Further, the potential of e-campaigning technologies and applications has not been fully exploited (Gibson & McAllister, 2008; Larsson, 2013). These have collectively prompted a new research stream that pertains to explaining political parties' or candidates' e-campaigning utilisation by identifying factors that influence e-campaigning utilisation (e.g., Anstead & Chadwick, 2009; Metag & Marcinkowski, 2012; Tkach-Kawasaki, 2007; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). This research steam is still in its infancy and primarily theoretically-based only.

In short, e-campaigning research is evolutionary. It presently comprises three different yet interrelated research streams. Each of them consists of knowledge gaps. Two streams are reflected in this study: one pertains to exploring the utilisation of e-campaigning and the other explaining e-campaigning utilisation.

2.3 Theorising e-campaigning utilisation

2.3.1 How e-campaigning is theorised in the literature

E-campaigning first emerged as merely an information kiosk in cyberspace (Owen & Davis, 2008). As political parties and candidates continuously engage in e-campaigning, it has become increasingly professionalised and sophisticated (Gibson, 2012; Vergeer, 2012; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). Because each campaign is unique and discrete, technology is constantly evolving, and political parties and candidates are continuously learning, experimenting, and innovating (Ward, Owen, et al., 2008), the changing landscape of e-campaigning is therefore comparable to the aphorism that one can never step into the same river twice.

The rapidly changing landscape of e-campaigning has also increased the complexity of understanding, describing, and comparing political parties' or candidates' e-campaigning utilisation in academic research (Schneider & Foot, 2004). In response, scholars commonly deploy frameworks to assist their empirical research, which also represent their theorisations of e-campaigning utilisation (Dougherty & Foot, 2007; Foot & Schneider, 2006; Lilleker & Vedel, 2013). An example of an e-campaigning framework is provided in Appendix 1.

In general, those e-campaigning frameworks are theorised with a practice-based approach that transforms a series of practices observed in a social phenomenon into contemporary theory (Foot & Schneider, 2006). In other words, practice-based theorisations are empirically grounded and extensible.

Theorising e-campaigning utilisation with a practice-based approach entails two sequential steps: identification and subsumption (Foot & Schneider, 2006; Lilleker & Vedel, 2013). More specifically, scholars first identify various observable content elements that are ICT-embedded from parties' or candidates' campaign websites. These content elements are then subsumed under different abstract categories, referred to as *campaign practices* or *campaign activities*. Put differently, in the context of e-campaigning, political parties' or candidates' electioneering practices are operationalised in a series of content elements on the parties' or candidates' campaign websites. Such elements serve as direct observables of parties' or candidates' electioneering practices. Accordingly, e-campaigning utilisation consists of at least one campaign practice and each practice entails at least one content element.

2.3.2 Issues with existing theoretical frameworks in the literature

Although scholarly research on political parties' or candidates' e-campaigning utilisation is still relatively young, there are already multiple differing e-campaigning frameworks in the literature (e.g., Hooghe & Vissers, 2008; Lilleker & Jackson, 2007; Schweitzer, 2008a). Three main issues can be identified from them, concerning a lack of academic rigour, the orientation of campaign practices, and variation in the coverage of campaign practices.

A lack of academic rigour. A scientific theory relating to an observable phenomenon – be it derived from another theory, a confirmed hypothesis, or an empirical observation – must include constructs within the phenomenon and the relationship between the constructs, so that the theory can be falsifiable or enables understanding about the phenomenon (Dubin, 1978; Gregor, 2006; van Fraassen, 1980). Under this principle, to theorise e-campaigning utilisation, not only should the key constructs but also the relationship between the constructs be articulated. Most existing e-campaigning frameworks have clearly stated the key constructs involved, namely, content elements, campaign practices, and election campaigning. Those frameworks also establish the relationship between content elements and campaign practices. However, hardly any frameworks in the literature articulate the relationship between campaign practices and election campaigning (e.g., Gibson & McAllister, 2008; Lilleker & Jackson, 2007; Owen & Davis, 2008; Schweitzer, 2008a; The Bivings Group, 2006); in other words, it is unclear what rational purpose that a campaign practice within those frameworks serves in relation to election campaigning. The absent relationship between campaign practices and campaigning is a major weakness in existing theorisations of e-campaigning utilisation.

The orientation of campaign practices. The campaign practices within some e-campaigning frameworks are mainly orientated by the latest available technologies or applications, such as RSS (really simple syndication) feeds, interactive opinion polls, and podcasts (e.g., Lilleker & Jackson, 2007; The Bivings Group, 2006). The campaign practices in other frameworks are orientated by wider campaign practices such as resource generation (e.g., Hooghe & Vissers, 2008; Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008). These contrasting orientations of campaign practices in essence reflect opposite views relating to technological determinism; that is, it is technology that dictates e-campaigning utilisation or it is wider campaign practices that shape e-campaigning utilisation. However, there is little discussion or debate in relation to that in the literature (Karlsen, 2010).

Variation in the coverage of campaign practices. Some e-campaigning studies focus on very limited campaign practices (e.g., Dader, 2008; D. T. Hill, 2008), whereas others cover a wide array of practices (e.g., Gibson & McAllister, 2008;

Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008). A possible explanation for this variation is that most frameworks are constructed on the basis of a single election. Since the nature of e-campaigning is evolutionary and contextual, it is likely that changes will happen to e-campaigning utilisation within a specific institutional context as well as across time. Further, studies situated in countries where ICT adoption and utilisation is relatively advanced tend to exhibit broader coverage of campaign practices (e.g., Gibson & McAllister, 2008; Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008), compared to studies in countries with low levels of ICT adoption and utilisation (e.g., Dader, 2008; D. T. Hill, 2008). Generally, with the focus on a single election, many e-campaigning studies have limited themselves to ICT-enabled practices in that particular campaign.

Put succinctly, as political parties' and candidates' e-campaigning utilisation becomes increasingly sophisticated, an e-campaigning framework is essential to empirically explore and acquire knowledge of the phenomenon. Existing e-campaigning frameworks in general exhibit three main issues, namely, a lack of academic rigour, the orientation of campaign practices, and variation in the coverage of campaign practices. These issues undermine research and knowledge relating to parties' and candidates' e-campaigning utilisation.

2.3.3 Towards a new theoretical framework

This study proposes a new theoretical framework for better exploring and understanding e-campaigning utilisation, given the three issues with existing frameworks. The proposed framework is based on an extensive literature review and follows the basic principle underpinning most frameworks in the literature, namely the inclusion of two interrelated components: campaign practices and their associated content elements. The following first states how the three issues with existing e-campaigning frameworks are tackled by the proposed framework.

A lack of academic rigour. It is noted that the relationship between campaign practices and the purposes of election campaigning has not been articulated in existing studies. The relationship between each campaign practice in the proposed framework and election campaigning is explored and established based on e-

campaigning or political science literature. This strengthens the rigour of the proposed framework.

The orientation of campaign practices. With the proliferation of new ICTs for organisations to adopt and utilise, some IS scholars warn that it is paramount for organisations to beware of *technocratic utopianism*, and, instead, to practice *technological realism*. More specifically, organisations should not be dictated by emerging technologies as technologies per se rarely yield miracles or a sustainable competitive edge; rather, organisations should hold a realistic view and focus on organisational practices and goals (Carr, 2003; Davenport, Eccles, & Prusak, 1992). This study argues that technological realism should also be fostered in academic research in ICT-related phenomena. Thus, this study posits that it is the wider campaign practices, rather than the latest available ICTs or applications, that shape e-campaigning utilisation. This view is consistent with some political scientists' (e.g., Lofgren & Smith, 2003; Vaccari, 2010). To that end, the campaign practices in the proposed framework are related to wider election campaign practices. It is worth noting that this does not diminish the role and involvement of technologies and applications in e-campaigning but acknowledges their enabling role.

Variation in the coverage of campaign practices. The campaign practices and their associated content elements in the proposed framework are drawn from existing e-campaigning studies situated in different elections and democracies. This consequently provides the widest possible range of campaign practices, their associated content elements, and a solid empirical base for the proposed framework.

In light of this study's response to the three issues with existing e-campaigning frameworks, five campaign practices are included in the proposed framework, based on existing e-campaigning studies. They are *information dissemination* (e.g., Bentivegna, 2008; Boas, 2008; Foot & Schneider, 2006; Foot, Schneider, Kluver, Xenos, & Jankowski, 2007; Gibson & McAllister, 2008; Hooghe & Vissers, 2008; Lilleker et al., 2011; Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008), *voter interaction and engagement* (e.g., Aquilia, 2007; Bentivegna, 2008; Foot & Schneider, 2006; Foot et al., 2007;

Gibson & McAllister, 2008; Hooghe & Vissers, 2008; Lilleker et al., 2011; Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008), *support mobilisation* (e.g., Bentivegna, 2008; Boas, 2008; Foot & Schneider, 2006; Foot et al., 2007; Lilleker et al., 2011; Owen & Davis, 2008), *targeted campaigning* (e.g., Ceron & d'Adda, 2015; Druckman, Kifer, & Parkin, 2010; Gibson & Ward, 2000b; Gibson et al., 2002; S. Hill, 2009; Karlsen, 2009; Voerman & Boogers, 2008; Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008), and *resource generatio*n (e.g., Anstead, 2008; Bimber, 2014; Gibson, 2012; Gibson & Ward, 2000b; Hooghe & Vissers, 2008; Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008). The remainder discusses each campaign practice in depth, concerning its relationship with election campaigning and its operationalisation. The proposed framework is presented following that.

2.3.3.1 Information dissemination

Disseminating campaign information is considered to be the most long-standing, fundamental campaign practice (Farrell & Schmitt-Beck, 2002; Foot & Schneider, 2006; Lilleker et al., 2011). Ultimately, election campaigning aims to influence voters' decision-making process and, with that, tries to maximise votes. Campaign information plays a critical role. As Zaller (as cited in Farrell & Schmitt-Beck, 2002, p. 183) explains, 'every opinion is a marriage of information and predisposition: information to form a mental picture of the given issue, and predisposition to motivate some conclusion about it'. This is confirmed by empirical research, which suggests that voting behaviour is strongly affected by the awareness and knowledge of political parties or candidates, and, more importantly, their causes. Such awareness and knowledge is formed by the availability and quality of information about political parties or candidates from sources such as election campaigns (Farrell & Schmitt-Beck, 2002; Hoff, 2012; Schmitt-Beck, 2004). Thus, in order to shape voters' awareness, opinions, knowledge, and, most importantly, decisions, campaign teams benefit from producing, disseminating, and reinforcing campaign information in a timely fashion (Bimber, 2001; Hoff, 2012; Holbrook, 2002; Schmitt-Beck, 2004).

McAllister's (2002) research on voting decision and behaviour during national elections in the US, Australia, and the UK between the late 1940s and 2000 points out that the number of swing voters increased, especially in Australia and the UK.

Swing voters are the ones whom most parties and candidates endeavour to woo throughout an election period, and they are most responsive to campaign information (Lachat & Sciarini, 2002). Lachat and Sciarini further suggest that although some voters have formed their voting decisions before the campaign period, their decisions are still subject to change as a result of increased campaign information.

Voters' active political participation is crucial to election campaigning and campaign information serves as a vital stimulus (Bimber, 2001; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). In other words, the greater amount of campaign information being disseminated, the more stimulated voters could become to get involved in different campaign activities.

Generally, information dissemination is undertaken through a one-way, top-down approach – from political parties or candidates to voters. That is, no feedback or information from voters is expected (Farrell & Schmitt-Beck, 2002). This important characteristic distinguishes information dissemination from another campaign practice, namely voter interaction and engagement.

In traditional election campaigning, campaign information is mainly disseminated through political news or talk shows on television or radio; campaign advertisements on television, radio, or newspapers; direct mails; and interpersonal interactions with voters such as rallies, telephone, or door-to-door canvassing (Anstead & Chadwick, 2009; Denver & Hands, 2002; Norris, 2002). However, those traditional means of information dissemination present various obstacles or issues to political parties or candidates. Notably, they not only consume a substantial amount of campaign resources but also constrain parties' or candidates' control over what campaign information is disseminated, as well as when and how (Farrell & Schmitt-Beck, 2002; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008).

It is believed that ICTs are able to alleviate those typical obstacles associated with information dissemination in traditional campaigning. More specifically, it is held that ICTs provide a relatively cost-effective platform or channel for parties and candidates to disseminate information; more importantly, ICTs provide parties or candidates with greater autonomy to determine what campaign information is

disseminated, as well as when and how (Foot & Schneider, 2006; Gibson & Ward, 2000a, 2000b; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008).

Content elements associated with information dissemination. The following content elements are commonly associated with information dissemination: political party's information; candidate biography; press releases; policy statements; campaign news; campaign events; speeches; contact information; and information relating to the political party's other online presence, if any (e.g., Foot & Schneider, 2006; Foot et al., 2007; Gibson & McAllister, 2008; Gibson & Ward, 2000b; Hooghe & Vissers, 2008; Schweitzer, 2011; Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008).

Generally, the practice of information dissemination is considered to be highly standardised due to its long existence (Lilleker et al., 2011). However, technological advancement enables parties and candidates to innovate the dissemination of campaign information in order to generate and sustain voters' interest (Lilleker et al., 2011). Two instances are noteworthy, the first pertains to campaign blogs and the other the use of Internet multimedia technology.

Originating from web blogs, campaign blogs are online journal entries posted by political parties or candidates to communicate with voters (Graf, 2008; Karpf, 2008; Maguire, 2008). In contrast to campaign information disseminated in campaign websites, information disseminated through campaign blogs is succinct and focused, which typically pertains to political views and issues, and campaign news and events (Graf, 2008). It is worth noting that campaign blogs can be static or interactive, depending on the authors' intention (Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008). That is, if a campaign blog is utilised for the sole purpose of providing static information, it is considered to be an element of information dissemination; if a campaign blog is utilised for generating feedback from voters in addition to information dissemination, it is accordingly considered to be an element of voter interaction and engagement.

It is found that most parties' and candidates' campaign blogs are static as opposed to interactive, owing to their concern over attracting undesired feedback, such as attacking comments from their political rivals and supporters of their rivals (Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008). Also, campaign blogs are often text-based (Ward, Owen, et al.,

2008). An alternative to text-based blogs is video blogs, which disseminate the same type of campaign information in a different form – video as opposed to text (Anstead & Chadwick, 2009).

Since the increasing penetration of broadband Internet from the early 2000s, information dissemination in e-campaigning has started to move beyond the text-based format. More specifically, campaign teams utilise Internet multimedia technology to disseminate campaign information in order to enhance the sophistication of this campaign practice (Hooghe & Vissers, 2008; Schweitzer, 2008a); for instance, images are used for depicting campaign events, audio or video for campaign speeches, or campaign advertisements on television or radio.

2.3.3.2 Voter interaction and engagement

This practice is also referred to as *involving* by Foot and Schneider (2006). Its underpinning rationale is twofold: interacting with voters for campaign feedback, and engaging voters for building trust and relationships.

It is argued that voters' constant feedback on an election campaign is critical, as it forms a basis on which the campaign team evaluates the campaign effects on voters. Feedback also provides the campaign team with an opportunity to take necessary actions to enhance or rectify its campaign practices in a timely manner (Farrell & Schmitt-Beck, 2002).

It is also suggested that voters, especially swing voters, are more likely to cast their votes for a political party or candidate whom they trust or feel more closely connected with (Norris, 2001). Often, trust and connectedness are developed as a result of continuous efforts by a political party or candidate to interact and engage with voters (Farrell & Schmitt-Beck, 2002; Foot & Schneider, 2006).

In traditional election campaigning, voter interaction and engagement is often conducted in town hall meetings, dinner meetings, and talk shows or debates on television or radio (Norris, 2002). This means that it is common for political parties and candidates to travel extensively in order to interact and engage with voters. There are two main challenges associated with voter interaction and engagement in traditional campaigning. First, it is found that citizens' engagement

with political affairs in general has been continuously decreasing since the 1960s (Denver & Hands, 2002; Norris, 2002). Second, traditional voter interaction and engagement is constrained by parties' or candidates' campaign resources, geographical and time boundaries, and the number of voters to interact with in each engagement (Denver & Hands, 2002; Norris, 2002).

It is argued that ICTs enable political parties and candidates to interact and engage with a wider group of voters, particularly those who are disengaged with technologies utilised in traditional voter interaction and engagement, namely television and radio (Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). It is also suggested that ICTs enable parties and candidates to establish a new form of interaction and engagement with voters that erodes the barriers in physical interaction (Gibson, Nixon, et al., 2003).

Content elements associated with voter interaction and engagement. Offline interaction and engagement can be classified into two forms: *synchronous* and *asynchronous* (Gallaugher & Ransbotham, 2010). The former refers to real-time interaction, such as face-to-face interaction, and the latter denotes delayed interaction, such as postal mail. Both forms of interaction and engagement can be simulated in e-campaigning (Schweitzer, 2011).

Synchronous voter interaction and engagement can be observed in instant chat or messaging; instant opinion polls; instant surveys; applications for interacting with election policies; and an interactive calendar of campaign events (e.g., Gibson & McAllister, 2008; Hooghe & Vissers, 2008; Lilleker et al., 2011; Schweitzer, 2008a, 2011; Small et al., 2008; Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008). Asynchronous voter interaction and engagement, on the other hand, can be observed in means to contact the political party, such as email; discussion forums; interactive campaign blogs – blogs that enable voters to post feedback or comments; and means for voters to provide feedback (e.g., Gibson & McAllister, 2008; Hooghe & Vissers, 2008; Lilleker et al., 2011; Schweitzer, 2008a, 2011; Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008).

It is found that political parties' or candidates' online interaction and engagement in e-campaigning in general is highly cautious and conservative (Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). It is also noted that although social media, such as YouTube, increasingly features in parties' and candidates' e-campaigns, its interactive nature is barely

exploited (Gibson & Cantijoch, 2011; Karlsson, Clerwall, & Buskqvist, 2013). As Ward, Owen, et al. (2008, p. 260) put it, 'Overall, interactivity is less common than we would have thought given the features of the Internet.' This is due to many parties' and candidates' concern over opening a 'Pandora's box', unleashing unexpected and undesired consequences, such as attacks from their opponents, that could dictate or derail their campaign agendas (Coleman, 2001; Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008). Ward, Owen, et al. (2008, p. 260) further comment that

> Admittedly, two-way communication is natural to the medium [the Internet]. Indeed, the original uses of the Internet were to facilitate multidirectional communication among the researchers and/or the U.S. military. But such an expectation is not natural in a viable electoral campaign. It is as if one expected a candidate giving a speech to repeatedly give part of their allotted time to the opposition or someone in the crowd who wants to have their say as well.

Furthermore, Boas (2008) asserts that when a party's or candidate's online interaction and engagement with voters is carefully framed and managed so that it is closely aligned with the party's or candidate's own political ideology and causes, such interaction and engagement lacks genuine openness and is in fact propaganda in disguise.

2.3.3.3 Support mobilisation

It is held that political parties' or candidates' efforts to maximise their votes or seats are reliant on voters' support (Foot & Schneider, 2006; Gibson et al., 2004; Norris, 2002). Such support is reflected in different forms, such as organising and participating in campaign events – political rallies for instance, and, most importantly, casting their votes for the parties or candidates on election day. Thus, it is vital for parties or candidates to identify potential supporters, particularly those who are disengaged from traditional campaigning, and translate support sentiment from them and the existing faithful into tangible support actions (Gibson et al., 2004; Norris, 2002; Owen & Davis, 2008).

It is indicated that support mobilisation is increasingly challenging for political parties and candidates because voters have become increasingly passive since television became the main election campaign technology, they also spend less

time participating in events supporting their parties or candidates (Owen & Davis, 2008).

Another rising challenge in support mobilisation pertains to political disengagement of young voters (Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). Those voters represent the fastest growing population. They are the least likely to vote on election day and also account for the largest segment of voters who are least interested in conventional politics.

In traditional campaigning, political parties' or candidates' support mobilisation typically focuses on supporters who have already been identified by the parties or candidates and ensuring that those supporters have voted on election day (Denver & Hands, 2002). For instance, on election day, campaign team members spread across voting stations to record and track whether the identified supporters have voted; those who have not yet voted would be sought after and are often offered a lift to a voting station nearby. This, however, is resource-intensive and focuses solely on existing loyalists, leading to the situation of mobilising the mobilised (Denver & Hands, 2002).

It is suggested that ICTs enable political parties and candidates to alleviate those challenges in support mobilisation in different ways (Foot & Schneider, 2006; Gibson, 2012; Gibson et al., 2004; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). For instance, with an increasing number of people, especially youth, connected to the Internet across the globe, it is anticipated that e-campaigning enables political parties and candidates to identify and seek new supporters, particularly those who are disengaged from conventional politics (Hoff, 2011; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). Loader's (2007) assertion concerning youth and political participation is noteworthy. According to him, there is a misconception widely held in both academia and practice that young citizens are politically disengaged or disaffected. They are in fact passionate about political affairs. The primary reason for their apparent political disengagement lies within political parties' or politicians' lack of understanding and empathy relating to the new, different medium used by most young citizens, namely the Internet. Loader refers to that as *cultural displacement*. It is also suggested that the networking capabilities of the Internet enable parties

and candidates to build online communities, eradicating time and geographical constraints, in order to organise, collaborate, and expand both online and offline supporting activities (Gibson, 2012; Gibson et al., 2004). As Owen and Davis (2008, p. 98) put it, 'the Internet has provided a means for the supporters to play more than a spectator role in the campaign.'

Content elements associated with support mobilisation. In e-campaigning, support mobilisation is generally observable in the following content elements: means for voters to invite their peers to participate in campaign events; means to inform voters of electoral information; means for voters to receive campaign information and updates; means for voters to connect with supporter groups; means for voters to download campaign material; and means for voters to forward campaign material to others (e.g., Bimber, 2014; Foot & Schneider, 2006; Foot et al., 2007; Gibson & McAllister, 2008; Owen & Davis, 2008; Schweitzer, 2011; Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008).

There are two instances of support mobilisation in e-campaigning that attract scholars' attention. They pertain to Howard Dean's and Obama's e-campaigning.

Before Obama, Dean, a candidate in the 2004 US Democratic primaries, was considered as a pioneer in e-campaigning chiefly because of his innovative support mobilisation at the time, referred to as 'the Dean phenomenon' in the literature (Bimber, 2014; Gibson, 2012; Gibson & Rommele, 2005; Graf, 2008). Dean was not one of the early adopters of e-campaigning in the election, his e-campaigning came much later than his rivals'. In the early phase of the election, Dean was not as widely known as his other competitors and consequently, he was sidelined by the mainstream media. This put Dean in an unfavourable situation. In order to catch up in the race, Dean and his campaign team tapped into the Internet and its related applications to solicit and mobilise support. Instead of merely providing a link to receive campaign news on his website and waiting for site visitors to sign up, Dean actively used the Internet to reach out to grass-roots citizens and political activists. More specifically, two main websites were used in order for Dean to achieve that goal. Dean first utilised his official campaign blog, 'Howard Dean 2004 Call to Action Weblog', to engage the attention of voters by

disseminating his views on different issues particularly concerning American voters, such as war against Iraq. Once his blog had started to gain sufficient public interest and support, Dean encouraged his supporters to register on a web page of his campaign site called 'Meetup', which served the purposes of a centralised community for fragmented supporter groups as well as organising and implementing offline support events – such as a series of rallies that captured significant attention from both the mass media and political scientists. As a result of his innovative utilisation of ICTs to mobilise support, Dean rose from a candidate who was marginalised by traditional media and barely known to the US public to a candidate who was frequently mentioned in the US mainstream media and academic literature (Bimber, 2014; Gibson, 2012; Gibson & Rommele, 2005; Graf, 2008).

A main feature of Obama's widely-publicised e-campaigning in the 2008 US presidential election pertains to support mobilisation (Bimber, 2014; Gibson, 2012; S. Hill, 2009). At the early stage of his campaign, knowing that most young American voters frequently visited social networking sites such as Myspace, YouTube, and Facebook, Obama established his presence across those websites and focused on issues of particular interest to young American voters. Moreover, Obama made a music video together with 'The Black Eyed Peas', a popular music group in the US. The video contained Obama's campaign message and was published on YouTube to attract youth support (S. Hill, 2009). Obama mobilised support among voters in other age groups by using the networking capabilities of the Internet to build a large virtual community of supporters. Members of this community were encouraged to organise both online and offline campaign events, and recruit new members. Furthermore, Obama used both the Internet and SMS (short message service) to remind his supporters, together with their friends and family members, to vote for him on election day. For instance, on the day of the election, voters who had signed up for Obama's SMS alerts received at least three text messages urging them to cast their vote for Obama (S. Hill, 2009).

Nevertheless, Gibson (2012) indicates that ICT-mediated support mobilisation in general produces mixed results. According to her, some studies claim that there is a strong association between e-campaigning and a higher vote share while others

hardly discern any mobilisation effects induced by e-campaigning. Overall, says Gibson, political scientists remain sceptical.

2.3.3.4 Targeted campaigning

This campaign practice consists of two distinctive forms. The first refers to political parties' or candidates' election campaigns targeted at their rivals. It can be the rivals in general or their specific views or policies. It is argued that in order to sway voters' opinions and decisions, a political party or candidate can consider an alternative practice to information dissemination, which aims at attacking or criticising political opponents' personality traits or election policies (Ceron & d'Adda, 2015; Fridkin & Kenney, 2012; Walter, 2014). Due to its nature, this form of targeted campaigning is also referred to as *negative campaigning*. Walter (2014, p. 45) suggests that 'Negative campaigning as a campaign practice fits better with an offensive campaign than a defensive campaign. The first is aimed at volatile voters and the opponent's adherents and the latter at mobilising a party's own adherents.' It is also indicated that negative campaigning 'may be responsible for depressing voter turnout' (Farrell & Schmitt-Beck, 2002, p. 18).

The other form of targeted campaigning pertains to election campaigning targeted at specific voter segments, also referred to as *narrowcasting* (Voerman & Boogers, 2008; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). It is suggested that the needs and wants across the voter population markedly differ. Thus, an effective campaign depends on not only increasing information, but also, more importantly, disseminating the *right* information to the *right* addresses (Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). In contrast to information dissemination that focuses on mass communication and assumes voters in general are more or less homogeneous, this form of targeted campaigning emphasises the heterogeneity of the voting public, in other words, *tailored* campaign information based on the *unique* characteristics of each voter segment.

It is suggested that ICTs are able to not only facilitate but also enhance the practice of negative campaigning due to the increased speed of communication (Gibson & Ward, 2000b). For narrowcasting, it is indicated that ICTs and related applications enable political parties and candidates to gather and analyse data on voters in

order to segment voters and personalise campaign information for each voter segment based on its unique characteristics (Gibson & Ward, 2000b; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008).

Content elements associated with targeted campaigning. Negative campaigning is observable in the following elements: campaign content targeted at political opponents and campaign content targeted at political opponents' policies (e.g., Ceron & d'Adda, 2015; Druckman et al., 2010; Gibson & Ward, 2000b; Hooghe & Vissers, 2008; Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008). Narrowcasting is observable in campaign content targeted at specific voter segments (e.g., Bimber, 2014; Hooghe & Vissers, 2008; Voerman & Boogers, 2008; Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008).

A notable example of ICT-enabled negative campaigning pertains to the 2008 US presidential race between the Republican candidate John McCain and the Democrat candidate Obama (Stirland, 2008). During the campaign period, in order to convince American voters that Obama's credibility was questionable, McCain's campaign team utilised an automated online tracking service called 'Versionista' to crawl Obama's campaign website and track precise word changes, in some cases as frequently as every hour.

As shown in Figure 2.1, the paragraphs highlighted in pink were the words deleted from Obama's campaign site and those in green were the words inserted. These highlighted changes were used to demonstrate Obama's changing stance relating to the Bush administration's policy on the war in Iraq. For instance, on 11 July 2008, the following statement could be found on Obama's website: 'at great cost, our troops have helped reduce violence in some areas of Iraq, but even those reductions do not get us below the unsustainable levels of violence of mid-2006.' (Stirland, 2008, para. 11) Within three days, however, that statement was replaced by the following words: 'Our troops have heroically helped reduce civilian casualties in Iraq to early 2006 levels. This is a testament to our military's hard work, improved counterinsurgency tactics, and enormous sacrifice by our troops and military families.' (Stirland, 2008, para. 12) These recorded changes formed an important factual basis on which McCain and his campaign team attacked Obama's credibility.

Figure 2.1 McCain's e-campaign targeted at Obama (Stirland, 2008)

Obama's 2008 e-campaign targeted at different voter segments is a notable instance of ICT-enabled narrowcasting. More specifically, Obama's campaign team made use of what it referred to as 'online behaviour targeting'. When someone visited Obama's official campaign website, a cookie, a small text file recording websites and web pages that the person visited, was stored on the person's browser. The cookie recorded the websites that the person had subsequently visited, which informed Obama's campaign team of the particular campaign message to display on the particular visitor's return to Obama's campaign website (S. Hill, 2009).

2.3.3.5 Resource generation

Often, election campaigning is strongly dependent on scarce resources (Anstead & Chadwick, 2009; Margolis et al., 2003; Small, 2008; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). Ever since election campaigning entered the era of modernism, characterised by television being the predominant technological platform for election campaigning, televised campaign advertising has become the norm in many democracies (Norris, 2002; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). This often consumes the largest share of political parties' and candidates' financial resources (Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). In

addition to televised campaign advertising, parties and candidates need to finance other electioneering activities such as direct mailing, in-person engagement with voters, telephone and door-to-door canvassing (Simpson, 2013). Furthermore, human resources are in high demand in order to plan, organise, and conduct different campaign activities (Simpson, 2013). Given parties' and candidates' strong reliance on instant campaign resources, resource generation is an essential practice for them (Simpson, 2013; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). This campaign practice is not directly associated with influencing voting preferences or the election outcome, it, however, affects the overall *sustainability* and *continuity* of election campaigning.

Traditionally, campaign resources are generated from recruiting party members and campaign volunteers as well as various forms of fundraising (Anstead & Chadwick, 2009; Gibson & Ward, 2000b).

ICTs per se do not generate campaign resources for parties or candidates. The technologies, however, are able to reduce the transaction costs associated with the practice of resource generation, and provide parties and candidates with new channels and a broader reach of campaign resources (Anstead & Chadwick, 2009; Gibson & Ward, 2000b). It is also suggested that the widespread popularity of online financial transactions enables parties and candidates to solicit monetary donations online (Anstead & Chadwick, 2009; Gibson & Ward, 2000b).

Content elements associated with resource generation. In e-campaigning, resource generation is commonly observable in the following elements: means to make donations; online merchandise shop; means to become a party member; and means to become a campaign volunteer (e.g., Foot et al., 2007; Gibson & Ward, 2000b; Hooghe & Vissers, 2008; Schweitzer, 2011; Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008).

A notable example of ICT-enabled resource generation pertains to John Edwards' online fundraising as noted by Tumulty (2007). Edwards was a candidate in the 2008 US Democratic primaries. In the election, Edwards' campaign strategist and advisor, Trippi, made a video on YouTube to raise funds for the candidate. The video featured both Edwards and Trippi making Edwards' favourite pecan pie. Viewers of the video were able to obtain the pie recipe with a minimum donation

of $6.10. The online video generated nearly $300,000 within a week and the cost of producing the pie was merely about $20. Trippi (as cited in Tumulty, 2007) points out that using the Internet creatively for fundraising is highly efficient compared to traditional fundraising, such as direct mailing. According to Trippi (as cited in Tumulty, 2007, para. 8), direct mailing for campaign donations 'can easily run into hundreds or thousands of dollars once a campaign has paid for the cost of buying a mailing list, high-quality paper stock, personalised laser printing, and postage'.

2.3.3.6 Summary

The discussion relating to the new theorisation of e-campaigning utilisation is encapsulated in Table 2.1. It also represents the theoretical framework of e-campaigning utilisation proposed in this study. The framework consists of five campaign practices, namely information dissemination, voter interaction and engagement, support mobilisation, targeted campaigning, and resource generation. Each campaign practice is observable in various content elements. The framework is based on existing e-campaigning studies. However, it addresses the three issues with existing e-campaigning frameworks. More specifically, the relationship between each campaign practice and election campaigning is articulated; all campaign practices in the framework are in accordance with wider campaign practices as opposed to the latest available technologies; and the coverage of campaign practices as well as content elements in the framework is based on multiple elections and countries.

Table 2.1 The proposed e-campaigning framework

Campaign practice	Content elements
Information dissemination	Political party's information
	Candidate biography
	Press releases
	Policy statements
	Campaign news
	Campaign events
	Speeches
	Contact information
	Information relating to the political party's other online presence
	Campaign blog without visitor comments allowed
Voter interaction and engagement	Instant chat or messaging
	Instant opinion polls
	Instant surveys
	Applications for interacting with the political party's policies
	Interactive calendar of campaign events
	Means to contact the political party
	Discussion forums
	Campaign blog with visitor comments allowed
	Means to provide feedback
Support mobilisation	Means for voters to invite their peers to participate in campaign events
	Means to inform voters of electoral information
	Means for voters to receive campaign information and updates
	Means for voters to connect with supporter groups
	Means for voters to download campaign material
	Means for voters to forward campaign material to others
Targeted campaigning	Content targeted at political opponents
	Content targeted at political opponents' policies
	Content targeted at specific voter segments
Resource generation	Means to make donations
	Online merchandise shop
	Means to become a party member
	Means to become a volunteer

2.4 Factors influencing e-campaigning utilisation

2.4.1 Prevalent factors in e-campaigning research

As noted, it is found that political parties' or candidates' e-campaigning utilisation varies markedly within elections or across democracies, despite the underlying technologies and applications being largely similar (e.g., Anstead & Chadwick, 2009; Margolis et al., 2003; Small, 2008; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). It is also found that the potential of e-campaigning has not been fully exploited (e.g., Bentivegna, 2008; Gibson & Cantijoch, 2011; Gibson & McAllister, 2008; Karlsson et al., 2013). This has prompted a new wave of e-campaigning research that pertains to

explaining political parties' or candidates' e-campaigning utilisation by uncovering factors that influence e-campaigning utilisation. Four factors are commonly noted: *election type*, *electoral regulations*, *voters' technology access*, and *the availability of campaign resources*.

2.4.1.1 Election type

Generally, two distinctive types of election can be identified in representative democracies, namely party-led and candidate-led (Anstead & Chadwick, 2009; Carlson & Strandberg, 2007; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008; Wlezien, 2010).

An election is considered party-led when it is dominated by political parties (Anstead & Chadwick, 2009; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008; Wlezien, 2010). More specifically, in a party-led election, voters choose parties to form a government; 'parties control the main material of the campaign – manifestos, the campaign staff and organisation, the use of media, campaign events, and voter targeting and mobilisation. Things there are highly centralised.' (Wlezien, 2010, p. 101) A candidate-led election is the opposite of a party-led election. It revolves around individual political candidates, the influence or assistance from political parties is highly limited (Anstead & Chadwick, 2009; Carlson & Strandberg, 2007; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008; Wlezien, 2010).

Accordingly, general elections in countries such as the UK, Australia, and New Zealand are party-led, and federal elections in countries such as the US and Chile are candidate-led.

From cross-national comparisons, it is widely noticed that campaign teams' e-campaigning utilisation varies according to election type (e.g., Anstead & Chadwick, 2009; Gibson & Ward, 2012; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). More specifically, it appears that in candidate-led elections, especially US primary and presidential elections, campaign teams tend to embrace diverse campaign practices in their e-campaigning, such as voter interaction and engagement, support mobilisation, targeted campaigning, and resource generation; in party-led elections, however, campaign teams tend to chiefly focus on information dissemination, irrespective

of the advancement and potential of technologies. Accordingly, it is theorised that election type influences campaign teams' e-campaigning utilisation.

This thesis is supported and further elaborated by Anstead and Chadwick (2009) with general elections in the UK and presidential elections in the US, including primary elections, as examples of party-led and candidate-led elections respectively.

As Anstead and Chadwick (2009) explain, although it is common for a political candidate to be affiliated with a political party in a candidate-led election, such party affiliation is usually weak; therefore, the influence or assistance from the candidate's party during the election is limited. This means that in a candidate-led election, it is the candidates who are solely responsible for raising their profiles, establishing their campaign networks both within their own parties, referred to as vertical communication networks, and with voters, referred to as horizontal communication networks, and garnering voter support. Furthermore, a lack of permanent membership incentivises candidates to aggressively recruit and solicit resources in order to sustain their campaigning. Such circumstances catalyse innovative, expansive, and extensive Internet campaigning because the technology is perceived by candidates as a powerful tool, enabling them to rapidly increase the exposure of their profiles, establish both vertical and horizontal communication networks, connect with the grass roots and garner support, and generate resources for election campaigning.

In stark contrast to individual candidates in candidate-led elections, political parties in party-led elections often possess a long-established public profile, communication networks, loyalists, and stable resources, particularly through permanent membership (Anstead & Chadwick, 2009). These serve as anti-catalysts for embracing any new form of election campaigning innovatively, expansively, and extensively.

In short, candidate-led elections tend to propel while party-led elections discourage e-campaigning utilisation. It can therefore be inferred that the impact of election type on e-campaigning utilisation consists of two facets: positive and

negative. It is worth noting that election type as a factor influencing e-campaigning utilisation is only theoretical; that is, it has not been empirically investigated.

2.4.1.2 Electoral regulations

Electoral regulations are widely considered as a major factor affecting campaign teams' intention to conduct e-campaigning (e.g., Anstead, 2008; Anstead & Chadwick, 2008; Kluver, 2008; Tkach-Kawasaki, 2007; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). For instance, it is held that voting in federal elections is mandatory under Australian electoral law, which consequently diminishes Australian campaign teams' incentive to embrace support mobilisation in their e-campaigning (Gibson, Lusoli, & Ward, 2008; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). The following further illustrates the thesis that e-campaigning utilisation is shaped by electoral regulations.

Anstead (2008) indicates that online fundraising during a federal election is generally more aggressive and innovative in the US than in the UK, which can be explained by electoral regulations. More specifically, US electoral regulations reject institutional campaign donations; that is, political parties or candidates are forbidden from soliciting financial contributions for election campaigning from corporations, banks, or unions. It is lawful for political parties or candidates to appeal to individuals for campaign donations; however, tight limits are imposed on each individual donation and the total amount of electoral donations made by an individual per annum. Candidates are permitted to spend their personal wealth on their own election campaigning, there is a legal limit, however. Spending on election campaigning is unrestricted, provided that it is outside of public financing of presidential campaigns. Anstead (2008, p. 286) argues that these circumstances collectively propel parties or candidates in the US to aggressively and creatively exploit various technologies and applications, especially those that are Internet-based, in order to rapidly appeal to 'vast numbers of contributors, each donating comparatively small sums of money'. In the UK, by contrast, electoral regulations accept institutional campaign donations. Neither institutional nor individual donations are capped, although anonymous donations are restricted. Further, strict spending caps are imposed on election campaigning. Such circumstances, Anstead suggests, collectively prompt British political parties to approach a small

number of institutional donors for a large campaign contribution from each, thereby negating any incentive for energetic and innovative online campaign fundraising. Ward, Owen, et al. (2008, p. 267) concur with Anstead and further stress that the imposition of campaign expenditure limits forces political parties or candidates 'to choose between traditional and new modes of campaigning in the allocation of resources' and e-campaigning often ranks 'relatively low in the priority list'.

The provision of free exposure on traditional media for election campaigning forms another aspect to theorise the causality between electoral legislation and e-campaigning utilisation. More specifically, Ward, Owen, et al. (2008) argue that electoral regulations in countries such as Australia, Chile, and most European nations provide political parties or candidates with a certain amount of publicly-funded exposure on traditional media such as television and radio for election campaigning. Accordingly, to those parties or candidates, 'the Internet becomes less essential as a tool … when [they] can rely on free traditional broadcast media' for election campaigning (Ward, Owen, et al., 2008, p. 267). In the US, according to Ward, Owen, et al., electoral regulations demand impartiality from traditional broadcast media when offering to sell time for election campaigning. However, traditional media in the US is not required to allocate free slots for election campaigning to political parties or candidates. Consequently, Ward, Owen, et al. (2008, p. 267) contend, 'candidates seek methods to reach voters that will reduce the financial cost; hence the attractiveness of the Internet as such an alternative.'

In all, it is argued that electoral regulations can incentivise as well as diminish e-campaigning utilisation. This suggests that the impact of electoral regulations is twofold: positive and negative. Also note that electoral regulations as a factor influencing e-campaigning utilisation is only theoretical; that is, it has not yet been empirically investigated.

2.4.1.3 Voters' technology access

It is commonly perceived that e-campaigning utilisation is dependent on voters' access to e-campaigning technologies and applications, particularly those that are Internet-related (e.g., Dader, 2008; Hameed, 2007; D. T. Hill, 2008; Ward, Owen, et

al., 2008; Wlezien, 2014). As Ward, Owen, et al. (2008, p. 264) put it, 'The logic is clear: parties and candidates are reluctant to invest in a medium that has limited reach.' The following further illustrates this factor.

It is noted that e-campaigning utilisation is highly constrained in countries where the diffusion of PC, the Internet, or broadband Internet is low. For instance, in Indonesia, the infrastructure and diffusion of ICTs is very poor (D. T. Hill, 2008): in mid-2000, the entire country had 7.5 million telephone connections shared by a population of 210 million. Of those telephone connections, 3 million were within the capital. In addition, Internet access in the country is described as costly, slow, and unreliable. Furthermore, the ratio of PC ownership to the country's inhabitants was roughly 1 to 100, indicating an extremely low level of PC ownership. Consequently, although e-campaigning has been long and widely adopted in Indonesia, practices beyond information dissemination are barely present (Hameed, 2007; D. T. Hill, 2008).

E-campaigning utilisation is also restricted in countries such as Spain and Italy where ICT access is moderate (Bentivegna, 2008; Dader, 2008). Chile is a notable exception. More specifically, ICT access in Chile is not only comparable to that in Spain and Italy but also highly unequal among voters (Boas, 2008); however, e-campaigning utilisation in Chile is comparably expansive and extensive (Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). This, according to Ward, Owen, et al., is due to federal elections in Chile being candidate-led. It can be inferred that the impact of voters' technology access can be moderated by another factor, election type in this instance.

Ward, Owen, et al. (2008) argue that e-campaigning utilisation tends to be relatively advanced, expansive, and extensive in countries where ICT access is at the high end of the spectrum. Such countries include the UK, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, the US, Canada, and Australia. Singapore is a notable exception. More specifically, Singapore 'has an advanced technological infrastructure and a strong commitment from the government to increase the role of information technologies in the life of citizens' (Kluver, 2008, p. 61). Despite that, Internet content and activities are extensively and tightly regulated in

Singapore, this in turn depresses e-campaigning utilisation (Kluver, 2008; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). This also suggests that the impact of voters' technology access can be moderated by another factor, electoral regulations in this instance.

In all, it is contended that voters' technology access can motivate as well as dampen e-campaigning utilisation. This suggests that the impact of this factor consists of two sides: positive and negative. Further, it is suggested that the impact of voters' technology access can be moderated by another factor. Also note that voters' technology access as a factor influencing e-campaigning utilisation is theoretical; that is, this factor has not yet been empirically investigated.

2.4.1.4 Resource availability

It is widely accepted in e-campaigning research that the amount of campaign resources possessed by political parties or candidates serves as a prominent factor influencing their e-campaigning utilisation (e.g., Gibson & Ward, 2012; Lilleker & Vedel, 2013; Margolis et al., 2003; Small, 2008; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). As noted, those campaign resources typically pertain to money, time, and campaign staff. There are two main theses in the literature relating to the impact of resource availability on e-campaigning utilisation: *equalisation* and *normalisation*.

The equalisation thesis was formed at the very early phase of e-campaigning research. A key part of it holds that political parties or candidates with limited campaign resources, typically minor parties or candidates, are more incentivised to embrace e-campaigning than their counterparts with vast campaign resources (Gibson & McAllister, 2014; Gibson & Ward, 2012; Small, 2008). More specifically, traditional campaigning, ranging from door-to-door canvassing to televised advertising, is immensely and increasingly costly, thus, it is almost an exclusive playing field for parties or candidates who possess vast campaign resources, parties or candidates with tiny resources, on the other hand, are frequently marginalised. In stark contrast, e-campaigning requires considerably lower start-up costs than its traditional counterpart and it is just as capable in many aspects, such as reaching a wide, diverse audience. Such circumstances especially motivate parties or candidates with limited campaign resources to embrace e-campaigning. From comparing various parties' and candidates' campaign websites, early studies

tend to support the equalisation thesis (Gibson & McAllister, 2014; Gibson & Ward, 2012; Small, 2008).

Subsequent and antithetical to its counterpart, the normalisation thesis asserts that well-resourced political parties or candidates tend to outperform their under-resourced counterparts in e-campaigning (Gibson & McAllister, 2014; Gibson & Ward, 2012; Margolis et al., 2003; Margolis, Resnick, & Wolfe, 1999; Small, 2008; Strandberg, 2009). More specifically, as e-campaigning gains wider appreciation and evolves rapidly and constantly, its present form differs substantially from its initial one, becoming more diversified, expansive, extensive, professionalised, and sophisticated. Accordingly, e-campaigning is increasingly resource-hungry. Ward, Owen, et al. (2008) note that despite its relatively low entry costs, e-campaigning is demanding more money, more skills, and advanced applications. Those scholars continue to point out that 'if parties or candidates can afford to employ specialist web staff, journalists to write website copy and staff to answer email and moderate online discussion they are more likely to produce more sophisticated online campaigns.' (Ward, Owen, et al., 2008, p. 10) Thus, well-resourced parties or candidates tend to exhibit more extensive, expansive, professionalised, and sophisticated e-campaigning utilisation than their under-resourced counterparts. On that note, it is asserted that major parties or candidates tend to outperform their minor counterparts in e-campaigning utilisation because of their inherent resource advantages, which mirrors traditional campaigning (Gibson & McAllister, 2014; Gibson & Ward, 2012; Margolis et al., 2003; Margolis et al., 1999; Small, 2008; Strandberg, 2009; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). Based on comparing various political parties' and candidates' campaign websites or a few interviews with campaign teams, a number of studies, especially recent ones, support the normalisation thesis (Gibson & McAllister, 2014; Gibson & Ward, 2012; Margolis et al., 2003; Small, 2008; Strandberg, 2009).

According to Small (2008), some political scientists suggest that the equalisation thesis tends to be visible in party-led elections while the normalisation thesis in candidate-led elections. This suggestion is not observed in Small's empirical study of political parties' e-campaigning utilisation in a Canadian general election, which is party-led.

In short, resource availability affects e-campaigning utilisation. There are two rival theses in the literature concerning the impact of this factor. Notwithstanding this, it can be inferred that the impact of resource availability consists of two facets: positive and negative; that is, resource availability can motivate as well as undermine e-campaigning utilisation.

2.4.2 Issues with the prevalent factors

The four prevalent factors, namely, election type, electoral regulations, voters' technology access, and resource availability, offer different perspectives to explain political parties' and candidates' e-campaigning utilisation. There are, however, two main issues with the factors.

First, among the four factors, only resource availability is an internal factor and the rest are external. While those factors may be adequate to explain e-campaigning utilisation across democracies with different voting systems, electoral regulations, and levels of technology access, they are inadequate to explain e-campaigning utilisation within the same election where the voting system, electoral regulations, and voters' technology access are constant. This is echoed by Marcinkowski and Metag (2014). According to them (2014, p. 153), there are several studies explaining e-campaigning utilisation in the literature; however, 'These studies all share the basic assumption that to best explain patterns of Web campaigning, one should seek to identify the environmental [factors] and personal resources'. This assumption, Marcinkowski and Metag argue, is insufficient to explain the usage of e-campaigning. They further suggest that political parties' or candidates' internal predisposition or motivation pertaining to e-campaigning utilisation in particular is crucial and should be included.

Second, most of the four factors, namely, election type, electoral regulations, and voters' technology access, are theoretical only. In other words, those factors have not been empirically applied. Even the empirical application of resource availability is highly limited. More specifically, studies that involve resource availability are chiefly based on analysing and comparing political parties' and candidates' campaign websites, in other words, web content analysis (Gibson &

McAllister, 2014); studies such as Margolis et al.'s (2003) that move beyond campaign websites and involve political parties' or candidates' campaign teams as research participants are rare. Further, the impact of resource availability remains somewhat inconclusive (Gibson & McAllister, 2014; Gibson & Ward, 2012). Taken together, it suggests that the explanatory power of the four factors widely noted in the literature is highly limited.

In short, the four prevalent factors explaining e-campaigning utilisation are mainly external to political parties or candidates, they are therefore insufficient to explain e-campaigning utilisation within the same election. Further, those factors are chiefly theoretical; in other words, their empirical application is highly limited. These two issues form major knowledge gaps in e-campaigning research that pertains to explaining e-campaigning utilisation, rendering e-campaigning utilisation largely unexplained.

2.4.3 Factors influencing e-campaigning utilisation: an IS perspective

The IS discipline is appropriate for e-campaigning research and, more importantly, can provide fresh and further insights (Wattal et al., 2010). The discipline, as former Editor-in-Chief of MIS Quarterly A. S. Lee (2001, p. iii) elegantly puts, 'examines more than just the technological system, or just the social system, or even the two side by side; in addition, it investigates *the phenomena that emerge when the two interact* [emphasis added]'. While IS research is active in the role of the Internet in business, *e-business* in other words, it is 'generally silent on the role of the Internet in politics' (Wattal et al., 2010, p. 669).

Little, if any, research is present in IS literature that explains e-campaigning utilisation. Nevertheless, e-campaigning in essence is a form of technology or system utilisation. Explaining technology and system utilisation is a core, long-established, and mature research domain in IS literature (Davis, 1989; King & He, 2006; Legris, Ingham, & Collerette, 2003; Venkatesh & Davis, 2000; Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, & Davis, 2003), which began as early as the 1970s (Legris et al., 2003). And the technology acceptance model (TAM), including its extension TAM2, is one of the most influential and widely adopted IS perspectives (King & He, 2006;

Y. Lee, Kozar, & Larsen, 2003; Legris et al., 2003; Schepers & Wetzels, 2007; Venkatesh & Davis, 2000; Yousafzai, Foxall, & Pallister, 2007a). More specifically, numerous empirical studies in IS literature have employed TAM to explain technology or system utilisation and a large number of them are published in leading IS journals or conferences, such as MIS Quarterly, Information Systems Research, International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS), and Hawaii International Conference on Systems Sciences (HICSS) (King & He, 2006; Y. Lee et al., 2003; Legris et al., 2003; Yousafzai, Foxall, & Pallister, 2007b). TAM has been empirically studied at various levels, namely, individual, group, organisational, and national; also, it has been applied to diverse technologies or systems, ranging from specialised systems, such as expert support systems, to general-purpose systems, such as e-business systems (Y. Lee et al., 2003; Legris et al., 2003; Schepers & Wetzels, 2007; Yousafzai et al., 2007a). That said, TAM has not been applied in e-campaigning research. Yousafzai et al. (2007a, p. 264) summarise it well, three factors contribute to the widespread popularity of TAM: first, it is 'parsimonious, IT-specific, and is designed to provide an adequate explanation and prediction of a diverse user population's acceptance of a wide range of systems and technologies within varying organisational and cultural contexts and expertise levels'; second, it 'has a strong theoretical base'; and third, it 'has accumulated strong empirical support for its overall explanatory power and has emerged as a pre-eminent model of users acceptance of technology'.

Conceived by Davis in the 1980s and inspired by social psychologists Fishbein and Ajzen's theory of reasoned action (TRA), TAM posits that technology or system utilisation is influenced by two independent variables, namely *perceived usefulness* and *perceived ease of use*, through the user's behavioural intention (Davis, 1989; Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989; King & He, 2006; Y. Lee et al., 2003; Legris et al., 2003; Yousafzai et al., 2007a). Perceived usefulness denotes the extent to which a user perceives that utilising a particular technology, application, or system will enhance the user's job performance, and perceived ease of use refers to the extent to which a user perceives that utilising a particular technology, application, or system will be free of effort (Davis, 1989). Thus, incorporating a TAM perspective in this study tackles the issue that the prevalent factors in e-campaigning research

theorised to influence e-campaigning utilisation are mostly external to political parties or candidates and hence inadequate to explain e-campaigning utilisation within the same election; it also addresses Marcinkowski and Metag's (2014) suggestion that political parties' or candidates' internal predisposition or motivation pertaining to e-campaigning utilisation is crucial and should be considered in empirical research that seeks to explain e-campaigning utilisation.

In 2000, more than a decade since its birth, TAM has received a significant theoretical extension from Venkatesh and Davis, referred to as TAM2. Most notably, in TAM2 perceived usefulness, an independent variable of technology or system utilisation in the original TAM, is influenced by five new independent variables, namely, *subjective norm*, *image*, *job relevance*, *output quality*, and *result demonstrability* (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). In other words, TAM2 propounds that technology or system utilisation is influenced by six independent variables, namely the five factors influencing perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use. Based on their longitudinal field studies, Venkatesh and Davis claim that TAM2 is empirically grounded and, more importantly, the explanatory power of TAM has been significantly improved. Further, references to two factors influencing perceived usefulness, namely subjective norm and image, are found in some existing e-campaigning studies. For those reasons, the six independent variables of technology or system utilisation in TAM2 are incorporated in this study as additional internal factors to explain e-campaigning utilisation. The remainder of this section is concerned with those factors.

2.4.3.1 Subjective norm

Consistent with TRA, subjective norm pertains to social pressure, more specifically, one's perception that relates to the behaviour and opinions concerning if the person should or should not act in a certain way, and the behaviour or opinions are of those whom the person considers significant (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). TAM2 suggests that how a technology or system is utilised is influenced by subjective norm. This implies that the factor can stimulate as well as discourage technology or system utilisation; in other words, the impact of the factor consists of two facets: positive and negative.

In the context of e-campaigning, TAM2 suggests that how a campaign team utilises e-campaigning for the political party or candidate is shaped by the team's perception relating to the e-campaigning or opinions of those whom the team considers significant. In other words, subjective norm can stimulate as well as discourage a campaign team's e-campaigning.

As mentioned, references to subjective norm are found in existing e-campaigning research. For instance, Dezelan et al. (2014) theorise that due to peer pressure, political parties or candidates tend to emulate their rivals' e-campaigning in their own. This is termed the 'me too effect' by Selnow (as cited in Dezelan et al., 2014) or a 'domino effect' by Gibson (2012). The role of peer pressure in e-campaigning utilisation is also suggested by Farrell and Schmitt-Beck (2002, p. 12), who argue that

> political actors – not unlike antagonistic nation states enmeshed in an inescapable 'security dilemma' (Hertz 1950; Buzan and Herring 1998) – operate under the same assumption that their opponents will at all times seek to maximise their power potential by taking advantage of any innovative tool available to them, in order to prevail in the contest. Under such circumstances, the competitive pressures inherent in elections and referendums create an autonomous dynamic towards an 'arms race' between 'campaign warriors' (Thurber and Nelson 2000). As no party or candidate campaign organisation can ever expect that its competitors will deliberately abstain from using the newest material and latest technologies of influence, strong incentives are built in to do the same, if only not to fall behind in terms of 'firepower', and to avoid giving anyone else a competitive edge. A spiralling arms race is set in motion, constantly infusing innovative methods into the conduct of campaigns, thus driving campaigning to ever higher levels of sophistication, and cost.

Venkatesh and Davis (2000) further note that the impact of subjective norm is moderated by other variables. More specifically, the impact of subjective norm can be amplified or diminished by *voluntariness*; that is, if the utilisation of a particular technology or system is perceived to be mandatory by the user, the impact of subjective norm will be intensified, and the opposite is true. Also, the impact of subjective norm will be weakened by *experience*; that is, continuous utilisation of a particular technology or system will reduce the impact of subjective norm, irrespective of the voluntariness of such utilisation.

2.4.3.2 Image

Drawn from diffusion of innovations research, this factor is self-explanatory; it denotes the image and reputation of a user within the user's social system (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). TAM2 holds that how a technology or system is utilised is affected by the resulting impact on the user's image as perceived by the user. This implies that image can foster as well as depress technology or system utilisation. In other words, the impact of image consists of two facets: positive and negative.

In the context of e-campaigning, TAM2 suggests that how e-campaigning is conducted by a campaign team is prompted by the team's perception relating to the party's or candidate's political image. In other words, image can foster as well as depress a campaign team's e-campaigning.

As mentioned, there are references to image in existing e-campaigning research. More specifically, some political scientists suggest that consideration of political image forms a driver in political parties' or candidates' e-campaigning utilisation, particularly in the professionalisation and sophistication of e-campaigning (e.g., Bimber, 2014; Dezelan et al., 2014; Schweitzer, 2008a).

Venkatesh and Davis (2000) also indicate that image is directly and positively influenced by subjective norm. As they explain, 'if important members of a person's social group at work believe that he or she should perform a behaviour (e.g., using a system), then performing it will tend to elevate his or her standing within the group.' (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000, p. 189)

2.4.3.3 Job relevance

Job relevance refers to a user's perception pertaining to the applicability of a particular technology or system in relation to the user's work goals or requirements (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). Venkatesh and Davis further indicate that this factor is similar to the variable *job-determined importance* in Leonard-Barton and Deschamps' research, *involvement* in Hartwick and Barki's, *task-technology fit* in Goodhue's, and *cognitive fit* in Vessey's. TAM2 postulates that how a technology or system is utilised is informed by job relevance. This implies that

job relevance can encourage as well as dissuade technology or system utilisation. In other words, the impact of job relevance consists of two facets: positive and negative.

In the context of e-campaigning, TAM2 suggests that how e-campaigning is conducted by a campaign team depends on how it is aligned with the team's campaign goals or requirements as perceived by the team. In other words, job relevance can encourage as well as dissuade a campaign team's e-campaigning.

2.4.3.4 Output quality

Output quality denotes a user's judgement relating to the task performance of a particular technology or system (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). TAM2 posits that how a technology or system is utilised is guided by output quality. This implies that output quality can motivate as well as hinder technology or system utilisation. In other words, the impact of output quality consists of two facets: positive and negative.

In the context of e-campaigning research, TAM2 suggests that how e-campaigning is conducted by a campaign team pivots on the team's judgement of the outcome. In other words, output quality can motivate as well as hinder a campaign team's e-campaigning.

Venkatesh and Davis (2000) add that the impact of job relevance is moderated by output quality. More specifically, when there are multiple options that are considered to be relevant to a user's work goals or requirements, the option that is judged by the user to deliver the best quality tends to be chosen.

2.4.3.5 Result demonstrability

Result demonstrability is also drawn from diffusion of innovations research, it refers to the tangibility of the outcomes of utilising a particular technology or system (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). TAM2 propounds that how a technology or system is utilised is orientated by result demonstrability. This implies that result demonstrability can incentivise as well as dampen technology or system utilisation. In other words, the impact of result demonstrability comprises two

facets: positive and negative. Venkatesh and Davis (2000, p. 192) further indicate that the impact of result demonstrability suggested in TAM2 is consistent with the job characteristics model, which stresses 'knowledge of the actual results of work activities as a key psychological state underlying work motivation'.

In the context of e-campaigning, TAM2 suggests that how e-campaigning is conducted by a campaign team is prompted by its ability to convey tangible results to the campaign team. In other words, result demonstrability can incentivise as well as dampen a campaign team's e-campaigning utilisation.

2.4.3.6 Perceived ease of use

As noted, perceived ease of use refers to the extent to which a user perceives that utilising a particular technology, application, or system would be free of effort (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). Davis (1989) indicates that this factor is noted in the self-efficacy theory, the cost-benefit paradigm from behavioural decision theory, and the diffusion of innovations theory. TAM2 holds that how a technology or system is utilised depends on perceived ease of use. This implies that perceived ease of use can promote as well as withhold technology or system utilisation. In other words, the impact of perceived ease of use comprises two facets: positive and negative.

In the context of e-campaigning, TAM2 suggests that how e-campaigning is conducted by a campaign team depends on the amount of effort that is required as perceived by the team. In other words, perceived ease of use can promote as well as withhold a campaign team's e-campaigning utilisation.

It is worth noting that TAM research is divided on the relevance of perceived ease of use when the target technology, application, or system is Internet-based. More specifically, some assert that Internet-based technologies, applications, or systems are general-purpose and therefore inherently relatively easy to use; accordingly, perceived ease of use is inconsequential (Y. Lee et al., 2003). Others disagree, contending that perceived ease of use remains relevant in the Internet context when specialist tasks, such as online purchasing, are being performed (Y. Lee et al., 2003).

2.4.4 Summary

Despite the underlying technologies and applications being largely similar, political parties' or candidates' e-campaigning utilisation varies markedly within elections or across nations. Further, the potential of e-campaigning technologies and applications has not been fully exploited by parties or candidates. These accordingly have led to an e-campaigning research agenda that intends to uncover factors that influence political parties' or candidates' e-campaigning utilisation; in other words, explain political parties' or candidates' e-campaigning utilisation.

There are four prevalent factors in e-campaigning research theorised to influence political parties' or candidates' e-campaigning utilisation, namely, election type, electoral regulations, voters' technology access, and resource availability. Those factors are chiefly external to parties or candidates. Therefore, they are inadequate to explain parties' or candidates' e-campaigning utilisation within the same election. It is also suggested that research seeking to explain parties' or candidates' e-campaigning utilisation should incorporate their associated internal predisposition or motivation. To that end, this study incorporates a TAM perspective from the IS discipline. More specifically, this study considers the six independent variables of technology or system utilisation in TAM2 as additional internal factors to explain e-campaigning utilisation, namely, subjective norm, image, job relevance, output quality, result demonstrability, and perceived ease of use. In other words, this study considers ten factors in total, three external and seven internal, to explain e-campaigning utilisation.

The impact of any given factor considered in this study comprises two facets: positive and negative. This means that any of the ten factors can motivate as well as retard e-campaigning utilisation. It also means that each factor can serve as an enabler as well as an inhibitor of e-campaigning utilisation. Further, it is suggested that the impacts of some factors, namely, voters' technology access, subjective norm, and job relevance, on political parties' or candidates' e-campaigning utilisation are subject to the moderation of other factors; for instance, the impact of voters' technology access can be moderated by election type. It is also worth noting that except resource availability, all factors have not been empirically

applied or applied in the context of e-campaigning specifically. This suggests that the explanatory power of the ten factors in the e-campaigning domain is highly limited. Thus, empirical application is the only way to tackle this issue.

Table 2.2 depicts the ten factors considered in this study, including the aspect, empirical application, and reference discipline of each factor.

Table 2.2 The factors influencing e-campaigning utilisation considered in this study

Aspect	Factor	Empirical application	Reference discipline
External	Election type		Political science
	Electoral regulations		Political science
	Voters' technology access		Political science
Internal	Resource availability	●	Political science
	Subjective norm		IS*
	Image		IS*
	Job relevance		IS
	Output quality		IS
	Result demonstrability		IS
	Perceived ease of use		IS

Note: * Also referenced in some e-campaigning studies

2.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has reviewed scholarly literature pertinent to this study. More specifically, it has presented an overview of e-campaigning in both practice and academic research. Following this, it has addressed the theorisation of e-campaigning and proposed an alternative e-campaigning framework integrative of existing e-campaigning research. The new framework consists of five campaign practices, namely, information dissemination, voter interaction and engagement, support mobilisation, targeted campaigning, and resource generation. Each practice is associated with various content elements, enabling the practice to be observable. Then, this chapter has focused on factors that influence political parties' or candidates' e-campaigning utilisation by involving both the political science and IS disciplines. A total of ten factors encompassing different aspects have been considered, namely, election type, electoral regulations, voters' technology access, resource availability, subjective norm, image, job relevance, output quality, result demonstrability, and perceived ease of use.

Chapter 3 Research design

3.1 Chapter introduction

Research design is a core constituent of empirical research (de Vaus, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Yin, 2009). As Yin (2009, p. 26) puts it, 'Every type of empirical research has an implicit, if not explicit, research design.'

The term *research design* can be generally understood as 'a logical structure of the inquiry' (de Vaus, 2001, p. 9). More precisely, it is a plan that logically joins the steps, such as collecting and analysing empirical evidence, from research questions to inferences or conclusions (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1976; Yin, 2009); it 'situates the researcher in the empirical world and connects him or her to specific sites, persons, groups, institutions, and bodies of relevant interpretive material, including documents and archives' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 25); and it also 'defines the domain of generalisability' (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1976, p. 29).

Therefore, the primary purpose of research design is to ensure that the collected empirical evidence enables the researcher to properly and unambiguously answer the research questions (de Vaus, 2001; Yin, 2009). Yin (2009, p. 27) stresses that research design 'deals with a *logical* problem and not a *logistical* problem'.

Research design is often confused with and treated as *research method* (de Vaus, 2001). According to de Vaus, the latter is specifically concerned with the practical processes of collecting and analysing empirical evidence within research design. In other words, research method is a subset of research design. Failing to recognise that, de Vaus argues, often jeopardises the evaluation of research designs. More specifically, when equating a research design with a research method, quantitative survey, for example, the design is then evaluated primarily against the strengths and weaknesses related to the method instead of the ability to derive proper and unambiguous inferences or conclusions.

Research design commonly involves the research questions, research paradigm, research approach, research method, procedures for data collection and analysis, and tactics to address research rigour (de Vaus, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003;

Myers, 1997; Yin, 2009). Accordingly, this chapter proceeds as follows: section 3.2 states the research questions; section 3.3 discusses the prevalent research paradigms and indicates the one endorsed in this study; section 3.4 considers common research approaches and specifies the one adopted in this study and its impact on the roles of the researcher; with the selected approach, section 3.5 chooses and justifies the research method for this study; section 3.6 outlines the specific design pertaining to the research method; section 3.7 describes the data collection procedures; section 3.8 describes the data analysis procedures; section 3.9 indicates the tactics employed to address research rigour; and last, section 3.10 summarises this chapter.

3.2 Research questions

Two questions are defined in this empirical study:

1. How do political parties' campaign teams utilise ICTs for election campaigning in New Zealand?
2. What are the factors that influence those campaign teams' utilisation of e-campaigning and why?

3.3 Research paradigm

Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 22) assert that 'all research is interpretive', irrespective of the research approach, method, and data because ultimately, inferences or conclusions drawn by researchers are distilled through their interpretation. This interpretation is governed by a collection of premises pertaining to ontology – the nature of existence or the world at large, epistemology – the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the knower and the known, and methodology – the practical means and procedures for discovering the known (Creswell, 2002; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; McKenzie, Powell, & Usher, 1997; Nachmias & Nachmias, 1976; Silverman, 2000). Collectively, those premises are referred to as a *research paradigm* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; McKenzie, et al., 1997). Both epistemology and methodology are concerned with the acquisition of knowledge. The notable distinction between the two is the

level at which each is situated – the former resides at an abstract level and the latter at a specific, practical level (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), research paradigms are located at an abstract level, they are not always visible to, and are often taken for granted by, researchers. Yet, the scholars stress that it is salient and logical to first address this in any research design, because researchers are 'bound within a net of epistemological and ontological premises which – regardless of ultimate truth or falsity – become partially self-validating' (Bateson, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 22).

3.3.1 Prevalent research paradigms

In general, four paradigms are distinguished and promulgated: *positivism*, *postpositivism*, *constructivism* – also known as *interpretivism*, and *critical theory* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; McKenzie, et al., 1997).

3.3.1.1 Positivism

Stemming from the natural sciences, positivism operates under the dominance of a naïve realist ontology and an objective epistemology, and, as a consequence, solely relies on laboratory experiment and manipulation or quantitative survey as the research method to verify knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

More specifically, positivism claims that the world exists independently of the knower and social practices, and is deterministic – the world is governed by absolute, indiscriminating, and logical truth in relation to cause and effect (A. S. Lee, 1991). In positivism, the purpose of inquiry is to establish and, more importantly, verify theories or hypotheses about the fundamental structure of the world, in other words, truth, through scientifically structured methods so that the world can be apprehended, controlled, and predicted (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; McKenzie, et al., 1997). In order to obtain universal truth, positivism reinforces that researchers must be unimpassioned so that the research is not impaired by any forms of subjectivity, such as their values and any sensory experiences that are irrational. Furthermore, positivism holds that knowledge exists only if it is directly quantifiable (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; McKenzie, et al., 1997).

Consequently, positivism in research design primarily focuses on scientific, mechanical methods for gathering and analysing data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; McKenzie, et al., 1997).

3.3.1.2 Postpositivism

Although positivism has dominated scientific inquiry for a considerable period of time, its fundamental discourse has attracted criticism, particularly against the naïve realist ontology and the limited focus of methods for collecting and analysing empirical evidence (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; McKenzie, et al., 1997). In response, positivism has received minor revisions, referred to as *postpositivism* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). It is worth noting that due to the close relationship between positivism and postpositivism, some scholars treat the two paradigms as one (e.g., A. S. Lee, 1991; Myers, 1997; Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991).

The main characteristics differentiating postpositivism from positivism lie within the modified ontological and methodological premises. More specifically, postpositivism holds a critical realist ontology and an objective epistemology, and employs laboratory experiment and manipulation or quantitative survey as the primary research method; on occasions, postpositivism may accept qualitative methods, but only with demonstrable scientific rigour and, more importantly, for data triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). That is, while still maintaining that the world is deterministic, postpositivism accepts that the universal laws governing the world can only be apprehended imperfectly and probabilistically (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). To that end, all theories or hypotheses about the fundamental structure of the world are inevitably subject to falsification. Therefore, researchers must be critical about the certainty of their knowledge – the central discourse of critical realism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). In postpositivism, the aim of inquiry is to falsify the established hypotheses or theories about truth. In addition, postpositivism acknowledges that no observation or measurement is completely free from errors. Consequently, it vigorously suggests that researchers employ multiple observations and measurements, and, on some occasions, non-quantitative methods to triangulate

the collected empirical evidence and reduce errors that could jeopardise inferences or conclusions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

3.3.1.3 Constructivism

As noted, some scholars treat positivism and postpositivism as a single paradigm. Constructivism, by contrast, is considered by Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 22) as working 'against and alongside (and some within)' positivism and postpositivism. Developed in 1967, constructivism holds a relativist ontology, a subjective epistemology, and a naturalistic set of interpretive, hermeneutical, and dialectical methodological procedures (Creswell, 2002; Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

More specifically, constructivism repudiates the ontological claims held by both positivism and postpositivism about the nature of existence of the world. It contends that the known does not exist externally or independently (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Rather, it represents the construction of multiple realities as perceived by individuals, based on their unique values, backgrounds, and experiences, and, consequently, absolute, universal truth is absent (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). In other words, knowledge resides within each individual in society and is subjective in nature. In order to gain a further understanding of the known, the aim of inquiry in constructivism is to observe and interact with various members of society involved in the phenomenon being investigated, and interpret their views (Creswell, 2002). In addition, constructivism vehemently encourages the research to be conducted in a natural setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Further, constructivism rejects the advocacy maintained by both positivism and postpositivism that researchers must be unimpassioned when conducting the research. In stark contrast, constructivism recognises the subjectivity inherent in researchers and promotes that researchers should equally appreciate the subjectivity of research participants (Creswell, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). As mentioned, constructivism is also referred to as *interpretivism* by some scholars (Creswell, 2002), especially those from the IS discipline (e.g., A. S. Lee, 1991; Myers, 1997; Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991). This reference, however, is not widely accepted by scholars of social science or

pedagogy, as it only reflects the epistemological and methodological premises of constructivism (e.g., Creswell, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

3.3.1.4 Critical theory

First defined by Horkheimer, the Frankfurt School theorist, with inspiration from other scholars, critical theory in essence assumes a historical realist ontology, a subjective epistemology, and dialogic, dialectical research methods (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005).

More specifically, the paradigm believes in an independent existence of reality. However, the reality is virtual – compared to the 'real' reality held by both positivism and postpositivism – and is moulded by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Critical theory is underpinned by several unique assumptions; notably, 'all thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations that are socially and historically constituted' (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 304), and 'facts can never be isolated from the domain of values or removed from some form of ideological inscription' (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 304). This paradigm further contends that researchers need to be critical about existing thought and knowledge because 'mainstream research practices are generally, although most unwittingly, implicated in the reproduction of systems of class, race, and gender oppression (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997)' (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 304). As a result, critical theory is not satisfied with the mere accumulation of knowledge, the main aim of inquiry in this paradigm is to critique and rectify 'the injustices found in the field site or constructed in the very act of research itself' (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 305). Consequently, in critical theory, knowledge is increased by historical revisionism and generalisation by similarity (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Due to its epistemological nature, critical theory solely employs qualitative methods for collecting, analysing, and communicating empirical evidence (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). It is worth noting that critical theory primarily gains support from studies of culture, anthropology, politics, and history (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005).

3.3.2 The research paradigm endorsed in this study

The four prevalent paradigms differ from each other, most notably their embedded premises, assumptions about the nature of knowledge, and inquiry aims. Considering that and the context of this study, constructivism is endorsed as the research paradigm.

Specifically, this study posits that the e-campaigning phenomenon is not deterministic; in other words, it is not governed by a single set of absolute, universal laws. Rather, e-campaigning is a complex social phenomenon that consists of multiple realities and contexts. The social phenomenon can be inquired in its natural setting only, without any manipulation and intrusion by the researcher. Further, the associated knowledge and understanding resides within individuals who are involved in the phenomenon. Thus, empirical knowledge and understanding relating to e-campaigning is acquired, developed, accumulated, and reconstructed from the researcher interacting with multiple participants in the phenomenon, gathering their underlying assumptions, values, beliefs, and experiences as empirical evidence, and interpreting the evidence through the researcher's subjectivity. Meanings derived from this study are therefore subjective, contextual, and socially negotiated, and when joined with others they form a panoramic perspective of the e-campaigning phenomenon.

3.4 Research approach

3.4.1 Prevalent research approaches

Broadly speaking, two distinctive, predominant research approaches are discussed in social science: quantitative, and qualitative. Conventionally, it is considered that the choice of research approach is largely dominated by the research paradigm (Creswell, 2002). This dominance is referred to as *paradigmatic hegemony* (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). For instance, the quantitative approach is often aligned with the positivist or postpositivist tradition, the qualitative approach, on the other hand, is usually associated with the constructivist or criticalist tradition. While the distinction between quantitative and qualitative approaches remains, paradigmatic hegemony has become

increasingly weakened over the past decade – as evidenced by more positivists or postpositivists taking a qualitative approach to their empirical research – chiefly due to the proliferation of scholars conducting interdisciplinary studies and the emergence of new research paradigms as a result of the pedigrees of various paradigms themselves 'beginning to interbreed' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 184). Thus, rather than assuming a particular approach based on paradigmatic hegemony, the research design in this study first considers the notable characteristics and impediments of each approach.

It is worth noting another research approach – mixed-methods, which is a hybrid of quantitative and qualitative approaches (Creswell, 2002). In Denzin and Lincoln's (2005) view, the mixed-methods approach is a direct descendent of classical experimentalism exclusively connected with the quantitative approach. Howe (as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 10) is cautious about the development of mixed-methods:

> It is just not the methodological fundamentalists who have brought into this approach. A sizable number of rather influential … educational researchers … have also signed on. This might be a compromise to the current political climate; it might be a backlash against the perceived excess of postmodernism; it might be both. It is an ominous development, whatever the explanation.

Considering the nature of the mixed-methods approach, it suffices to discuss the two predominant approaches, quantitative and qualitative, in the research design of this study.

3.4.1.1 Quantitative approach

As described by Creswell (2002), de Vaus (2001), and Silverman (2000), the quantitative approach, in principal, is influenced by the positivist or postpositivist tradition. This approach primarily employs true experiment, quasi-experiment – a less rigorous experiment, and social survey as methods of collecting and analysing empirical evidence, which subsequently leads to verification or falsification of knowledge. The quantitative approach excludes subjective values from the research and is chiefly evaluated against traditional scientific rigour such as structured, often statistical, analysis, internal and external validity, reliability

and computer-assisted analyses that permit frequency counts and tabulations. Furthermore, the quantitative researcher is an impartial observer and reporter of objective empirical evidence and results (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Silverman, 2000).

Although the quantitative approach is supported by scholars from various academic disciplines, it attracts criticism, especially from scholars of social science and political science, mainly centring the omission of variables that represent subjective values (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Silverman, 2000).

3.4.1.2 Qualitative approach

As found by Denzin and Lincoln (2005), the attempt to clearly conceptualise the qualitative approach has become enormously challenging, as it is not only associated with constructivism, but also other emergent research paradigms that assume subjective, interpretive epistemology and methodology. Generically, the qualitative approach is defined as:

> A situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.
>
> Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study; personal experience, introspection; life story; interview; artifacts; cultural texts and productions; observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives. Accordingly, qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand. It is understood, however, that each practice makes the world visible in a different way. Hence there is frequently a commitment to using more than one interpretive practice in any study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3).

The qualitative approach attracts criticism from quantitative researchers mainly on two counts. First, most, if not all, empirical evidence collected in qualitative

research is filled with biases. Consequently, from a natural scientist's perspective, the qualitative approach can hardly be considered as scientific and, at best, only serves the purpose of immersing the researcher in the phenomenon under study (Silverman, 2000). Some positivists or postpositivists accuse qualitative research of being fictional, which ultimately is an assault on the scientific tradition (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Second, any explanation of a subject or phenomenon inevitably involves causality between observable variables. However, qualitative research discounts statistical validation of causality and therefore, the explanatory power of qualitative research, especially when focusing on a single incident, is highly contentious to quantitatively-orientated scholars (Silverman, 2000).

3.4.2 The research approach adopted in this study and the roles of the researcher

As indicated by Creswell (2002) and Silverman (2000), each research approach attracts proponents as well as opponents. In considering a specific approach to adopt, as suggested by those scholars, the researcher should particularly focus on the research questions, the nature of the subject or phenomenon under study, and the research purpose.

With consideration of the above suggestions, a qualitative approach is adopted in this study. This is justified from four perspectives. First, the existing empirical understanding of the social, contextual phenomenon, campaign teams' utilisation of e-campaigning, is limited, particularly concerning factors that influence the utilisation of e-campaigning. To that end, this empirical study is largely exploratory in nature. Second, as noted, the phenomenon can only be studied in its natural setting. More importantly, the understanding and knowledge of e-campaigning resides within individuals involved in this social phenomenon and therefore can only be acquired, developed, and constructed through interaction with them. Third, the empirical evidence to be collected in this study consists of participants' beliefs, perceptions, and assumptions. In other words, this study holds that it is the qualitative data that makes it meaningful and relevant. And last, this study does not intend to verify or falsify any facts or realities in relation to

campaign teams' utilisation of e-campaigning, because, as mentioned, it considers that the phenomenon comprises multiple meanings and realities.

In general, a qualitative researcher is described as a *bricoleur* by Denzin and Lincoln (2005). As they (2005, p. 4) explain,

> A *bricoleur* makes do by "adapting the *bricoles* of the world. *Bricolage* is 'the poetic making do'" (de Certeau, 1984, p. xv) with "such bricoles – the odds and ends, the bits left over" (Harper, 1987, p. 74). …
>
> The interpretive *bricoleur* produces a bricolage – that is, a pieced-together set of representations that is fitted to the specifics of a complex situation. "The solution (bricolage) which is the result of the *bricoleur's* method is an [emergent] construction" (Weinstein & Weinstein, 1991, p. 161) that changes and takes new forms as the *bricoleur* adds different tools, methods, and techniques of representation and interpretation to the puzzle. …

Also, in the definition of qualitative approach offered by Denzin and Lincoln (2005), there are a few indications concerning the roles of a qualitative researcher. For instance, Denzin and Lincoln suggest that qualitative researchers are transformers – who turn the world into a series of representations, sense-makers – who interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings participants bring to them, and knowledge co-producers – who produce knowledge with participants.

Given the various roles associated with, and expected of, a qualitative researcher, the roles specifically emphasised in this qualitative study are *outside observer*, *facilitator*, and *interpreter*. More precisely, the researcher of this study observes an emerging, complex, social phenomenon in its natural setting without any intrusion or manipulation; the researcher also facilitates the production of empirical knowledge and understanding in relation to the phenomenon under study by involving, and interacting with, multiple participants; moreover, the researcher assigns meanings to the empirical observations and evidence, guided by the researcher's subjectivity.

3.5 Research method

Research method, also referred to as *strategy of inquiry*, is concerned with the practical, specific processes of collecting, analysing, and reporting or interpreting

empirical evidence (Creswell, 2002; de Vaus, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). In essence, research methods describe

> the skills, assumptions, enactments, and material practices that researchers-as-methodological-*bricoleurs* use when they move from a paradigm and a research design to the collection of empirical materials. … [They] connect researchers to specific approaches and methods for collecting and analysing empirical materials. [They] locate researchers and paradigms in specific empirical, material sites and in specific methodological practices … (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 379).

3.5.1 Prevalent research methods

A key feature of qualitative research lies within the variety of research methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Silverman, 2000). In general, four different methods are frequently discussed in qualitative research: *ethnography*, *grounded theory*, *case study research*, and *action research* (Creswell, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Myers, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

3.5.1.1 Ethnography

Stemming from the discipline of social and cultural anthropology, ethnography, in its broad sense, refers to the task of describing a specific culture, organisation, or person, with reference to the particular customs and characteristics, within a society in its own natural setting over a prolonged period (Alexander, 2005; Myers, 2009). Tedlock (2005) further draws distinctions within ethnographic research. According to the scholar, ethnography is dualistic in two realms of experience: public versus private, and objective versus subjective. Public ethnography is referred to as *monograph* while private ethnography is referred to as *memoir*; objective ethnography is referred to as *ethnography* while subjective ethnography is referred to as *autobiography*.

Due to the nature of ethnography, ethnographers are often required to devote a sizable amount of time in the field to observe. Furthermore, 'Ethnographers immerse themselves in the life of people they study (Lewis, 1985) and seek to place the phenomena studied in their social and cultural context.' (Myers, 2009, p. 93) Ethnographic research often provides depth yet a highly limited breadth of knowledge (Myers, 2009).

3.5.1.2 Grounded theory

Grounded theory refers to 'an inductive, theory discovery methodology that allows the researcher to develop a theoretical account of the general features of a topic while simultaneously grounding the account in empirical observations or data' (Martin & Turner, as cited in Orlikowski, 1993, p. 311).

Grounded theory consists of two main characteristics differentiating itself from other qualitative methods, according to Strauss and Corbin (1998). First, researchers employing this method start their empirical research without any theoretical assumptions relating to the subject or phenomenon under study. Second, in this method, the theory of the subject or phenomenon emerges from the empirical evidence collected by the researcher. Therefore, the theory is 'more likely to resemble the "reality" than is theory derived by putting together a series of concepts based on experience or solely through speculation (how one thinks things ought to work)' (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 12). In other words, the research processes in grounded theory is contextual and processual (Orlikowski, 1993).

3.5.1.3 Case study research

Yin (2009) indicates that although the case study has existed as a scientific research method for a considerable time, it is still widely misunderstood, which can be observed from two perspectives. First, some scholars, including social scientists, still consider the case study as 'the exploratory stage of some other type of research method' (Yin, 2009, p. 17). Second, some scholars confuse the case study with ethnography since observation of participants is central in both methods.

In response to the definitional issues relating to case study research, Yin (2009) conceptualises this method from two aspects: scope and technicality. From the aspect of scope, case study research is defined as a method of empirical research that 'investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' (Yin, 2009, p. 18). From the technical aspect, case study research

> copes with the technicality distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result; relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result; [and] benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (Yin, 2009, p. 18).

Gable's (1994, p. 113) definition of case study research is elegant and bears noting:

> The case study approach seeks to understand the problem being investigated (where the word 'understand' is used in the phenomenological or hermeneutic sense, and where 'understanding' the meaning held by a subject or group is contrasted with the 'explanation' produced by a scientific observation ...). The approach provides the opportunity to ask penetrating questions and to capture the richness of organisational behaviour, but the conclusions drawn may be specific to the particular organisations studied and may not be generalisable.

3.5.1.4 Action research

Emerging around World War II, action research is 'an interventionist approach to the acquisition of scientific knowledge that has sound foundations in the postpositivist tradition' (Baskerville & Wood-Harper, 1996, p. 236).

Action research is a close collaboration between researchers and practitioners in which the researchers are often considered as a consultant (Baskerville & Wood-Harper, 1996). It is typically considered as a cycle consisting of five iterative phases: diagnosing, action planning, action taking, evaluating, and specifying learning (Baskerville & Wood-Harper, 1996). In the first phase, the researchers and practitioners identify the primary, underlying problems to be changed or tackled. In the second, the researchers and practitioners specify a series of actions to tackle or treat the problems previously identified. In the third, the researchers and practitioners intervene in the subject or phenomenon under study, and execute the actions or treatments. In the fourth, the researchers and practitioners evaluate the outcomes of the applied actions or treatments. This is followed by the last phase, which involves undertaking an ongoing, formal process of specifying the knowledge gained during the action research (Baskerville & Wood-Harper, 1996). The cycle of action research can continue after the last phase until the researchers and practitioners are fully satisfied with the knowledge developed in the research.

3.5.2 The research method employed in this study

Yin (2009, p. 8) advises that the researcher should consider four aspects when choosing a particular method: the form of research question, 'the extent of control the investigator has over actual behavioural events', 'the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events', and the existence of theoretical assumptions prior to data collection.

In this study, the research questions are primarily concerned with 'how' and 'why', the researcher cannot manipulate any campaign team's e-campaigning utilisation, the research focus is on a contemporary event, and theoretical assumptions have been made before data collection. Under such circumstances, says Yin (2009), case study research is justified as the research method. Accordingly, this study employs case study research.

3.6 Case research design

Many scholars stress that after choosing case study research as the research method and before data collection and analysis, the researcher needs to carefully consider case research design from three aspects: unit of analysis, single- or multiple-case research, and case selection (Benbasat, Goldstein, & Mead, 2002; Yin, 2009). Failing to do so, say those scholars, will undermine the quality of data collection and analysis, subsequent inferences and conclusions, and the validity and reliability of the research.

3.6.1 Unit of analysis

The first aspect to consider in designing case study research pertains to unit of analysis. It denotes the research focus and therefore can be individuals, small groups, or organisations; in some circumstances, it can also be relationships or decisions (Benbasat et al., 2002; Yin, 2009). Guest, Namey, and Mitchell (2013, p. 26) add that unit of analysis 'is the level of abstraction at which you look for variability'. The research questions are central in defining the unit of analysis (Benbasat et al., 2002; Yin, 2009).

The unit of analysis in this study is defined as political parties' campaign teams, in other words, small groups, because this entire study is concerned with political parties' e-campaigning conducted by their campaign teams in the 2008 New Zealand general election.

3.6.2 Single-case or multiple-case research

Another important aspect of case research design is the number of cases to be conducted or studied; in other words, the researcher needs to decide if the empirical research should be based on only one case or multiple cases (Benbasat, et al., 2002; Yin, 2009).

A single case design is justified when the case 'represents the *critical* case in testing a well-formulated theory' that 'has specified a clear set of propositions as well as the circumstances within which the propositions are believed to be true' (Yin, 2009, p. 47); represents an *extreme* case or a *unique* case that 'commonly occurs in clinical psychology, where a specific injury or disorder may be so rare that any single case is worth documenting' (Yin, 2009, p. 47); is 'the *representative* or *typical* case' and 'the objective is to capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday or commonplace situation' (Yin, 2009, p. 48); is 'the *revelatory* case' that 'exists when an investigator has an opportunity to observe and analyse a phenomenon previously inaccessible to social science inquiry' (Yin, 2009, p. 48); or is 'the *longitudinal* case: studying the same single case at two or more different points in time' (Yin, 2009, p. 49).

A multiple-case design is advised when the rationale for single-case research cannot be satisfied; that is, the case is not critical, extreme, representative, revelatory, or longitudinal (Benbasat et al., 2002; Yin 2009). Yin remarks that a case is analogous to an experiment in quantitative research. Thus, 'the evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust' (Herriott & Firestone, as cited in Yin, 2009, p. 53). Benbasat et al. (2002, p. 84) agree and add that a multiple-case design allows for 'cross-case analysis and the extension of theory'. Yin (2009, p. 54) further indicates that a multiple-case design enables the researcher to replicate the same analytic logic – as opposed to sampling logic in quantitative surveys – as

in the first case, in order to predict similar results (a literal replication) or predict 'contrasting results but for anticipatable reasons (a theoretical replication)'. Yin (2009, p. 53), however, warns that 'the conduct of a multiple-case study can require extensive resources and time beyond the means of a single student or independent research investigator'.

This study opts for a multiple-case design because the rationale for a single-case design cannot be fulfilled. Further, multiple case studies enable more compelling empirical evidence, a cross-case analysis for further insights, and theoretical extension and replication.

3.6.3 Case selection

Case selection is central in any case research design (Benbasat et al., 2002; Seawright & Gerring, 2008; Yin, 2009). However, specific advice concerning this aspect is sparse in research methods literature (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). Benbasat et al. (2002, p. 85) stress that case selection 'should be carefully thought out rather than being opportunistic'. Yin suggests that in multiple-case designs, researchers should consider two or three cases for literal replications and four to six cases for theoretical replications. Seawright and Gerring point out that in multiple-case designs researchers base their case selections on various considerations. For instance, some researchers choose cases primarily for pragmatic reasons, 'such as time, money, expertise, and access' (Seawright & Gerring, 2008, p. 295); some choose cases based on random sampling; and some choose cases because of diversity.

In this study, case selection is based on three main criteria. First, the cases should reflect diversity; in other words, they should not focus on only the major parties' or minor parties' e-campaigning utilisation. Diversity is also a main characteristic of New Zealand's political landscape, especially after MMP replacing FPP as the electoral system for general elections in 1996 (Miller, 2010; Mulgan, 2004). Second, the cases should be concerned with only the parliamentary parties because they had a more realistic chance of being elected and thus had more meaningful election campaigns in general. It is worth noting that most existing e-campaigning studies based on party-led elections solely or chiefly focus on

parliamentary parties (e.g., Gibson & McAllister, 2008; Schweitzer, 2008a; Small et al., 2008; Voerman & Boogers, 2008). And third, the cases should each feature e-campaigning utilisation or it would render this study meaningless.

Eight parliamentary parties participated in the 2008 New Zealand general election: the New Zealand National Party (referred to as 'National' henceforth), the New Zealand Labour Party (referred to as 'Labour' henceforth), the Green Party of Aotearoa (referred to as 'the Greens' henceforth), the New Zealand First Party, ACT New Zealand (referred to as 'ACT' henceforth), the Maori Party, Jim Anderton's Progressive Party (referred to as 'the Progressives' henceforth), and United Future New Zealand (referred to as 'United Future' henceforth). Those parties all conducted e-campaigning in the election. Thus, there were eight cases satisfying the three criteria for case selection.

The researcher contacted all case organisations, inviting their campaign teams to participate in this study. Seven accepted, including the major parties; one minor party, however, indicated that the person solely responsible for its e-campaigning passed away at the early phase of the campaign period and the party's e-campaigning had remained mostly unattended since. Accordingly, this study investigated the e-campaigning utilisation of six parliamentary parties, namely, National, Labour, the Greens, ACT, the Progressives, and United Future. Although the e-campaigning of two minor parties are not included in this study, the included cases still highly reflect diversity.

3.7 Procedures for data collection

Each research question in this study involves a different data collection procedure. For clarity, this section describes the data collection procedures according to the research questions.

3.7.1 Data collection for the first research question

The first question relates to exploring the six parliamentary parties' e-campaigning utilisation in the 2008 New Zealand general election. To investigate political parties' or candidates' e-campaigning utilisation, existing studies solely

or primarily draw on the content of their campaign websites (Lilleker & Vedel, 2013). It is, however, worth noting that obtaining empirical evidence from multiple sources to explore e-campaigning utilisation, such as the studies by Gibson, Margolis, et al. (2003) and van Os et al. (2007), is not common in e-campaigning research.

This study collected empirical evidence from multiple sources to answer the first research question. Primary data was derived from the content of the six parties' e-campaigns, comprising text, images, links, applications, video files, discussions, comments, documents, and blog entries. Primary data was obtained daily between 12 September 2008, when the 2008 New Zealand general election was announced by the then Prime Minister Helen Clark, and 8 November 2008, the date of the general election.

Secondary data, for triangulation and further insights, was derived from the following sources:

- in-depth, semi-structured interviews with members of the six parties' campaign teams after the election (The interviews focused on factors that influenced the six parties' e-campaigning utilisation – the second research question; however, they inevitably involved discussions relating to the parties' e-campaigning utilisation, which both triangulated and supplemented the primary data. Further details about the interviews are presented in section 3.7.2.)
- newspaper articles about the parties' e-campaigns or election campaigns in general
- news and programmes on television about the parties' e-campaigns or election campaigns in general
- public presentations by the parties of their election campaigns
- studies and blogs by scholars pertaining to the parties' election campaigns

3.7.2 Data collection for the second research question

The second research question is concerned with identifying factors that influenced the six parties' e-campaigning utilisation and the underlying reasons. Put

differently, the question pertains to explaining the parties' e-campaigning utilisation.

Among the studies in the literature that attempt to explain e-campaigning utilisation, only few involve empirical evidence derived from interviews with campaign team members (e.g., Margolis et al., 2003; Vaccari, 2010).

This study gathered empirical evidence from multiple sources in order to answer the second research question. Primary data was derived from multiple in-depth interviews with individuals and small groups representing the campaign teams of the six parliamentary parties included in this study, namely, National, Labour, the Greens, ACT, the Progressives, and United Future. The interviews, which lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, were conducted after the election. Each interview followed the interview protocol designed for this study and took place at a time and location convenient for the participant or participants. More specifically, the researcher invited members of the six parties' campaign teams to participate in semi-structured interviews focusing on factors that influenced the parties' e-campaigning utilisation in the election. An information sheet was attached to each invitation, consisting of a summary of the study, the purpose of the interview, general questions to be raised, and measures to address the participant's anonymity and confidentiality. The invitation also encouraged the participant to raise any questions relating to the interview or the study. Before commencing each interview, informed consent was obtained from each participant. The consent allowed the participant to withdraw from the study at any time before a specific date. In each interview, the researcher encouraged the participant or participants to openly and candidly discuss factors that influenced the party's e-campaigning utilisation with specific examples. Questions asked by the researcher were interactive and generally open-ended. At the end of each interview, the researcher asked the participant or participants for corroborative evidence and any other individuals whom were believed to be suitable for the study. All interviews were recorded. The researcher also took plenty of notes in the interviews. Given that the interviews were conducted after the election and, as noted, election campaigning in fact reflects collective, orchestrated efforts, all

participants of a campaign team shared a consensus view on how the party's e-campaigning was conducted in the election.

Secondary data, for triangulation or further insights, was derived from the following sources:

- the six parties' official e-campaigns
- newspaper articles about the parties' e-campaigns or election campaigns in general
- news and programmes on television about the parties' e-campaigns or election campaigns in general
- public presentations by the parties of their election campaigns
- studies and blogs by scholars pertaining to the parties' election campaigns

3.8 Procedures for data analysis

Each research question in this study involves a different data analysis procedure. For clarity, this section describes the data analysis procedures according to the research questions.

3.8.1 Data analysis for the first research question

Most studies in the literature employ content analysis in order to understand, describe, and compare political parties' or candidates' e-campaigning utilisation within an election or across elections (Lilleker & Vedel, 2013). This analytic technique, according to Lilleker and Vedel (2013, p. 405), is 'highly objective and transparent' and 'provides the basis of much academic understanding of Internet use in politics'. Further, it 'has a long and established pedigree' (Gibson & Ward, 2000b, p. 303) and is applicable to both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Berg, 2001; Gibson & Ward, 2000b). In e-campaigning research, content analysis involves observing the presence or absence of content elements on a party's or candidate's campaign website, and from which charting the themes, patterns, and extent of the party's or candidate's e-campaigning utilisation as each element is associated with a practice (Dougherty & Foot, 2007; Foot & Schneider, 2006; Gibson & Ward, 2000b).

A coding framework is central to content analysis and represents a theorisation of e-campaigning utilisation (Dougherty & Foot, 2007; Foot & Schneider, 2006; Gibson & Ward, 2000b). It can be developed prior to or during data analysis; however, the former is advised (Dougherty & Foot, 2007; Foot & Schneider, 2006; Gibson & Ward, 2000b). It is worth noting that a coding framework serves as a heuristic tool in content analysis.

The content analysis in this study adapted the practices of Dougherty and Foot (2007), Foot and Schneider (2006), and Gibson and Ward (2000b). The e-campaigning framework developed in this study, Table 2.1, was employed as the coding framework; that is, the coding framework was constructed prior to data analysis. Content analysis of each case was conducted after the primary data was collected, in other words, daily and concurrently with data collection. It began with the researcher organising the empirical data for analysis. Following that, the researcher observed the presence or absence of the content elements within the party's e-campaign, assisted by the coding framework. The researcher also created analytic memos relating to any noteworthy features of the e-campaign. When a new content element emerged, the researcher determined if the element was a manifestation of a practice in the framework, such as information dissemination, or a new practice, based on the explanations of the practices in Chapter 2. And the framework was revised accordingly. This demonstrated the heuristic nature of the coding framework and that the researcher was inclusive towards any new perspectives from empirical evidence. After all content elements within the e-campaign were observed and with the memos taken previously, the researcher described the themes, patterns, and extent of the party's e-campaigning utilisation. These were triangulated with secondary data and compared to those in the previous analysis and existing studies. Matrices were used to present the primary data. Finally, conclusions relating to the party's e-campaigning utilisation were drawn.

As illustrated, the content analysis in this study was a structured and iterative process. Cross-case analysis was performed to uncover further patterns, trends, and insights pertaining to the parties' e-campaigning utilisation.

3.8.2 Data analysis for the second research question

Discussions about qualitative data analysis are rich in research methods literature, some focus on the phases and activities involved (e.g., Yin, 2011) while others the techniques (e.g., Myers, 2009). This study incorporated Yin's view of analysing empirical data for the second research question; in other words, five sequential phases were involved, namely *compiling*, *disassembling*, *reassembling*, *interpreting*, and *concluding*, and each phase consisted of different activities.

The activities in the compiling phase were chiefly administrative. The main objective of this phase was to organise all empirical data properly and systematically before formal analysis. More specifically, the researcher listened to and transcribed all interview recordings, the primary data for the research question. Each interview transcript was verified for accuracy and sorted. Notes taken during the interviews were typed, reviewed, and arranged. All secondary data was also organised.

After properly organising empirical data for analysis, the researcher entered the disassembling phase. In this phase, the researcher carefully and repeatedly read through all interview transcripts in order to be intimate with the data and develop ideas about what was discussed, what was relevant, what was similar, what was different, what was emphasised, and what was noteworthy. These ideas were captured by a series of analytic memos. Then, the researcher segmented the interview data into smaller portions for coding in the next phase, chiefly based on the ideas previously developed. This was not straightforward and often involved re-reading the transcripts, re-assessing and, sometimes, modifying the initial ideas.

In the reassembling phase, the researcher began coding the interview data disassembled in the previous phase. As Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 56) explain, in qualitative research codes denote 'tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study'; they 'usually are attached to "chunks" of varying size-words, phrases, sentences, or whole paragraphs, connected or unconnected to a specific setting'. It is widely accepted that researchers create initial codes from their prior theoretical assumptions; that is, a priori codes (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Maxwell, 2013;

Miles & Huberman, 1994; Walsham, 2002). Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 58) in particular 'prefer' this method of code creation. A risk, according to Walsham (2002, p. 105), is that researchers only see what their initial theoretical assumptions illuminate and fail to notice 'potential new issues and avenues of exploration'. To counter that, Walsham (2002, p. 105) advises researchers to 'preserve a considerable degree of openness to the field data, and a willingness to modify initial assumptions and theories'.

In this study, the initial codes were derived from the ten factors discussed in Chapter 2: election type, electoral regulations, voters' technology access, resource availability, subjective norm, image, job relevance, output quality, result demonstrability, and perceived ease of use. Table 3.1 exhibits the initial code list.

Table 3.1 Initial code list

Category	Subcategory	Code
External factors	Election type	EF-ET
	Electoral regulations	EF-ER
	Voters' technology access	EF-VTA
Internal factors	Resource availability	IF-RA
	Subjective norm	IF-SN
	Image	IF-IMG
	Job relevance	IF-JR
	Output quality	IF-OQ
	Result demonstrability	IF-RD
	Perceived ease of use	IF-PEU

As coding progressed, the researcher recognised that the impact of a factor could be positive or negative to e-campaigning utilisation, it could also be moderated by another factor. These different outcomes were valuable to the study yet not reflected in the initial codes as they were only descriptive. To address that, the researcher inserted a subcategory under the subcategory in the initial code list; that is, a sub-subcategory. The sub-subcategory was initially based on prior theoretical assumptions and was expanded multiple times as a result of new patterns emerging from the empirical data. Table 3.2 exhibits the final code list with data-driven codes being highlighted. The addition of a sub-subcategory to the initial code list meant that refreshing the initial codes was necessary. Consequently, data that had been previously coded was recoded for consistency. Put differently, modification of any existing codes resulted in recoding. During the

coding process, the researcher reassessed data segmentation on several occasions, which sometimes led to recoding or coding new segments. Many analytic memos were taken while coding, they were substantive, conceptual, theoretical, and personal. The coding process concluded when all data segments had been coded or recoded.

Table 3.2 Final code list

Category	Subcategory	Sub-subcategory	Code
External factors	Election type	Positive	EF-ET-P
		Negative	EF-ET-N
		Moderated	EF-ET-M
	Electoral regulations	Positive	EF-ER-P
		Negative	EF-ER-N
		Moderated	EF-ER-M
	Voters' technology access	Positive	EF-VTA-P
		Negative	EF-VTA-N
		Moderated	EF-VTA-M
Internal factors	Resource availability	Positive	IF-RA-P
		Negative	IF-RA-N
		Moderated	IF-RA-M
	Subjective norm	Positive	IF-SN-P
		Negative	IF-SN-N
		Moderated	IF-SN-M
	Image	Positive	IF-IMG-P
		Negative	IF-IMG-N
		Moderated	IF-IMG-M
	Job relevance	Positive	IF-JR-P
		Negative	IF-JR-N
		Moderated	IF-JR-M
	Output quality	Positive	IF-OQ-P
		Negative	IF-OQ-N
		Moderated	IF-OQ-M
	Result demonstrability	Positive	IF-RD-P
		Negative	IF-RD-N
		Moderated	IF-RD-M
	Perceived ease of use	Positive	IF-PEU-P
		Negative	IF-PEU-N

Note: Data-driven codes are highlighted

During and after the coding process, the researcher organised the coded data in matrices according to the interview participants, the cases, the factors, and the impacts of the factors; in other words, data reassembly. Diagrams were also used to depict the coded data. The objectives of data reassembly and depiction were to constantly compare and interrogate the coded data from various aspects, identify and address alternative explanations for specific instances of e-campaigning utilisation provided by the campaign teams, sharpen and deepen the

understanding of the data, and elicit insights and patterns. There was constant interplay between data coding and data reassembly and depiction.

Subsequent to data reassembly, the researcher began interpreting. The focus was not on any particular data; rather, it was on forming a comprehensive view based on all empirical findings. Yin (2011) suggests three forms of interpreting: description, description plus a call for action, and explanation. The third was applicable; that is, the researcher provided an interpretation by explaining the six parliamentary parties' conduct of e-campaigning in the 2008 New Zealand general election. To achieve that, the researcher revisited the main findings and insights elicited in the previous phase several times; the researcher also particularly considered five aspects of the interpretation: generalisability, context, and empirical accuracy, adequacy, and relevancy.

In the last phase the focus was on drawing a conclusion for the research question. As Yin (2011, p. 220) puts it, 'A conclusion is some kind of overarching statement or series of statements that raises the findings of a study to a higher conceptual level or broader set of ideas.' To reach that, the researcher revisited the interpretation made in the previous phase as well as the main findings produced in the reassembling phase. Particular attention was paid to the significance, limitations, and implications of the findings.

As illustrated, both the phases and activities of data analysis for the second research question were highly iterative. The expansion of the code list due to the emergence of new patterns from empirical data demonstrated that the researcher was open to perspectives beyond prior theoretical assumptions. It is worth noting that cross-case analysis was performed to uncover further insights and patterns.

3.9 Addressing research rigour

Central to any empirical study is its rigour – in other words, the quality of the research design and findings; it often encompasses four aspects: *construct validity*, *internal validity*, *external validity*, and *reliability* (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2009). Lincoln and Guba (1985) contend that rigour, internal validity, external validity, and reliability should be respectively referred to as *trustworthiness*,

credibility, *transferability*, and *dependability* in qualitative research. Yin suggests various tactics specifically for case study researchers to address the different aspects of research rigour. However, say Miles and Huberman, problems of research rigour in any qualitative study cannot be eliminated. Thus, it is 'unworkable' to 'get it all right'; instead, researchers should aim to 'not get it all wrong' (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 277). The following indicates the techniques suggested by Yin and employed in this study to address the four aspects of research rigour.

Construct validity refers to 'identifying correct operational measures for the concepts being studied' (Yin, 2009, p. 40). Three tactics were employed. First, the researcher collected empirical evidence from multiple sources, which is detailed in the data collection procedures. Second, the researcher maintained a chain of evidence; that is, any conclusions drawn in this study can be traced back to the research questions and vice versa. Third, feedback on the main empirical findings was sought from the research participants and was incorporated.

Internal validity refers to 'seeking to establish a causal relationship, whereby certain conditions are believed to lead to other conditions, as distinguished from spurious relationships' (Yin, 2009, p. 40). Yin further indicates that this aspect should be addressed during data analysis and by explanatory or causal case studies only. Two tactics were employed. First, this study employed pattern matching; that is, empirically-based patterns were compared to their theoretically-based counterparts. Second, this study explored and assessed alternative explanations for instances of e-campaigning utilisation provided by the research participants. More specifically, the researcher identified possible explanations for a given instance of e-campaigning utilisation and argued for each of them. The researcher then decided on the most cogent one. It is worth noting that the researcher's academic colleagues frequently participated in the process of assessing rival explanations.

External validity refers to 'defining the domain to which a study's findings can be generalised' (Yin, 2009, p. 40). Replication logic, as opposed to sampling logic, was employed in case selection to address external validity; that is, the researcher

selected cases that were expected to produce contrasting results for anticipatable reasons. It is worth noting the views of Creswell (2002) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) on generalisability of empirical findings in qualitative research. Crewell (2002, p. 195) indicates that generalisability plays 'a minor role in qualitative inquiry'. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 316) suggest that qualitative researchers 'cannot specify the external validity of an inquiry; [they] can provide only the thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility'. Lincoln and Guba's suggestion was employed in this study; that is, the researcher used rich, thick description to convey the research design and findings as an additional tactic.

Reliability refers to 'demonstrating that the operations of a study – such as the data collection procedures – can be repeated, with the same results' (Yin, 2009, p. 40). Yin indicates that this aspect pertains to data collection. Two tactics were employed. First, the researcher established a case study protocol and followed it in the study. It is worth noting that a case study protocol differs from an interview protocol in that a case study protocol entails more elements, such as the research background, objectives, questions, theoretical assumptions, data collection procedures, and the structure of findings (Yin, 2009). Second, the researcher established a database for storing and retrieving any material relating to the cases, such as interview transcripts, memos, and case narratives.

Also, the researcher triangulated the empirical findings with secondary data for accuracy during data analysis, a tactic suggested by Creswell (2002).

3.10 Chapter summary

This chapter has comprehensively described the design of this empirical study. More specifically, it has specified the research paradigm, approach, method, data collection and analysis procedures, and tactics to address research rigour.

Chapter 4 National's e-campaigning utilisation

4.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter presents the key findings from the first case study: National's e-campaigning utilisation in the 2008 general election. This chapter proceeds as follows: section 4.2 outlines the case background; then, section 4.3 and 4.4 answer the first and second research questions respectively; and last, section 8.5 summarises this chapter.

4.2 Case background

Formed in 1936 as a result of a merger between the United Party and the Reform Party, National has been the political party with the largest membership in New Zealand for many decades. The party's political stance is positioned as centre-right.

Before the 2008 election, National held 48 of 121 seats in Parliament. It had been the largest opposition party since the 1999 general election. During that time, National had seen several changes of party leadership. In 2006 John Key was elected as the party leader, who first entered New Zealand politics in 2002 as an elected MP and led National in the 2008 general election.

Following a landslide defeat to Labour in the 2002 general election, Don Brash, the then leader of National, started an initiative called 'the digital strategy for the National Party' in 2005 to envisage the use of ICTs, particularly the Internet, in order to invigorate and innovate the party's engagement with the general public. An important avenue within this initiative was election campaigning. Although Brash was succeeded by Key, National continued the initiative.

In the 2008 election, National's overarching campaign message was a change for a new leader and a new government, and a brighter future for New Zealand. National's campaign team wanted its e-campaign to be perceived as modern and contemporary, but also at the same time, daring and aggressive. National's campaign team explained that in the context of the party's e-campaign 'aggressive' meant incorporating 'more campaign functions and activities beyond a simple

electronic brochure'. Also, according to the campaign team, National's e-campaigning not only focused on securing traditional support from the party loyalists but also reaching out to young voters between the age of 18 and 25. Furthermore, the party's e-campaigning aimed at achieving a balance between formality and informality. In this light, the campaign team perceived the need to not just move offline campaign material to the campaign site but to develop new forms and ways of campaigning to the general public. A major mission in National's e-campaigning, according to the team, was to market its relatively new party leader, Key, who was largely unknown to many voters.

Personnel dedicated to the party's e-campaigning were recruited, such as a webmaster, and a web editor, along with the party's volunteers. Despite being a large political organisation, National did not have an IT unit. Staff directing National's e-campaign were part of the party's centralised campaign team and reported to the chair of the team. Initially, the party considered developing a campaign website specifically for the 2008 election. This idea was later dropped. Instead, the party opted to use the existing official party website (www.national.org.nz) as the primary platform for its e-campaigning. Figure 4.1 and 4.2 depict the home page of National's campaign website.

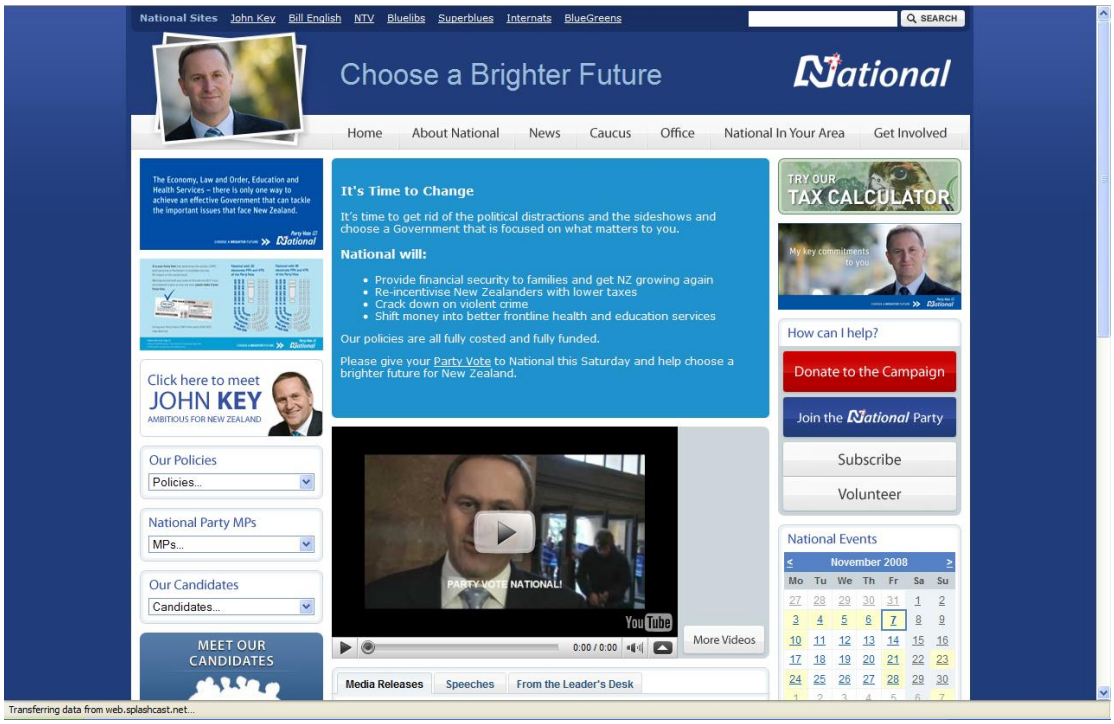

Figure 4.1 The home page of National's campaign website (part 1)

Figure 4.2 The home page of National's campaign website (part 2)

4.3 National's e-campaigning utilisation and its extent

On the basis of the proposed e-campaigning framework, National's e-campaigning encompassed all five practices, namely, information dissemination, voter interaction and engagement, support mobilisation, targeted campaigning, and resource generation. Those practices were conducted to varying degrees. The analysis in this section is structured according to the practices. This section is concluded with a summary.

4.3.1 Information dissemination

National's campaign website in general was dominated by blue, the colour representing the party, images of Key, and its campaign slogan: 'Choose a Brighter Future'. It provided a wide array of comprehensive information to visitors and was organised under sections with an intuitive name and structure, allowing visitors to retrieve the required information relatively easily. For instance, under 'About National' and 'News', visitors could find general information about the party and the latest updates from the party respectively. Despite its large volume, campaign

information disseminated through the website could be readily discovered and retrieved with a search engine on the website.

The website contained a large repository of policies, ranging from 'Art and Culture' to 'Defence and Security'. National's policies could be navigated through the 'About National' page or a drop-down box labelled as 'Our policies' on each page of the website. Each policy statement was presented as a hypertext link, filed under its related portfolio, and was released by the shadow minister for the portfolio. In doing so, it also introduced the party's allocation of shadow ministerial portfolios to visitors. Overall, media releases via the website were policy-orientated. They were either related to the policies championed by the party or attacking the policies of the party's main opponent, Labour. Similar to the party's policy releases, media releases were presented as hypertext links and filed under their related portfolios. Other campaign information disseminated through the website included an archive of speeches by key party members; contact information for the party leader and candidates; hyperlinks to other online presence of the party or its leader, such as Facebook, Flickr, and YouTube; and a text blog called 'Key Notes', authored by the party leader. The content of the blogs primarily aimed at further promoting the party's policies and, sometimes, launching counter-attacks at the party's largest rival, Labour. Permission for visitors leaving comments was disabled.

In addition to text, National's e-campaign frequently used multimedia for information dissemination. Most notably, the website contained a large collection of images depicting the party's campaign trail, which primarily focused on the party leader. Information relating to National MPs and candidates could be accessed through two drop-down boxes, labelled as 'National Party MPs' and 'Our Candidates', respectively. A combination of image and text was used to introduce National MPs and candidates. A separate website (www.nationaltv.co.nz), 'NTV' (National TV), was linked to National's campaign website, which in essence was a central hub of videos of National's key party members. From there, visitors could access a wide variety of video clips, ranging from the party's debates in Parliament to particular campaign events such as visiting schools or talking to workers. Figure 4.3 depicts National's NTV.

Figure 4.3 National's NTV

4.3.2 Voter interaction and engagement

National's e-campaign exhibited some attempts to interact or engage with visitors. For instance, a clickable link was provided for visitors to email the party leader, party candidates, and the party office; and visitors were encouraged to submit feedback to the party by clicking on an email link (although there was no specific mention about the kind of feedback the party solicited). Also of note was an interactive calendar that not only centralised all campaign events organised by National throughout the country but also allowed visitors to filter campaign events based on their personal preferences. More specifically, with the interactive calendar, National's campaign events could be filtered by selecting options in drop-down boxes relating to dates, regions, cities or towns, and event types.

A key policy campaigned by National was on income tax reduction, which was in opposition to Labour's stance on the same issue. Because of this, a web application called 'National Party Tax Calculator' was deployed to assist visitors to develop a personal experience of the party's proposed income tax policy. The calculator prompted visitors to select options in two drop-down boxes relating to their own level of salary or wage, and whether they were receiving any social benefit. After

completing those steps, the calculator would inform visitors how much gain in after-tax income would be received under National's personal tax policy. Figure 4.4 exhibits National's online tax calculator.

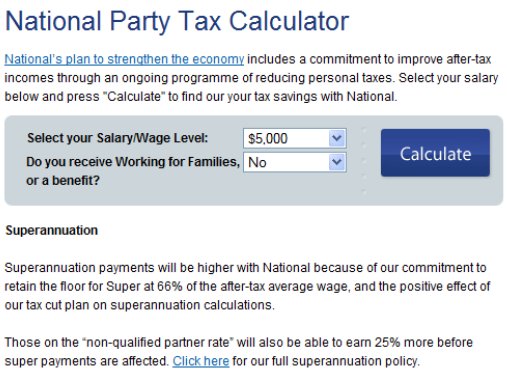

Figure 4.4 National's tax calculator

As noted, National's website included links to other virtual presence of the party or party leader, such as Facebook, Flickr, and YouTube. Visitors to those social networking websites were able to interact with the party or its leader through leaving comments or participating in discussions. However, based on the content posted on those websites by National or its party leader, the primary focus leaned towards information dissemination, as opposed to voter interaction and engagement. More specifically, Facebook was mainly used for announcing the latest policy, speech, or Key's blog post added to the party's campaign website; Flickr for depicting the campaign trail of National MPs, particularly the party leader; and YouTube for broadcasting National's televised campaign advertisements, select debates in Parliament, Key's video journals, and Key's personal pledge for financial support. These attracted only a few comments from visitors. Occasionally, some visitors initiated different topics for discussion, particularly on the party's Facebook campaign page. Overall, on those social networking websites, National did not respond to each visitor comment or participate in any discussion initiated by visitors. National's campaign team acknowledged that all visitors' comments and discussions in National's e-campaign were carefully managed, meaning that each comment and discussion was subject to the party's moderation.

4.3.3 Support mobilisation

As noted, the overarching campaign message in National's election campaign centred on the notion of change – a new government and new leadership. The campaign team indicated that in this election it was particularly crucial for National to continuously garner party support from voters, maintain the momentum of support, and mobilise the support. This desire was observed in National's campaign website.

In a couple of videos on both National's campaign website and National's YouTube page, the party leader expressed National's vision for New Zealand and the criticality of voters' support, especially their party votes, in helping the party to realise its vision for the country.

Another noticeable element of mobilising support was National's 2008 campaign anthem titled 'Choose a Brighter Future', which featured in National's televised election campaign opening address. The song was presented on the home page of National's campaign website as a clickable image link. Visitors were encouraged to click on the link to purchase a copy of the song on CD at a cost of $10, in order to show their party support. The campaign team explained that the idea behind this was entirely about 'mobilising support in a fun and less formal way. The song could be played while driving or even be used as a mobile ringtone'. Although a small charge was attached to the song, the team stressed that it was only for covering some of the production costs. Based on that, this element is not considered as a means of generating financial resources in National's e-campaign; instead, it represents a means for voters to endorse the party, which is not captured by the proposed e-campaigning framework.

It is worth noting that National's campaign website included campaigns targeted at two specific voter segments, namely overseas National supporters and senior National supporters (refer to section 4.3.4 for elaboration on National's targeted campaigning). Some content elements in the two targeted campaigns pertained to support mobilisation.

Specifically, the campaign targeting overseas National supporters, also referred to as an 'Internat' by National, consisted of three elements suggesting support mobilisation. The first was a function called 'Find an Internat', which enabled an overseas National supporter to connect with other National supporters in either the person's area or other parts of the world. The second was 'Invite potential Internats'. As its name suggested, this function encouraged overseas National supporters to proactively assist the party to identify and expand its support base around the world. It, however, was in development in the campaign period. The last was 'Vote Home', which emphasised the importance of overseas National supporters registering and casting their votes for the party. 'Vote Home' also explained the eligibility of voting from overseas, how to correctly enrol as a voter and vote from overseas.

The campaign targeting senior National supporters, referred to as 'SuperBlues' by National, included an element called 'Send an Ecard' for spreading party support among that particular voter segment. The electronic postcard featured an image of Key and the URL of the targeted campaign. In addition, senders could personalise the card by attaching their own messages. Figure 4.5 depicts National's 'Send an Ecard'.

National's campaign team especially stressed that the ultimate support it needed was that supporters would register as voters and, on polling day, cast their votes for National candidates, and, more importantly, the party. For that reason, National's campaign website included a hyperlink to the Electoral Enrolment Centre where eligible people could register themselves as voters. Moreover, the campaign website included a drop-down box, listing the party's various constituencies across the country and contact information for each local office.

A hypertext link and a web form were provided in order to subscribe to electronic newsletters from National or the party leader sent on an almost daily basis during the campaign.

Means for voters to invite others to participate in National's offline campaign events and means for voters to forward National's campaign material to others were both absent from the party's e-campaign.

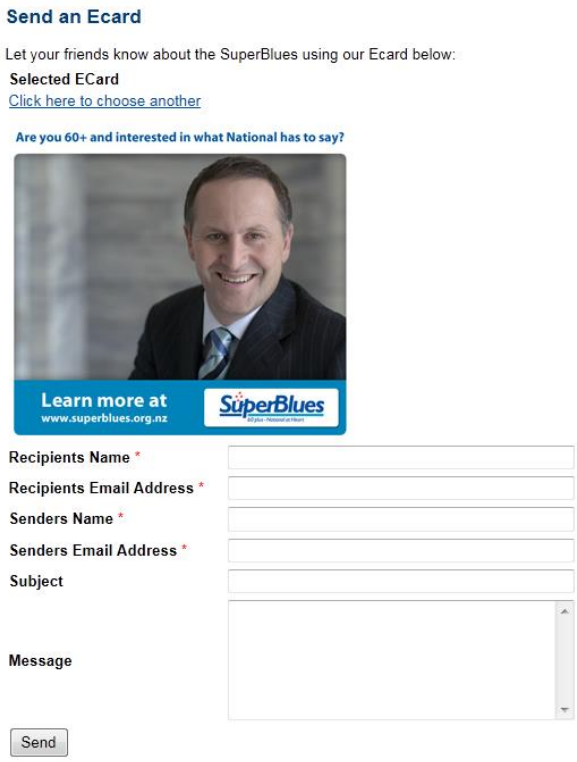

Figure 4.5 National's 'Send an Ecard'

4.3.4 Targeted campaigning

A targeted election campaign can be seen as one that is aimed at particular opponents or their policies in the race, or at particular voter segments. Both forms were observed in National's e-campaign.

On a few occasions, Labour's policies and its cabinet ministers were targeted in National's speeches. For example, National targeted Michael Cullen, the then Finance Minister in the Labour Government, in a speech promoting National's policy on KiwiSaver. The speech was titled 'Cullen Glosses Over KiwiSaver Concerns'. It first criticised Cullen for 'deliberately ignoring serious concerns about the minimum contribution rates for KiwiSaver', before explaining National's own stance on the subject. Similarly, in another speech titled 'Another Week – Still No Costings On Labour Promises', National denounced Labour for offering voters vain election promises. The speech then directly attacked the capability and credibility of Clark, the then Prime Minister and leader of Labour, by accusing her of '[being] either incapable of producing reliable figures or deceptive'. Moreover, Labour's policies were attacked in some of National's campaign videos on both

NTV and YouTube. Overall, National's campaign targeting its political opponents was confined to its speeches. The targeted opponents were Labour and its cabinet ministers. The targeted policies mainly centred on the economy and taxation.

Four particular voter segments were targeted in National's e-campaign, namely, overseas National supporters, senior National supporters, Asian voters, and National supporters with a strong interest in environmental issues. Each campaign targeting a particular voter segment was presented in a sub-site under National's campaign website.

National referred to its overseas supporters as Internats. The campaign website targeting Internats mainly focused on support mobilisation, such as online voter registration, obtaining and casting voting papers overseas, becoming an overseas National supporter, finding and socialising with other Internats in the same geographical area, and participating in overseas campaign events. Besides, the website provided the latest updates on the party's policies, speeches, and campaign in general. It also included a list of hyperlinks to some New Zealand mainstream news media; a political blog penned by a well-known New Zealand political blogger and ardent National supporter; New Zealand social networking websites; New Zealand Electoral Commission; a New Zealand job seeking website; and organisations or businesses actively promoting New Zealand identity.

National referred to its supporters aged 60 and above as SuperBlues. The SuperBlues website primarily focused on issues of particular importance to senior citizens, such as crime and aged care. It also provided a list of contact details of SuperBlues groups in different regions throughout the country. A function called 'Send an Ecard' was available for spreading support to others. The website also featured 'Bernie's Blog', authored by the founder of SuperBlues. The blog was non-interactive and text-based. Its primarily focus was on promoting National's policies on senior citizens and mobilising support for National among older New Zealanders. A web form was available for visitors to submit feedback. Differing from the feedback form for general voters, here, National specifically indicated the preferred areas for feedback, such as views on the SuperBlues and tips for establishing successful SuperBlues groups. In order to increase readability, a

function was provided allowing the text size of the entire website to be scaled according to personal preference.

National's campaign website included an 'Asian Language Section', aimed at the growing population of Asian voters in New Zealand. The section was presented as a clickable image link on the home page. When clicked, a web page called 'Asian Languages' was rendered. There, visitors could download an electronic brochure in five Asian languages: Chinese (Mandarin), Korean, Indian (Hindi), Indian (Gujarati), and Indian (Punjabi). The brochure began with a personal message from Key, translated in one of the five languages. It urged voters to cast their party votes for National, make a campaign donation, join the party, or become a party member. It especially highlighted National's policies on taxation, law and order, immigration, economic growth, education, aged care, health care, social welfare, and community. The section also provided contact information related to a sitting National MP and a National candidate, both of Asian ethnicity.

National supporters with a strong interest in environmental issues, referred to as 'BlueGreens', were also targeted in National's e-campaign. The BlueGreens website was static; it predominantly focused on disseminating information relating to National's vision, principles, and environmental policies. The website contained a large collection of policy and discussion documents, covering a wide range of environmental topics, such as environment governance, solid waste, and climate change. All documents were downloadable from the website. In addition, environmentally-related speeches and news were present. The website also introduced visitors to National's BlueGreens executive team and regional coordinators, and provided their contact details.

4.3.5 Resource generation

National's website exhibited a few attempts to generate resources for its election campaign, namely, pledging for financial donations, becoming a party member, and signing up as a volunteer.

On the home page of National's campaign website there was a red text button called 'Donate to the Campaign'. Upon clicking, a secure page called 'Donation' was

rendered for making a financial donation towards National's election campaign. The page started with a brief message outlining National's future vision for New Zealanders. It then went on to stress the importance of each campaign donation in ensuring National realised its vision. The donation page also included a video clip in which Key personally appealed for campaign donations. To make a donation, a web form needed to be completed. The form solicited both personal and credit card details. It allowed donors to either select one of five predefined donation amounts, ranging from a minimum of $20 to a maximum of $1,000, or specify an amount. In order to complete the donation, two statements relating to legal compliance had to be selected. The web page also detailed the legal requirements for donating above $1,000 to National's election campaign.

To become a campaign volunteer or National member online simply required completing a web form. While the former gathered only personal information: name, address, email, and local electorate, the latter solicited further details relating to payment and credit card, due to National's fee-based membership.

4.3.6 Summary

Table 4.1 summarises National's e-campaigning utilisation and its extent with the proposed e-campaigning framework. It suggests that National's e-campaigning utilisation was expansive and highly extensive; it focused most on information dissemination and targeted campaigning, and least on voter interaction and engagement.

Five areas of National's e-campaigning utilisation are worth highlighting. First, a substantial portion of National's e-campaign focused on the party leader. Second, online videos featured prominently in National's e-campaign. Third, the online interaction and engagement in National's e-campaign chiefly focused on key election policies. Fourth, social media was introduced as part of National's e-campaign in this election; it, however, was primarily intended for information dissemination. That is, the interactive nature of social media was barely exploited. Last, National's targeted campaigning at specific voter segments was diverse and sophisticated. Also note that two content elements are not captured by the

proposed e-campaigning framework, namely means for voters to endorse the political party and means to encourage votes.

Table 4.1 National's e-campaigning utilisation and its extent

Campaign practice	Content elements	Present
Information dissemination	Political party's information	●
	Candidate biography	●
	Press releases	●
	Policy statements	●
	Campaign news	●
	Campaign events	●
	Speeches	●
	Contact information	●
	Information relating to the political party's other online presence	●
	Campaign blog without visitor comments allowed	●
Voter interaction and engagement	Instant chat or messaging	
	Instant opinion polls	
	Instant surveys	
	Applications for interacting with the political party's policies	●
	Interactive calendar of campaign events	●
	Means to contact the political party	●
	Discussion forums	
	Campaign blog with visitor comments allowed	
	Means to provide feedback	●
Support mobilisation	Means for voters to invite their peers to participate in campaign events	
	Means to inform voters of electoral information	●
	Means for voters to receive campaign information and updates	●
	Means for voters to connect with supporter groups	●
	Means for voters to download campaign material	●
	Means for voters to forward campaign material to others	●
	Means for voters to endorse the political party*	●
	Means to encourage votes*	●
Targeted campaigning	Content targeted at political opponents	●
	Content targeted at political opponents' policies	●
	Content targeted at specific voter segments	●
Resource generation	Means to make donations	●
	Online merchandise shop	
	Means to become a party member	●
	Means to become a volunteer	●

Note: * Not present in the proposed e-campaigning framework

4.4 The factors influencing National's e-campaigning utilisation

National's e-campaigning utilisation was attributable to all factors in Table 2.2, namely, election type, electoral regulations, voters' technology access, resource

availability, subjective norm, image, job relevance, output quality, result demonstrability, and perceived ease of use. The remainder of this section is structured according to those factors. This section is concluded with a summary.

4.4.1 Election type

The impact of party-led elections on e-campaigning utilisation was strongly felt by National's campaign team. The team noted several instances where party-led elections at times meant battling with the senior hierarchy to gain acceptance of new ideas, more time spent on the internal decision-making process and less on external, actual campaigning, and even regression in e-campaigning. These, as a result, limited the party's e-campaigning utilisation.

National's campaign team explained that e-campaigning for the party 'is not a straightforward undertaking'. It involved a formal decision-making process and a number of members from the party hierarchy in the process. During the campaign period, weekly meetings were held between the decision makers and members from the campaign team who were in charge of National's e-campaigning. The party's e-campaigning utilisation as observed from National's website was based on consensus among all members in the decision-making process.

E-campaigning, according to National's campaign team, had significantly evolved since its inception. More specifically, e-campaigning in the past was 'simply about pulling all offline [campaign] material together and then transferring it to the website'. Nowadays, 'you need to be more proactive, provide more campaign functions, and perform those functions quite differently [in e-campaigning] in order to maximise the benefits and effects.'

Some people in the decision-making process were technology savvy, they saw 'the potential and power' of e-campaigning and were willing to embrace those changes. They were referred to as 'visionaries' by the team. Others, however, were not 'heavy Internet users'; 'they have long-standing ideas about what [National's campaign website] should look like and provide,' which 'represent [National's e-campaigning] in the past'. Those people were referred to as 'reactionaries' by the team. The reactionaries were highly uncomfortable about new ideas or changes of

National's e-campaigning as 'they didn't see or completely understand the need.' Because campaigning in a party-led election meant for National's campaign team that gaining consensus from all members in the decision-making process was essential, the reactionaries' discomfort about new ideas or changes of e-campaigning caused the campaign team to 'scale down' or 'abandon' some new or 'edgy' ideas relating to National's e-campaign, or, in some cases, to be confronted with a frustrating situation of 'two steps forward and one step back'.

For instance, the team believed that it was critical to feature RSS feeds in National's e-campaign in order to get a subscriber base but could not get everyone in the decision-making process to agree. This idea was consequently withdrawn. The team also pointed out that the videos in National's e-campaign were a new and important feature, and 'proven to be hugely successful'. Initially, the idea of online campaign videos was rejected by some senior party members. It took 'a few battles' in order for the team to gain their acceptance. Then, those members strongly resisted the idea of focusing on personal aspects of the party leader in some online campaign videos. It was not until the team demonstrated some tangible results of similar ideas in overseas elections that the resistance was reversed; in other words, the negative impact of party-led elections was moderated by result demonstrability.

National's campaign team continued to indicate that in contrast to traditional campaigning, e-campaigning 'is demand-driven in many ways'. An effective e-campaign therefore 'needs to be responsive to voters' demands, which often requires new ideas and approaches'. 'The fact that more people and processes being involved in a party campaign means [that] sometimes it takes longer to implement new [e-campaigning] ideas and approaches.' This in turn reduced the responsiveness of the e-campaign.

In all, to National's campaign team, party-led elections involved more people and processes in decision-making, which at times negatively influenced the team's e-campaigning utilisation. It is worth noting the instance where the team reversed the resistance against focusing on personal aspects of the party leader in some

online campaign videos, as it suggests that the impact of election type was moderated by another factor – result demonstrability.

4.4.2 Electoral regulations

National's campaign team was extremely critical of the Electoral Finance Act (EFA) 2007, stating that it 'severely limited' the party's e-campaigning utilisation. According to the team, the Act extended the regulated period for election campaigning from three months before polling day to the beginning of an election year. This meant that in the 2008 general election the regulated period was extended from three months to eleven. Since all expenditure on election campaigning, including e-campaigning, during the regulated period was capped and subject to strict legal scrutiny, the additional eight months of the regulated period meant that some of National's 'great' yet 'expensive' e-campaigning ideas conceived before the Act had to be abandoned due to their implications on National's overall campaign expenditure. Further, the team felt that the Act was 'rushed into law' and inundated with 'a lot of confusion and controversies'; accordingly, it was difficult for National's campaign team to determine if certain e-campaigning concepts were within the law. As a consequence, 'some concepts had to be dropped because it's very questionable they would not violate the EFA in some way and [the team] didn't want to take the risk.'

The National's campaign team noted a specific instance to further illustrate the impact of the EFA 2007 on the party's e-campaigning utilisation. Prior to the Act, all parliamentary parties undertook e-campaigning on websites significantly funded by the Parliamentary Service. This considerably reduced their campaign expenses. After the Act became effective, e-campaigning practices on a website funded by the Parliamentary Service were highly restricted. Specifically, parties had to refrain from many e-campaigning practices, for instance, 'you can't ask [voters] for money or sign up new [party] members.' Under the Act, if a party decided to pursue e-campaigning practices beyond those permitted on a parliament-funded website, the party was required to conduct those practices on a website entirely financed by itself. All associated expenses would be counted towards the party's campaign expenditure limit. This new ruling put National's

campaign team in a quandary: if the team decided to utilise the website funded by the Parliamentary Service, National's e-campaigning utilisation would be profoundly impaired; if the team opted for a self-funded website, it would inevitably increase National's campaign expenses and some initial e-campaigning ideas 'would have to go' in order to stay within the campaign expenditure limit. The team in the end decided on a fully self-funded website and had to forfeit some e-campaigning ideas.

In short, electoral regulations discouraged National's e-campaigning utilisation. In other words, the impact induced by the factor was negative. Among the electoral regulations, only the EFA 2007 was noted by National's campaign team. The team added that the impact of the factor diminished as National's campaign progressed. According to the team, the adversarial impact of the Act was not exclusive to National, yet it did not seem to withhold other parties campaigning aggressively – both online and offline – during the election. Consequently, the team quickly returned the focus to its upmost important task – campaigning. Put differently, the impact of electoral regulations on National's e-campaigning utilisation was moderated by subjective norm.

4.4.3 Voters' technology access

As noted, National's campaign team considered the online videos in the party's e-campaign to be a new, significant, and successful feature, which renewed voters' experience of election campaigning. A critical factor that made this significant feature possible in this election, said the team, was the rapid increase of broadband access in many parts of New Zealand just before the election. As the team put it, 'If the majority of people were still having slow Internet connections like in 2006 or 2007, there wouldn't have been any demand for Internet videos of our MPs and John Key'. The team continued, 'And what's the point of supplying something when there's no demand for it?'

Despite the much-improved status of broadband penetration across New Zealand, in the election voters from certain regions or demographic segments were 'still using very basic Internet connections [dial-up] – either by choice or because of the fact that they didn't have broadband access'; these voters 'were equally important'

to National, according to National's campaign team. Consequently, the team decided not to 'push the use of rich media to the full scale' in National's e-campaigning.

The team also indicated that it had briefly considered incorporating mobile phone text messaging in its e-campaign, referred to as 'text campaigning', before the election because of high mobile phone access in New Zealand. The thought was quickly dropped because 'it's just too expensive and [the team] didn't have plenty of money to play with.' In other words, the impact of voters' technology access was moderated by resource availability.

In brief, voters' technology access encouraged as well as withheld National's e-campaigning utilisation. Put differently, the impact of the factor on National's e-campaigning consisted of two facets: positive and negative. It is worth noting the instance where the team initially considered deploying text campaigning in National's e-campaigning for it suggests that the impact of voters' technology access was moderated by another factor – resource availability.

4.4.4 Resource availability

National's campaign team revealed that the decision to include YouTube and Flickr in the e-campaign was due to resource considerations. More specifically, despite considering its campaign videos to be a significant feature of its e-campaign, National initially decided to employ YouTube as the only platform for hosting and broadcasting the videos; developing a sub-site for those videos with the party's own resources, namely NTV, was not originally intended. As the team explained, contrary to popular belief, the resources available for National's campaigning were 'remarkably limited' and 'it hardly required any resources [of National]', namely, 'time, labour, and money', to employ YouTube for National's online campaign videos. Flickr was utilised for National's campaign photos for the same reason.

It is worth noting that National's campaign team eventually developed NTV for the party's online campaign videos in addition to YouTube because soon after deploying the online campaign videos, it became clear to the team that the videos

were 'a phenomenal success' and 'a strategic differentiator'; further, National's senior members and focus groups unanimously suggested that the videos feature on the campaign website. In other words, the team's earlier intention not to implement NTV because of resource availability was moderated by result demonstrability as well as subjective norm.

As National's campaign team further utilised e-campaigning or conceived innovative e-campaigning ideas, it realised, on a number of occasions, that e-campaigning was not always 'resource-friendly'; quite the contrary, the increasing utilisation and professionalisation of e-campaigning accordingly demanded more resources that the team struggled to meet. This consequently confined the party's e-campaigning utilisation.

National's campaign team asserted that when its US, UK, and Canadian counterparts 'decide to work on a solution [pertaining to e-campaigning], they always have unlimited resources so they can always produce a more elegant product [e-campaign]'. This, however, was not applicable to the team; that is, the team 'didn't have the wealth of resources to make some of [its] ambitious ideas a reality'. A specific instance was noted by the team to further illustrate that.

A 'brilliant' e-campaigning idea was conceived before the election. It pertained to online consultation, which entailed 'large datasets, raw material and making them available online, discussion mechanisms with and among voters, inviting people to join and collaborate, and generating very large response sets which would serve as a foundation of National's online interaction and policy developments'. 'The idea would also allow people to go in and see comments from other people on specific things, and people would also be able to see how major threads in policy developments were handled in the final policy,' the team continued. 'It's an all-in-one process and it's complicated and very ambitious. We just didn't have the time and other resources to do it.' The team added,

> That's the thing about online campaigning: if you are simply doing basic things, such as putting policies and speeches online, it is true [that] it doesn't need a lot of resources; but if you want to take it further, more often than not, it requires an enormous amount of time and resources, which we

> didn't have. So there's quite a bit of irony about online campaigning when it comes to resources.

National's campaign team concurred with the observation of this study that the party's online voter interaction and engagement was highly limited, especially on social networking sites. This, according to the team, was not for a lack of genuine interest to interact and engage with voters but the lack of time resources. As the team explained, each day during the campaign period, about a thousand comments were received from voters directly to Key on his blog entries and National's Facebook page. The team firmly believed that 'any online communications must be authentic', therefore, only Key could respond to any of those voter comments. However, '[Key's] diary was always full during the campaign period. He's so busy to the extent that [the team] even struggled at times to get him in front of the video camera to make campaign videos.' To that end, Key 'simply didn't have the amount of time to personally respond to each and every comment people made'. 'Online interactions', the team added, 'are extremely important in web campaigning … but they're getting more and more resource-intensive.' The team did not have any solution to handle that and found it greatly concerning.

A notable feature of National's e-campaigning pertained to several campaigns targeted at specific voter segments. However, there was a gulf between those campaigns and what the team desired; the cause, said the team, was resource availability. According to the team, both Kevin Rudd, former Australian prime minister, and Obama were 'exceptionally good at data mining and targeting specific voter groups and marginal seats' in their e-campaigning, which was 'totally fascinating and way more advanced and sophisticated' than National's. The team strongly wanted to emulate the targeted campaigning by Rudd and Obama in the election. That, however, remained as an intention only as 'it's too expensive' and the team did not possess 'large-scale resources like [Rudd and Obama]'. The team added, 'There's a great myth that National has plenty of money to play with. Not really, membership-based organisations, little old ladies basically. We could only work with the resources that we had at the end of the day.' It can be inferred

from this instance that the impact of subjective norm was moderated by resource availability.

'Pouring' more resources – such as money, time, and campaign staff – would definitely promote extensive and innovative e-campaigning, the team acknowledged. That, however, 'sounds good in theory but it's simply not practical'. Two reasons were noted.

First, the team 'didn't have unlimited resources for campaigning to start with and, more importantly, online campaign is always led by the offline, which is extremely unlikely to change'. Accordingly, 'a large chunk of resources are always handed to offline campaigning.' 'In fact,' the team continued, 'right from the start [of the election] we were given a clear message to keep our resource spending – not just money but also other resources – at an absolute minimum.'

Second, the team pointed out that many inside National had not realised that e-campaigning beyond the basic level was tremendously resource-intensive. Thus, 'it has not yet come across their mind to consider giving more [resources to e-campaigning].' 'It's going to take quite a while for them to see that', the team continued, 'and before that happens, the expectation of how much should be spent on web campaigning, which is a minimum level of resources, is going to stay.'

In all, resource availability encouraged and depressed National's e-campaigning utilisation. In other words, the impact of the factor on National's e-campaigning consisted of two facets: positive and negative. As illustrated, the impact of resource availability was moderated by other factors, namely result demonstrability and subjective norm. And resource availability moderated the impact of another factor, namely subjective norm. It is worth highlighting the reasons provided by National's campaign team for the impracticality of increasing campaign resources in order to foster extensive and innovative e-campaigning.

4.4.5 Subjective norm

Two instances have been noted so far where subjective norm moderated or partially moderated the impact of another factor on National's e-campaigning utilisation. In the first instance, National's campaign team felt that in the early

phase of the campaign period, the EFA 2007 severely affected National's e-campaigning plans. However, the negative impact of the Act waned because the team perceived that National was 'not alone' in observing the impact of the Act and the Act did not appear to withhold National's counterparts from 'campaigning aggressively online'. In the second instance, National's campaign team did not initially intend to host the party's campaign videos on its own, due to resource availability; however, the team overturned its initial stance after receiving strong advice from both National's senior members and the focus groups that '[National's] online videos were excellent … They should be on [National's] website.'

The first instance pertained to competitive pressure and the second related to opinions of people whom were highly valued by National's campaign team. The team also acknowledged that parts of National's e-campaigning were influenced by the e-campaigning of some overseas political candidates and parties whom the team perceived to be important. Notably, the decision to 'run an aggressive web campaign as a challenger and not be afraid to experiment different daring and innovative ideas' was largely influenced by several e-campaigns in Canada, the US, Australia, the UK, France, and Germany that were closely followed by National's campaign team before or during the 2008 election.

Furthermore, the team admitted that a few features of its e-campaign, 'Send an Ecard' for instance, were in fact inspired by some of its political counterparts' e-campaigning in the election. The underlying reason centred on the team's concern that National could 'give away the edge' to those political rivals if it did not follow suit.

In all, subjective norm encouraged National's e-campaigning utilisation. In other words, the impact of the factor was positive. The subjective norms in National's e-campaigning were derived from competitive pressure as well as the opinions and behaviour of those whom the team perceived to be significant.

4.4.6 Image

As National's campaign team pointed out, 'at the heart of [election] campaigning, doesn't matter if it's online or offline, a lot of it is to do with a party's brand.'

Further, 'It has become more and more common in recent times [that] a great deal of effort in party campaigns also revolves around the image and personality of party leaders.' Expectedly, consideration over National's party's and leader's images played a role in National's e-campaigning utilisation.

Differing from National's e-campaigning in the previous election cycle, according to the team, 'A significant amount of effort was made to ensure the content and the look and feel across the National Party's and its MPs' Internet presence were consistent.' However trivial this might appear to others, the team believed that it directly dealt with an important asset of a political party – image; therefore, any efforts devoted to promoting and protecting party image were 'rightly justified'. As the team explained:

> A lot of people might think the consistency of content, look and feel across a party and its MPs' websites is really a cosmetic issue. It's not. A number of the National Party's supporters told us that they're turned off by the lack of strong consistency in terms of content, look and feel across our Internet presence during and after the 2005 election. They felt it actually affected our party image in some ways. We agreed. Why would you vote for a party to become the next government if it doesn't seem to be serious and professional? This applies to our Internet presence as well. So this time around, we spent quite some effort developing and maintaining our brand consistency, which involved everything from specifying the RGB values of colours used in any websites associated with the National Party to blogs, newsletters, etc., for a simple reason – we wanted to be seen as professional and polished.

Despite characterising its e-campaigning utilisation as 'adventurous', National's campaign team initially decided to confine its virtual presence to the party website only. Establishing a Facebook campaign page was not originally intended. This, according to the team, was due to a twofold concern relating to National's image. First, the team considered using Facebook to be 'hip', which 'isn't the typical image National normally associated itself with'; second, the team believed that being present on interactive websites, such as Facebook, would be perceived by many voters as an invitation for two-way communication between voters and National – particularly the party leader. However, Key's hefty schedule during the entire campaign period deemed it impossible for him to personally respond to each voter message. The team continued, if Key did not personally respond to voter messages, it could be perceived to be 'a lack of genuine interest in engagement with voters',

however understandable the underlying reason might be; if someone else was allowed to answer voter messages on Key's behalf, it could be perceived as 'lacking authenticity', ultimately jeopardising 'the credibility of both the party and John [Key]'.

Nevertheless, Facebook was employed as part of National's e-campaigning during the election. Intriguingly, according to the team, a contributing factor was also image. More specifically, during the course of campaigning, the team both discovered and was alerted to a number of Facebook pages that masqueraded as the party's or Key's. 'Although we took a close look at the content [on those pages] and it didn't show anything particularly harmful,' said the team, 'it, quite frankly, caused quite some concern about the National Party's brand, especially when many voters who've come across or have become friends [or] fans with these pages most likely do not know they're actually fake.' In response, National decided to establish its Facebook presence in order to protect and defend its image.

Negative campaigning was observed in National's e-campaign, which was mainly confined to policies. This, according to National's campaign team, was deliberate, out of consideration relating to National's political image. Specifically, the team believed that targeting at opponents' policies, especially in an election, 'is generally accepted and expected [by voters]' and therefore inconsequential to the party's image. The team, however, held that 'a line must be drawn between policy and personal attacks'. The latter was perceived to be ill-received among voters. The team added that employing 'smear tactics' against political opponents would directly contradict the core message, 'a bright future', National heavily campaigned on, which emphasised positivity, and would ultimately lead to a lot of damage to the party's brand, which was 'totally unworthy'. The perception that personal attacks were highly pernicious to National's political image was so vehemently held by National's campaign team that the team steered clear of personal attacks in e-campaigning throughout the election, even when several overseas e-campaigns that inspired National's e-campaigning utilisation employed the tactic, and domestically, numerous personal attacks, particularly aimed at Key, were launched from National's opponents. This instance also suggests that the impact of subjective norm was moderated by image.

In brief, concerns over both National's and Key's images stimulated and dissuaded National's e-campaigning utilisation. Put differently, the impact of image on National's e-campaigning consisted of two facets: positive and negative. Although National's e-campaigning utilisation was considerably inspired by others' – both domestically and globally, personal attacks were an exception; in other words, the impact of subjective norm on National's e-campaigning utilisation was occasionally moderated by image.

4.4.7 Job relevance

National's campaign team noted that a key difference in e-campaigning between the 2008 election and previous elections lied in the rapid rise of social networking websites, which could be integrated as part of an e-campaign. National, however, did not embrace all social networking websites in its 2008 e-campaign. Three 'popular' social networking websites at the time of the election, namely, Bebo, Myspace, and LinkedIn, were particularly omitted, plainly because the team did not consider them to be relevant. Specifically, 'Bebo's user base is young kids who represent the voters of tomorrow but not today,' the team explained, 'Myspace and LinkedIn are anything but politics so it's a waste of time to engage on them.'

Based on numerous overseas e-campaigns that occurred around the 2008 election National's campaign team found that 'It's becoming a global trend for politicians, such as Obama, to increase their popularity and votes by chatting and interacting with voters online.' Yet, the perceived trend did not propel National to act similarly in its e-campaigning utilisation. As the team explained, 'Spending a lot of time online chatting and interacting with voters isn't really relevant in the New Zealand context when you consider the culture here; the voters here in New Zealand still very much prefer face-to-face interaction.' It can be inferred from this instance that the impact of subjective norm was moderated by job relevance.

From closely observing e-campaigning during the 2008 US presidential election, National's campaign team noted a new feature garnering much public attention and commendation. It pertained to networked collaboration between voters and politicians to develop election policies. This feature did not appeal to the team however popular it appeared. This was due to the perception that it was 'more a

gimmick than of any true relevance to election campaigning'. More specifically, it was inconceivable that, at least in New Zealand, 'any political party would go into an election and say to the public, "Look, we haven't got any policies to campaign on but would you like to help us to come up with some?"' because political parties were expected to enter election campaigning with most of their main policies being almost, if not already, finalised.

In general, job relevance discouraged National's e-campaigning utilisation in several aspects. It is worth highlighting the instance where National's campaign team preferred to engage and interact with voters face-to-face despite a growing global trend of online voter interaction and engagement, as it suggests the impact of subjective norm was moderated by job relevance. National's campaign team added that the relevance of a particular technology, application, or approach to e-campaigning 'is subjective and constantly evolving'. With 'some fresh thinking or tweaking', a previously seemingly irrelevant technology, application, or approach could be turned into a 'relevant, or even very successful', one.

4.4.8 Output quality

Being a challenger in traditional election campaigning, National often found itself in an unfavourable position in that, compared to the incumbent, much less exposure and attention was given by traditional media in order to promote itself and its policies, according to National's campaign team.

The 2008 election was especially arduous for National as a third-time challenger to some extent because the party needed to solicit additional exposure to promote its new party leader who was largely unknown to the New Zealand public. Under such a 'challenging circumstance', National's campaign team had decided before the election to extensively promote the party's election policies and leader online, because the team strongly perceived that e-campaigning had presented itself as 'a powerful alternative to accomplish those important tasks in a way that wasn't possible before'. This perception consisted of two main facets. First, the team surmised that the number of New Zealand voters online was similar to, if not greater than, that engaging in traditional media. And second, the team believed that e-campaigning 'is empowering, and, more importantly, provides any

challengers with more or less equal campaign opportunities'. It is worth noting that the perception had not been verified before being acted on; in other words, as the team described, it was 'a leap of faith'.

National's campaign team understood that 'the voting public is the ultimate audience of any election campaign,' voters' thoughts and feelings relating to any aspect of the party's campaign were therefore 'strategically valuable'. Yet, the team acknowledged that it had not been 'particularly proactive' when gathering voters' feedback of any sort in National's e-campaigning. This, as stressed by the team, was not contradictory but a plain reflection of the belief that soliciting feedback online would not 'perform as well as' its offline counterpart, such as the various in-person focus groups organised by the party during the election. As the team further explained, the Internet was an environment consisting of not only opportunities but also risks that could not be fully managed. Particularly, 'If not careful, it's quite easy to get out of our [the party's] control … and there're lots of trolls and people with a very vicious agenda out there [in the online environment].' Since it was extremely difficult to identify trolls or people with a very vicious agenda, gathering feedback online inevitably 'opens up an enormous possibility to invite yourself [the party itself] to nothing remotely meaningful but being abused'.

In short, output quality propelled and dampened National's e-campaigning utilisation. That is, the impact of the factor consisted of two sides: positive and negative.

4.4.9 Result demonstrability

As noted, before the election National's campaign team decided to take an 'aggressive', 'new' approach to promoting the party's policies and 'new leader' in its e-campaign, guided by the untested belief that in doing so the party could combat the anticipated campaign challenges in those areas. Such an approach was primarily reflected in the depiction of Key in various roles and activities through images and videos, and in a series of videos where senior National MPs promoted the party's main election policies for which they were responsible. National's campaign team was 'quite confident' that the 'new' approach would 'really take off' when it was launched but in the meanwhile, the team was also acutely aware that

'there's still a small fraction of senior members [within National] who were quite sceptical [about the approach].'

Nevertheless, as the team indicated, the scepticism evaporated when the merits of the approach became 'quickly and increasingly apparent' after implementation, through both quantified and qualified results. Notably, the images and videos, especially the latter, that promoted National's policies and Key constantly attracted increased and significant attention from both national and overseas voters. This was demonstrated by 'the viewership and website traffic'. Moreover, before the election, Key 'was only known as a rich capitalist to many', according to the team. This narrow perception of National's leader caused considerable concern to National's campaign team, particularly when it 'formed the basis of a series of Labour's smear campaigns directly against both the National Party and John [Key]'. However, by the mid-phase of the campaign, both the images and videos in National's e-campaign portraying Key in different roles and activities had diversified the public perception of Key, based on the feedback from different sources gathered by National. According to the team, the result demonstrability of the approach had affirmed its position and warranted further development in National's e-campaigning. Put differently, had the approach been unable to indicate any observable results, its continuity in National's campaign could have been in jeopardy.

As noted, during the election, National's campaign team shifted its stance on Facebook in e-campaigning – from rejecting to accepting it, primarily out of image considerations. However, not all of National's senior members were entirely comfortable with it because, said the team, it was the first time that Facebook was part of National's election campaigning, so no one knew 'what to expect'.

Nevertheless, within only a few weeks after National's Facebook campaign page went live, the senior members' feelings of discomfort were substantially eased because the aptness of utilising Facebook became 'very apparent to everyone in the party'. More specifically, the number of people wanting to befriend Key on Facebook was volcanic, so much so that the limit of 5,000 friends on the Facebook profile was rapidly reached and an additional profile was set up in order to

accommodate a backlog of 2,000 friend requests as well as new requests. These clear results, said the team, had won support from every member of National, including the sceptics, consequently fortifying the role of Facebook in National's e-campaigning.

National's campaign team also noted that a few e-campaigning approaches were restricted or halted due to a lack of observable results. For instance, at the beginning of the campaign, National's campaign team published a few videos on the campaign website relating to post-cabinet press conferences. However, the team was unsure how those videos fared, consequently, the team stopped producing them as much as before.

In sum, result demonstrability stimulated and discouraged National's e-campaigning utilisation. Put differently, the impact of the factor consisted of two facets: positive and negative. The team stressed that caution had to be taken when reacting towards the result demonstrability of any e-campaigning idea or approach, because it could take time for results to be generated, especially if the concerned approach or idea was new. The team also noted that its understanding of e-campaigning was not holistic, it was therefore difficult for the team to adequately obtain or assess results of e-campaigning.

4.4.10 Perceived ease of use

National's campaign team pointed out that as ICTs advanced and the pressure to 'do more and break new ground' from both within the party and the public increased, e-campaigning had gone beyond 'simply moving text and a few pictures to a website'. Because of that, the extent of National's e-campaigning utilisation 'is increasingly driven by how much we [the campaign team] know'. This suggests that National's e-campaigning utilisation was influenced by perceived ease of use.

It was not straightforward for National's campaign team to arrive at the decision to incorporate Facebook in its e-campaigning, considering the amount of thought and deliberation involved. Despite that, the extent of the party's utilisation of this social networking website was rather limited. More precisely, National utilised Facebook chiefly for information dissemination. This could be explained by a lack

of comprehensive knowledge, according to the team. More specifically, 'In many ways Facebook is a completely different breed when you compare it with traditional websites such as the National Party's own website,' said the team. 'It [Facebook] can be turned into a powerful campaign machine … but we didn't fully know how in this election so we could only stick to doing what we did know at that point in time.'

In National's e-campaigning, online videos were another new element whose extent of utilisation was elevated by perceived ease of use. As the team explained,

> We did lots of campaign videos of all sorts in our online campaign. Because technically speaking, it's simple, straightforward, and there wasn't any learning curve involved. More importantly, it's unnecessary for online videos to involve TV quality production, which meant we didn't need to worry about any complicated and time-consuming stuff such as studio lighting or professional video editing. That's why we're very keen on doing more video stuff.

From a non-technical perspective, the team believed that it was easier to promote Key with online videos than other available alternatives in the election. More specifically, before the campaign, little was known among voters about Key except for him being 'a rich investment banker'. The campaign team understood that in order to have a National-led government after the election, the voting public needed to be made aware that Key was 'more than just a successful banker in his past job; in fact, he's a very charismatic, caring, approachable, and likeable guy'. To accomplish that, according to the team, 'voters needed to be given a chance to see for themselves those qualities of John in different natural situations.' On that note, online videos were considered to be 'the easiest option'. The team also perceived National's online campaign videos of Key to be the easiest mechanism to refute Labour's constant negative campaigning against Key. More specifically, 'Every time they [Labour] attacked John Key, saying he's this slippery, slimy bastard, the easiest way to counter this was to show people our videos of John Key,' said the team, 'so that they could find out themselves what the Labour Party said about John Key couldn't be further from the truth. So we produced quite a lot of videos of John.'

In short, perceived ease of use motivated and hindered National's e-campaigning utilisation. That is, the impact of the factor consisted of two facets: positive and negative.

4.4.11 Summary

National's e-campaigning utilisation in the 2008 general election was shaped by the ten factors in Table 2.2, namely, election type, electoral regulations, voters' technology access, resource availability, subjective norm, image, job relevance, output quality, result demonstrability, and perceived ease of use. Each factor in essence represents a unique perspective, therefore, National's e-campaigning utilisation has been explained from ten perspectives. Various specific and contextual instances that occurred in National's e-campaigning utilisation have been presented to illustrate the factors, lending valuable insights into this unique phenomenon. Table 4.2 highlights the ten factors that influenced National's e-campaigning utilisation.

Table 4.2 The factors influencing National's e-campaigning utilisation

Factor	Dual impact	Moderated by
Election type		Result demonstrability
Electoral regulations		Subjective norm
Voters' technology access	●	Resource availability
Resource availability	●	Result demonstrability, subjective norm
Subjective norm		Resource availability, image, job relevance
Image	●	
Job relevance		
Output quality	●	
Result demonstrability	●	
Perceived ease of use	●	

As noted in the table, the impacts of some factors, such as resource availability, on National's e-campaigning consisted of two facets: positive and negative. This means that those factors were enablers as well as inhibitors of National's e-campaigning utilisation. The impacts of some factors, such as election type, were moderated by other factors, such as result demonstrability. Taken together, it suggests that National's e-campaigning utilisation was complex, contextual, and dynamic.

4.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the key findings from the case study relating to National's e-campaigning utilisation in the 2008 general election. It has comprehensively analysed the breadth and depth of National's e-campaigning utilisation. Based on that, it has identified and illustrated in depth the ten factors that influenced National's e-campaigning utilisation.

Chapter 5 Labour's e-campaigning utilisation

5.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter presents the key findings from the second case study: Labour's e-campaigning utilisation in the 2008 general election. This chapter proceeds as follows: section 5.2 outlines the case background; then, section 5.3 and 5.4 answer the first and second research questions respectively; and last, section 5.5 summarises this chapter.

5.2 Case background

Founded in 1916, Labour is the political party with the longest history in New Zealand, representing the country's working class. It is also one of the two major New Zealand political parties. The party's political stance is generally regarded as centre-left and socially liberal.

With 50 seats in Parliament, Labour was the largest party before the 2008 general election. Since 1999 the party, together with coalition partners, had been the New Zealand government for three consecutive terms. Labour was led by Clark, the first elected female prime minister in New Zealand. Clark first entered Parliament as an elected Labour MP in 1981 then rose to the Labour leadership and prime ministership in 1993 and 1999, respectively. In the 2008 election Clark led her party to seek a fourth term in government.

In past election cycles offline campaigning had been the primary focus, as acknowledged by Labour's campaign team, the notion of e-campaigning, on the other hand, 'didn't really appear on [the party's] campaign radar until 2007'. Thus, e-campaigning in the 2008 election was regarded by Labour's campaign team as 'an exciting experience'.

Despite being a new comer, e-campaigning received serious attention from Labour, so much so that the party sent some members of its campaign team to the US in 2007 in order to closely observe and learn from the e-campaigning conducted by Obama's campaign team. In addition, Labour's campaign team opted for a new

website (www.labour08.co.nz), designated for the party's e-campaign. Therefore, this case study is based on Labour's campaign-specific website. Figure 5.1 and 5.2 depict the entire home page of Labour's campaign website.

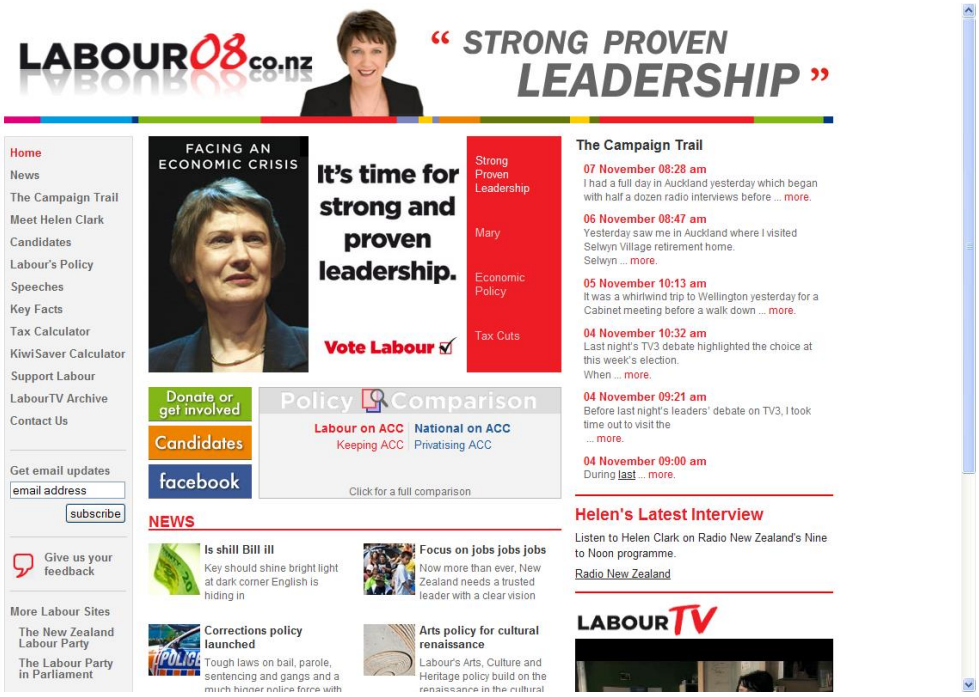

Figure 5.1 The home page of Labour's campaign website (part 1)

Figure 5.2 The home page of Labour's campaign website (part 2)

The decision to utilise a campaign-specific website was made not long before the official announcement of the 2008 general election. This, compounded with a severe shortage of e-campaigning staff, saw Labour's campaign website go live before completion. Consequently, early in the campaign, a large number of pages of Labour's campaign website, including the ones relating to the party's election policies, displayed 'under construction' only.

Labour took a centralised approach to e-campaigning, meaning that the party's entire e-campaigning was directed, implemented, and managed by Labour's campaign team from the party's head office. Despite being a large political organisation, Labour did not specifically have an internal IT unit providing oversight to any of the party's ICT activities such as e-campaigning. Labour's campaign team acknowledged that the party relied considerably on its campaign volunteers to assist in the operation of its e-campaigning.

In the election, Labour's primary campaign message, across both offline and online campaigns, centred on political stability and the credibility of Clark and Key, the party leader of National. Labour's campaign message formed a stark contrast to National's which focused on change of government and the leader of the country.

5.3 Labour's e-campaigning utilisation and its extent

On the basis of the proposed e-campaigning framework, Labour's e-campaigning encompassed all five practices, namely, information dissemination, voter interaction and engagement, support mobilisation, targeted campaigning, and resource generation. Those practices were conducted to varying degrees. The analysis in this section is structured according to the practices. This section is concluded with a summary.

5.3.1 Information dissemination

Labour's e-campaign disseminated a large quantity of campaign information. The header of Labour's campaign website was the party's primary campaign message expressed through different quotes from Clark – for instance, 'strong proven

leadership' or 'I believe that we have shown in government that we deliver on our promises and we keep our word to voters.' Labour's campaign message was also expressed through campaign videos on the website. In general, Labour's campaign information was organised around different themes, such as 'News', 'The Campaign Trail', 'Meet Helen Clark', 'Labour's Policy', and 'Speeches'.

Labour provided a large volume of campaign news under the 'News' page. The news articles were represented as hypertext links and organised in reverse chronological order. The articles encompassed a wide range of topics – from announcing the party's latest election policies to attacking National's policies. Labour's campaign news was updated on an almost daily basis. Quite often, the news was updated frequently within the same day. Labour's press releases were placed together with campaign news.

Labour's campaign website provided comprehensive election policies under the 'Labour's Policy' page. The coverage of the party's election policies was broad, which was expected for a major political party. This, however, did not compromise the ease of navigation as the policies were thoughtfully compartmentalised. More specifically, the classification of Labour's election policies involved two levels: macro and micro. At the macro level, policies were sectionalised into ten domains, such as 'People and Communities', 'Education', and 'Sustainability'. At the micro level, policies under each domain were subdivided; take policies under the Education domain for instance, they were further divided into seven portfolios, such as 'Tertiary Education', and 'Student Allowances'.

Labour's policy domains and portfolios were both presented as hypertext links. When navigating a particular domain or portfolio, the significance and main goals relating to the domain or portfolio were stated. The policy web page also featured a search engine, enabling a policy search with keywords. Two particular economic policies namely 'Tax Cuts' and 'Working for Families' were the main foci in Labour's e-campaign, as they centrally featured on the home page of Labour's campaign website. It is noteworthy that Labour adopted *tag cloud*, a web 2.0 application, as an additional means to inform its economic policies, based on the emphasis that the party placed on them. Specifically, Labour's economic policies

were tagged with terms encapsulating the essence of the policies, for instance, 'Finding Work' and 'Productivity'. The font size of a tag visualised the frequency of application. That is, the larger a tag in the tag cloud, the more frequently it had been applied by Labour, thereby suggesting the more emphasis that Labour placed on the particular area represented by the tag. Figure 5.3 illustrates the utilisation of tag cloud by Labour to inform the emphases of the party's economic policies. The figure suggests that 'Finding Work' or 'Responding to the international downturn' received more focus from Labour than 'Science and Innovation Funding' or 'International Connections'. It should be noted that Labour's use of tag cloud to inform the emphases of the party's policies was confined to the economic domain. Similar to the party's campaign news, Labour's election policies received frequent updates during the entire campaign period.

Figure 5.3 Labour's use of tag cloud

Labour's campaign trail, also referred to by the party as 'Labour's campaign blog', was a dominant feature of the party's e-campaign. Not only was a web page created for Labour's campaign trail, but links to the six most recent additions to Labour's campaign trail also featured on the home page. The campaign blog, according to the website, was 'a chance for us [Labour] to tell the story of what we've achieved for New Zealand in the last nine years, and … for us to shout out, loud and clear, what we can achieve with another term'. It was also a place where Labour could tell its story in entirety 'through facts and figures and through the real Kiwis that we talk to on the campaign trail', not 'in soundbites [*sic*] or two-line billboards dreamt up in an advertising agency's boardroom'. Moreover, the blog

served as a chance for Labour 'to engage with voters in every corner of the country'. Despite covering various topics, Labour's campaign trail predominantly centred on announcing new election policies, highlighting Labour's offline campaign, promoting Labour's main election policies, and attacking National's policies and party leader. A number of the entries were penned by Clark personally, referred to as 'Helen's diary', shown in Figure 5.4. Helen's diary particularly focused on the credibility of her party, the main achievements of her government in the past nine years, the significance of Labour's election policies, and the criticality of Labour being re-elected. The entries of Labour's campaign trail were predominantly text-based and displayed as hypertext links in reverse chronological order. A search engine was provided on the campaign trail page, enabling information retrieval with keywords. Commenting on any entry of Labour's campaign blog was disabled, suggesting that the nature of the blog was primarily to inform voters.

Figure 5.4 Helen's diary

A noticeable portion of Labour's e-campaign was allocated for profiles of Labour's 2008 candidates. All profiles were contained in the 'Candidates' page, organised according to the candidates' list ranking by default. Each profile was displayed as

a hypertext link with the candidate's name, the electorate, if applicable, and the candidate's list ranking. Upon clicking a candidate's name, the candidate's full profile rendered in a separate web page, highlighting the candidate's background, and political ambitions and achievements in the candidate's own words. Clark's profile received particular emphasis; not only was her profile included in the 'Candidates' page, a separate, alternative profile of the Labour leader and prime minister was also provided, which featured as 'Meet Helen Clark' on the home page. The content of this alternative profile was reworded. A sizeable portion of Clark's alternative profile focused on her personal life, such as her regular visits to the gym and conquering Africa's highest peak. Clark's alternative profile and its content, along with the campaign message emphasising Clark's 'proven leadership', suggests that Labour's e-campaigning leaned towards the party leader as opposed to the party.

Speeches delivered by select senior Labour MPs, mostly Clark, in offline activities, such as conferences and award ceremonies, were available in Labour's e-campaign. However, only nine speeches were provided. Also, based on the time stamps, Labour's speeches received updates much less frequently than did the party's campaign news or campaign blog. Labour utilised three social networking websites, namely, Facebook, YouTube, and Flickr in its 2008 e-campaigning. However, only its Facebook presence was explicitly indicated on Labour's campaign website; the party's YouTube and Flickr presence was suggested only when clicking on video clips or pictures depicting Labour's campaign roadshow, respectively.

Labour almost solely relied on text to disseminate its campaign information. Quite rarely, the party utilised video clips or images to describe its major election policies or campaign trail.

A few content elements associated with information dissemination were absent from Labour's e-campaign, namely, party information, campaign events, and contact information of Labour's 2008 candidates.

5.3.2 Voter interaction and engagement

Labour's e-campaign consisted of two elements that enabled interaction and engagement with voters. These elements pertained to interacting with Labour's election policies and providing feedback. The former was synchronous interaction and the latter was asynchronous.

Labour's campaign website offered voters two forms of interaction with its election policies. First, an online calculator was provided for voters to interact with Labour's policies relating to personal income tax, particularly 'Working for Families' – a flagship policy of Labour relating to paying tax credits to families with dependent children under 18 years old in order to assist them with raising their families. Figure 5.5 depicts Labour's tax calculator. As shown in the figure, when a voter input personal information as a parent – both parents' annual income, and the number and age of dependent children in the family – the calculator would then respond with the sum of personalised tax credits under Labour's Working for Families from the current tax year to two subsequent years. The same calculator also enabled voters to interact as an individual, as opposed to a parent, with Labour's intensely-campaigned policy on personal income tax by simply clicking on the icon in the calculator that switched to calculation of individual income tax.

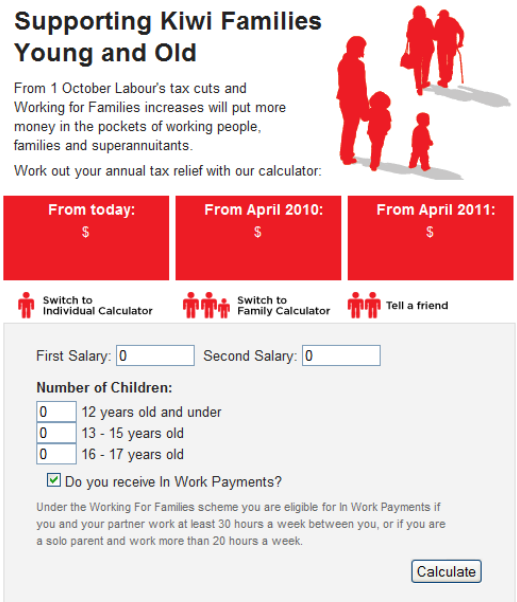

Figure 5.5 Labour's tax calculator

The second form of interaction with Labour's election policies, manifested as another online calculator, related to 'KiwiSaver' – a major policy championed by Labour, fostering voluntary, work-based savings for retirement with monetary contributions from both the employer and the New Zealand government as the primary enticement. Figure 5.6 exhibits the calculator, referred to as 'KiwiSaver Calculator' on Labour's campaign website. The calculator functioned similarly to the one for personal income tax. That is, the calculator was able to advise voters the amount of tax cut and KiwiSaver support that they would receive, based on the personal information, namely salary, they entered and Labour's election policy on the relevant areas. Also included in the calculator was an icon, which, upon clicking, would render a separate page, disseminating the details of Labour's policies on personal income tax. This suggests that the calculator also performed information dissemination.

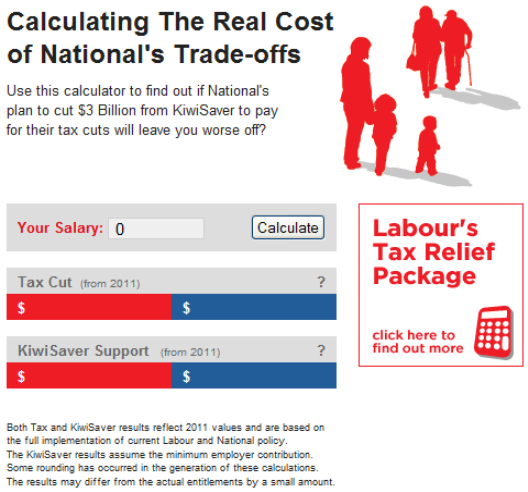

Figure 5.6 Labour's KiwiSaver calculator

In addition to synchronous interaction, Labour's campaign website also included asynchronous interaction. Specifically, an icon could be located on Labour's campaign website that allowed visitors to send their feedback to the party. The icon was in essence a mailto link; in other words, feedback would be delivered as an email from the visitor's email client with a predefined email subject ('Labour08 website') to a designated email address (myideas@labour08.org.nz).

Labour included three social networking websites as part of its e-campaigning, namely, Facebook, YouTube, and Flickr. Despite being intrinsically interactive,

those websites were found to primarily serve the purpose of disseminating campaign information or attacking National's leader for Labour. More specifically, Facebook was used to inform new content that was added to Labour's campaign website, such as news and policy releases; YouTube was employed to broadcast Clark's offline speeches and particularly Labour's televised campaign advertisements that chiefly focused on attacking the credibility of National's leader; and Flickr was utilised to host more than 100 images taken during Labour's campaign roadshow. Visitor comments were rarely spotted on any of Labour's pages on the social networking websites, although commenting was permitted. This could be due to the potential moderation by Labour of online remarks, or a lack of keen interest among visitors to proactively interact with Labour online. Moreover, no response from Labour was provided to any comment on Labour's pages.

5.3.3 Support mobilisation

Mobilising voter support was a significant practice in Labour's e-campaigning. The home page featured a noticeable image icon. As the label of the icon suggested, clicking on the icon would direct the visitor to the website of the New Zealand Electoral Commission for checking enrolment status. If not yet enrolled as a voter, the visitor could complete the enrolment on the Commission's website. The link to the Electoral Commission's website was also found on Labour's Facebook page.

In addition to encouraging voter registration, Labour urged voters to cast their votes for the party on the polling day in its e-campaign. More specifically, it was frequently noted in Helen's diary, speeches, and policy releases that voters must cast their votes for Labour in the election, in order to sustain 'all the good work' delivered to New Zealanders by Clark's government and to reap the future benefits of Labour's various election policies. For instance, in an entry of Helen's diary, titled 'Labour tackles financial crisis at launch', Clark first stressed that under her government the New Zealand economy not only remained unscathed in the worst worldwide financial crisis since the 1930s but also saw continuous growth. Clark continued that there was no room for complacency and a lot of work remained to be carried out in order to 'keep our [New Zealand's] banking system sound and

the economy on a growth path'. Therefore, Clark affirmed, it was paramount that Labour was given 'the privilege of re-election'.

Labour's campaign website consisted of a notable means for voters to share its campaign content. More specifically, each entry of Labour's campaign blog was attached with four Web 2.0 services, namely 'Scoopit', 'Digg', 'Reddit', and 'Del.icio.us', as shown in Figure 5.7. Each web service related to a particular social networking website – for instance, Scoopit connected to www.scoopit.co.nz, focusing on bookmarking, sharing, and discovering web content. Therefore, these four services enabled readers to effortlessly spread Labour's election campaign on the associated social networking websites, accessed by a large, growing quantity of both domestic and international visitors.

Figure 5.7 Labour's use of Web 2.0 services for sharing its campaign blog

Subscribing to Labour's campaign email was straightforward by simply locating the section on every web page of Labour's campaign website that was labelled 'Get email updates', entering an email address, and clicking on the 'subscribe' button. Digital copies of Labour's offline campaign billboards were also available on Labour's campaign website for downloading and sharing.

As noted, information relating to Labour's campaign events was absent from Labour's campaign website; unsurprisingly, means for voters to invite others to participate in Labour's campaign events were also absent. Moreover, Labour's campaign website did not provide any means for visitors to connect with other third-party supporter groups.

5.3.4 Targeted campaigning

A prominent portion of content on Labour's campaign website was fiercely targeted at Labour's largest political rival, namely National. More precisely, Labour's targeted campaigning at National could be classified into two branches according to the subject: National's policies, particularly economic policies, and Key, National's party leader.

Labour accused National's election policies of undermining the economic achievements that had been made by Clark's government and enjoyed by the majority of New Zealanders, and, more importantly, jeopardising the future of the New Zealand economy and the wellbeing of most New Zealanders. This accusation was observable in numerous areas. For instance, in an entry of Labour's campaign blog titled 'Short-term thinking wins in National's inner circle', Labour attacked National's tax cut plan by stating that it was going to 'sacrifice KiwiSaver, and axe research and development tax credits for New Zealand businesses'. Labour continued that National's tax policy had 'a scarily familiar ring' to the one that former US President George W. Bush had been promoting for eight years. Labour concluded that National's tax policy was in fact a populist measure, giving a short-term reward to the wealthy few 'at the cost of long-term growth'.

A direct policy comparison between Labour and National is another notable example of Labour's targeted campaigning at National's policies. Centrally featuring on Labour's campaign website was a section comparing Labour's and National's policies on a given area – such as 'KiwiSaver' and '90 day worker probation' – with Labour's policy in red (the party's colour) and National's in blue (the party's colour), as shown in Figure 5.8. When clicking on the link for a full comparison, a separate web page named 'Policy Comparison' rendered as shown in Figure 5.9. As the figure depicts, visitors could select from 12 predetermined areas, ranging from 'KiwiSaver' to 'Health', on which a full policy comparison between Labour and National was based. Also noticeable on the home page was a sizeable area with a caption 'Labour or National?', as illustrated in Figure 5.10. It was essentially an alternative form of policy comparison. Labour's policy comparison with National also extended to the KiwiSaver calculator. Specifically,

when the salary or wage of a visitor was entered, the calculator advised the amount of tax cut and KiwiSaver support that the visitor would receive under a Labour-led and a National-led government based on both parties' election policies on the related areas. Irrespective of their forms, Labour's policy comparisons cast itself under a positive light and National a negative.

Figure 5.8 Labour's policy comparison on the home page

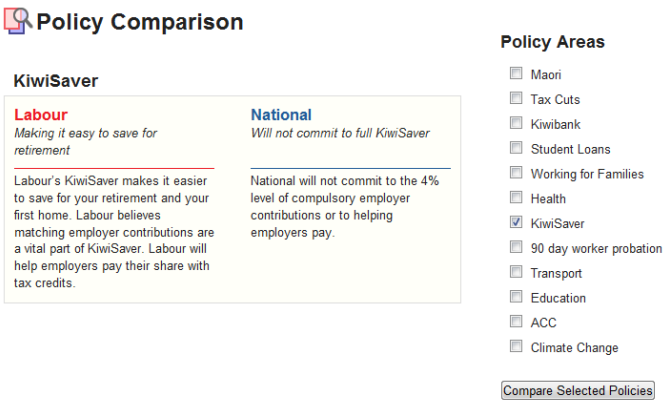

Figure 5.9 Labour's dedicated web page for a full policy comparison

Figure 5.10 An alternative form of Labour's policy comparison

In addition to National's policies, Key's credibility was frequently an object of Labour's targeted campaigning at National. Notably, Labour's campaign website

consisted of a web page named 'Key Facts', which was designated to attack Key's credibility in various ways. On the web page, it was stated that the prime minister of New Zealand 'has the most important job in New Zealand'. Whoever aspires to becoming prime minister, said Labour, 'should be upfront about where they stand on issues and clear on their values'. Labour went on to note that in her political career Clark had proven numerously to be a credible politician and to have 'what it takes to lead New Zealand'. In stark contrast, Labour argued, Key constantly confused the New Zealand public as to his true values and stand on different issues. To encourage visitors to judge for themselves if Key was credible enough to be a prime minister, Labour distinguished 12 areas that ranged from the war in Iraq to KiwiSaver and showed Key's stances in his own words. For instance, on KiwiSaver, the web page quoted Key as saying: 'KiwiSaver is a glorified Christmas club and its design is fundamentally flawed.'

Also on the web page was a series of videos named 'John Key Double Talk'. The aim was to explicitly cast doubt over Key's credibility by showing his contrasting and confusing stances on various issues ranging from KiwiSaver to climate change, hence 'double talk'. For instance, in the video relating to Key's double talk on KiwiSaver, it first showed a picture of Key with a quote in his own words made on 4 August 2008: 'modest changes to KiwiSaver', in reference to Key's position on this policy if he was elected prime minister of New Zealand; while still in the same reference, the video displayed a different picture of Key with his words said on 9 October 2008 '… cut KiwiSaver in half.', demonstrating Key's changing stance on the same policy. All videos of Key's double talk ended with Clark's campaign picture and a tag line that read 'This one's about trust', unambiguously showing that credibility was the main aim of Labour's targeted campaigning at Key. Furthermore, a link was provided for viewers to forward the videos to others.

Labour's campaign website featured another video attacking Key's credibility. The video was one of Labour's televised campaign advertisements, which portrayed a young mother who appeared immensely concerned about the prospect of a Key-led government by saying: 'You might know a few things about money trading [in reference to Key's previous occupation], Mr Key, but when it comes to my family's future, I just can't trust you.'

Labour's targeted campaigning at Key could also be found in the party's campaign blog. For instance, in a blog post titled 'It's the economy, stupid', a phrase that gained prominence from former US President Clinton's attack on his presidential rival George H. W. Bush, Labour asserted that Key's economic thinking behind his tax cut plan was severely flawed and bore dangerous consequences. To illustrate that, Labour used an online video, and words of Key's and an economics columnist's. The blog concluded by stating that Key's response to a global financial crisis was 'as dumb as it sounds' and he therefore should not be trusted to become prime minster of New Zealand and lead the country through the financial crisis.

5.3.5 Resource generation

Labour sought both financial and human resources from visitors in its e-campaigning. A button and a hypertext link for financial donation were present on the home page. Upon clicking, the visitor would be taken to a secure web page hosted under the domain of Labour's party website (www.labourparty.org.nz). The web page was essentially an online form. To make a financial donation, the donor needed to complete the form by selecting or specifying an amount to donate, choosing the recurrence of donation, and providing both personal and credit card details. A text link was also included on the page for those who preferred to donate by phone, postal mail, or online banking.

Labour's campaign website provided contact information, such as phone number, and email and offline addresses, for those who wished to become volunteers to assist Labour in various campaign activities such as pamphlet dropping, data entry, and hosting a meeting for a Labour candidate.

Labour's campaign website excluded a means to become a party member, a common form to generate both financial and human resources. In order to become a party member online, visitors needed to go to Labour's party website.

5.3.6 Summary

Table 5.1 summarises Labour's e-campaigning utilisation and its extent with the proposed e-campaigning framework. It suggests that Labour's e-campaigning

focused most on information dissemination and least on voter interaction and engagement.

Table 5.1 Labour's e-campaigning utilisation and its extent

Campaign practice	Content elements	Present
Information dissemination	Political party's information	
	Candidate biography	●
	Press releases	●
	Policy statements	●
	Campaign news	●
	Campaign events	
	Speeches	●
	Contact information	●
	Information relating to the political party's other online presence	●
	Campaign blog without visitor comments allowed	●
Voter interaction and engagement	Instant chat or messaging	
	Instant opinion polls	
	Instant surveys	
	Applications for interacting with the political party's policies	●
	Interactive calendar of campaign events	
	Means to contact the political party	
	Discussion forums	
	Campaign blog with visitor comments allowed	
	Means to provide feedback	●
Support mobilisation	Means for voters to invite their peers to participate in campaign events	
	Means to inform voters of electoral information	●
	Means for voters to receive campaign information and updates	●
	Means for voters to connect with supporter groups	
	Means for voters to download campaign material	●
	Means for voters to forward campaign material to others	●
	Means to encourage votes*	●
Targeted campaigning	Content targeted at political opponents	●
	Content targeted at political opponents' policies	●
	Content targeted at specific voter segments	
Resource generation	Means to make donations	●
	Online merchandise shop	
	Means to become a party member	
	Means to become a volunteer	●

Note: * Not present in the proposed e-campaigning framework

Six areas of Labour's e-campaigning utilisation are worth highlighting. First, a significant proportion of Labour's e-campaign focused on the party leader, especially her political experience and credibility. Second, online voter interaction and engagement was highly limited and confined to key election policies. Third, although three social networking sites, namely, Facebook, Flickr, and YouTube,

featured in Labour's e-campaigning, they were primarily intended for information dissemination; that is, the interactive nature of those social networking sites were hardly exploited. Fourth, Web 2.0 applications or services were employed in Labour's e-campaigning for information dissemination and support mobilisation. Fifth, Labour's targeted campaigning was fierce and sophisticated; it was confined to National, National's leader and key election policies. Last, online videos were prominent in Labour's e-campaign; however, they were confined to Labour's targeted campaigning. Also note that a content element in Labour's e-campaign was not captured by the proposed e-campaigning framework, namely means to encourage votes.

5.4 The factors influencing Labour's e-campaigning utilisation

Labour's e-campaigning utilisation was attributable to all factors in Table 2.2, namely, election type, electoral regulations, voters' technology access, resource availability, subjective norm, image, job relevance, output quality, result demonstrability, and perceived ease of use. The remainder of this section is structured according to those factors. This section is concluded with a summary.

5.4.1 Election type

Election campaigning under a party-led election meant that it was necessary to work with a political party, a form of organisation, said Labour's campaign team. However, 'Unlike working with a typical organisation such as 3M, working with a political organisation can be very "interesting" in that the decision-making structure isn't always straightforward, the [decision-making] pace isn't always ideal, and the task allocation isn't always clear.' Consequently, campaigning under a party-led election could often involve 'delay, chaos, and confusion', all of which were undesirable and encountered by Labour's campaign team 'at some point during the campaign period'. The team added that delay, chaos, and confusion could also be present when campaigning under a candidate-led election, but 'to a much lesser degree'.

A significant advantage of e-campaigning over its offline counterpart lied within the ability to be 'nimble', said the team. Yet, such an advantage was not always apparent under a party-led election because of 'the number of hoops [a campaign team needs] to jump through inside the party in order to perform the [campaign] tasks'. The team indicated that the negative impact of party-led elections on e-campaigning utilisation was applicable to most, if not all, political parties. In other words, the impact was not unique to Labour.

Nevertheless, the team found that in some aspects, party-led elections were beneficial to Labour's e-campaigning utilisation. As the team explained, campaigning under a party-led election meant that the campaign team could 'capitalise on' the party's networks, members, supporters, and volunteers for valuable suggestions and assistance in different aspects of campaigning, which was 'certainly the case for Labour' in the election. The team acknowledged that Labour's e-campaign 'wasn't perfect. There're a number of areas that the Labour Party could definitely improve on'. However, it's difficult to imagine what Labour's e-campaign would have been but for the suggestions and assistance from the party's 'committed and passionate' members, supporters, and volunteers. The team added that campaigning in party-led elections was often highly centralised. Although at times it could increase complexity and curb some individuals' spontaneous ideas, which could be perceived as negative, it could often protect scarce campaign resources against wastage, which was 'crucial and beneficial' to e-campaigning utilisation.

In brief, party-led elections supported as well as hindered Labour's e-campaigning utilisation. Put differently, the impact of election type on Labour's e-campaigning consisted of two facets: positive and negative.

5.4.2 Electoral regulations

Labour's use of a separate, fully party-funded website for its e-campaigning was in part due to electoral regulations. More specifically, prior to the election, Labour had a website that was 'fully geared and pretty much ready to hit the ground running, if it was used as the campaign website'. In other words, the website was fully developed and functional and would consume a minimum level of campaign

resources, had it been chosen as the party's campaign website. However, the website was in part funded by the New Zealand Parliamentary Service. 'Before the Electoral Finance Act [2007], it wouldn't be too much of an issue if it's used for election campaigning,' said the team. However, under the new Act, if the website served as the primary platform for Labour's e-campaigning, the party had to confine the campaign functions to only providing contacts of existing MPs and publishing press releases. Labour's campaign team felt that the party's e-campaigning would be 'heavily impaired and meaningless' if the Parliament-funded website was used. Because of that, Labour's campaign team decided to opt for an independent and completely party-funded website for full e-campaigning utilisation, even if it meant 'having to start all the bits and pieces from scratch', committing more scarce resources, and a risk of being unable to launch a fully functional website on schedule.

The team indicated that a notable aspect of the Act pertained to a clear distinction between parliamentary and party business. In the election, Labour had 'some talented people with great ideas and skillsets' that were immensely beneficial to its e-campaigning utilisation. However, they were working on the parliamentary side of Labour; in other words, they were paid by the New Zealand Parliamentary Service. The distinction between parliamentary and party business set by the EFA 2007 meant that those people were unable to 'work around the clock' with Labour's campaign team for the party's e-campaigning. Labour's e-campaigning could have been different had those people been able to be fully involved in the party's e-campaigning, said the team.

Another important aspect of the EFA 2007 was the strict spending limits encompassing all areas of election campaigning that were subject to close scrutiny by the Electoral Commission, said the team. Because of that as well as Labour's stronger emphasis on offline campaign activities that were 'increasingly costly', the team was enjoined by the party's senior staff before the election that it should keep the monetary expenditure on most of its e-campaigning 'free', or 'very cheap', so that the money spending allocation for Labour's offline campaign activities remained uncontested and the party stayed on 'the right side of the law'. Consequently, several 'brilliant' e-campaigning ideas 'couldn't be made reality',

according to the team. For instance, before the election, the team noticed various tactics of interaction and engagement with voters in overseas e-campaigns. And the team 'intended to do something very similar' in Labour's e-campaign. While 'It wouldn't cost much technologically to implement because of the free and open tool sets available, it would definitely require at least a full-time employee to run and manage on an ongoing basis throughout the entire campaign period.' And this would attract a considerable amount of cost that would be counted towards the total election spending. For that reason, the campaign team halted the intention of interacting and engaging with voters in Labour's e-campaign. This instance suggests that the impact of subjective norm was moderated by electoral regulations.

In brief, electoral regulations stimulated and dissuaded Labour's e-campaigning utilisation. That is, the impact of the factor on Labour's e-campaigning consisted of two facets: positive and negative. It is worth noting the instance where the campaign team halted the intention to interact and engage with voters online as its overseas counterparts, as it suggests that the impact of subjective norm was moderated by another factor – electoral regulations. Further, with the proliferation of e-campaigning in New Zealand, the campaign team strongly believed that the existing electoral regulations would soon closely reflect the phenomenon. And by then, most, if not all, campaign teams in New Zealand could be further subject to the associated impact on their e-campaigning utilisation.

5.4.3 Voters' technology access

Before the election, Labour's campaign team contemplated 'different ways of leveraging text messaging' for informing and, more importantly, mobilising voter support. The underlying reason was 'simple and compelling', said the team: 'cell phones stand out hands down as the communication technology most used by people in this country. And the most popular cell phone service in this country – regardless of age, background and the type of phone – is SMS.' 'At the end of the day, voters are a central part of any election campaign', the team continued, 'and because of that, what sort of media or technology they use the most becomes very critical when developing a modern election campaign.' Despite that, the strong

intention of SMS campaigning did not materialise for a two-fold reason, according to the team. First, SMS campaigning was considered expensive and, more importantly, had to be fully party-funded in order to comply with the EFA 2007; second, in light of the previous reason, the party side of Labour was unable to solely and fully fund SMS campaigning. In other words, electoral regulations and resource availability jointly moderated the impact of voters' technology access in this particular instance.

From observing various overseas e-campaigns, the campaign team was particularly 'wowed by the digital campaigns especially designed for smartphone users'. More specifically, some overseas campaign teams targeted part of their e-campaigns at smartphone users by utilising features exclusive to smartphones – such as digital mapping, GPS, email, calendar, and smartphone applications – in order to inform, interact, and mobilise voters. This new variant of e-campaigning could have potentially been a strategic differentiator for Labour, said the team, because putting the wow factor aside and judging by overseas experience, it could have offered 'a more interactive, personalised, and seamless campaign' to voters, thereby reviving their interest and experience of Labour's election campaign. Keen as it was, the campaign team did not pursue the smartphone election campaign. This, according to the team, was for the sheer reason that unlike its overseas counterparts, the number of voters with capable smartphones in New Zealand during the election was 'still far from critical mass', rendering the inclusion of this particular form of e-campaign unfeasible. Put simply, the perceived low level of smartphone access in New Zealand during the election dissuaded Labour's campaign team from employing a new form of e-campaigning. It can be inferred from this instance that the impact of result demonstrability was moderated by voters' technology access. That is, despite its demonstrated results from overseas examples, an e-campaign tailored for smartphones was only considered, but not embraced, by Labour's campaign team owing to its concern over voters' access to smartphones.

One of the main features in Labour's e-campaign was the use of multimedia, according to the team, as it provided 'more avenues' for the party's campaign content to appeal to the voters. However, it was 'partly the fact there're lots of

people in the country having access to home broadband' that secured the presence of this feature in Labour's e-campaign. The team continued that it was unthinkable to deploy bandwidth-intensive features, particularly online videos, in previous e-campaigns because 'it's only recently that the number of home broadband has seriously picked up.'

Nonetheless, Labour's campaign team acknowledged that the use of bandwidth-intensive features in the party's e-campaign was moderate, especially when compared to Labour's major adversary National. Two reasons were given. First, despite the growing number of home broadband, the team recognised that there were still a number of voters throughout the country with dial-up Internet access. The campaign team was mindful of those voters' potential feelings of exclusion if Labour's e-campaign primarily revolved around bandwidth-consuming features. Second, the team recognised that, contrasting with some overseas countries, home broadband in New Zealand came with 'a high price tag and monthly [data] usage cap'. As the team perspicaciously put, 'Voters, particularly undecided voters, simply wouldn't go so far as to use up their costly, limited [broadband] data on an election campaign.'

In short, voters' technology access inspired and discouraged Labour's e-campaigning utilisation. That is, the impact of the factor on Labour's e-campaigning consisted of two facets: positive and negative. It is worth noting two instances: first, the team abandoned the idea of conducting a text campaign and second, the team decided not to pursue a smartphone campaign. The first instance illustrates that the impact of voters' technology access was moderated by other factors – electoral regulations and resource availability; the second suggests that the impact of result demonstrability was moderated by another factor – voters' technology access.

5.4.4 Resource availability

As noted, Labour's e-campaigning utilisation reflected the campaign team's resource considerations. Indeed, resource availability was frequently emphasised by the team as a pivotal factor shaping its e-campaigning; as the team incisively put,

> Throughout the campaign, we had quite a few people asking why we didn't do certain things in our digital campaign like Kevin Rudd or Obama had done in theirs. Well, the answer has always been the same: 'It's not we haven't thought about it or didn't want to. We simply didn't have the same scale of resources those guys had, or anything close to that.'

A noticeable trend within Labour in this election could be observed, according to the team, which saw the party's senior members increasingly champion further e-campaigning utilisation primarily because of Labour's limited campaign resources. More specifically, contrary to popular belief, Labour had 'very slim resources for campaigning in general', said the team. As the cost of offline campaign activities continuously soared, it had become increasingly challenging for Labour to perform its offline campaign to the same extent as in previous elections. This 'could be incredibly frustrating at times', the team noted. In stark contrast, e-campaigning was perceived by many senior members to be not 'just as capable as traditional campaigning' but, more importantly, 'much more resource-friendly'. The perceived resource-friendliness of e-campaigning was so compelling for those members that 'there's a strong push within the party' to pursue e-campaigning beyond 'just a few simple lines along with the party logo on a website', in order to avoid suffering from any potential setbacks owing to the party's limited resources. This could be observed in several areas of Labour's e-campaign, according to the team.

Notably, it was mentioned that under the 'newly' introduced EFA 2007, if Labour wanted to perform more campaign activities online than merely listing the contact details of its current MPs, it had to finance the website for its e-campaigning entirely with its already limited campaign resources. Undeterred, the campaign team decided to launch a new, campaign-specific website, instead of temporarily turning its party website to campaign only as suggested by some senior members. This was partly due to Labour's limited campaign resources. More specifically, the team believed that 'with the large number and variety of free toolsets around', it would consume much fewer campaign resources to build an entirely campaign-focused website 'from scratch' than transforming its existing 'complex and very user-unfriendly' party website to the website that the team needed.

Another instance that saw the campaign team embrace e-campaigning because of its campaign resources pertained to the party's online campaign photos and videos. More specifically, the team understood that in election campaigning, images and videos generally produced a stronger impact on voters than text. Despite that, Labour's use of images and videos in traditional campaigning had always been insufficient, as the team acknowledged, due to the increasing cost of producing or presenting them. However, 'It's a totally different story when it comes to online campaigning.' The resources required for producing, editing, and presenting online images and videos were 'minuscule', the team explained. Typically, for instance, it required only 'a basic video camera and one person' to produce an online video; 'if really necessary, there's plenty of free or low-cost software around that's sufficient for editing online videos'; 'then there're websites like YouTube to take care of … hosting and broadcasting online videos for free', according to the team. Consequently, the level of using images and videos was greater in Labour's e-campaign than in its offline counterpart.

Nonetheless, as Labour's campaign team further utilised e-campaigning, it became increasingly evident that the resource advantage of e-campaigning, which immensely elevated the positive perception of e-campaigning among many Labour members, was not always true. On many occasions, the amount of resources required for e-campaigning was even comparable to its offline counterpart.

For instance, the team agreed with the observation of this study that 'interactive wasn't exactly the word' to describe Labour's campaigning on Facebook. In fact, the team acknowledged that 'there wasn't much going on there.' However, 'it wasn't a question of whether or not [Labour] wanted to interact with supporters or voters at all;' rather, 'it really came down to the amount of resources available for us to commit [to interacting and engaging with voters online],' said the team. More specifically, the team firmly believed that, like its offline counterpart, any online interaction and engagement should be 'authentic and consistent'. In that light, any responses to visitors' remarks would need to be made by 'no one else but Helen' since the party's Facebook campaign page was under Clark's name, as noted; also, if any responses were made, every remark or visitor, instead of only a

selected few, would need to be attended to for consistency. Consequently, this was 'mission impossible' given the 'fully-loaded schedule of Helen Clark'. The team further indicated that Helen's diary, Clark's campaign blog, had already been a 'huge commitment' of Clark's time resources, given she was also the prime minister at the time. Moreover, if Labour wanted to have a 'truly interactive Facebook site, [the team] had to find someone to build and run it. So that's at least $100K a year and [the team] couldn't ask volunteers to do it for free because that raised questions about trust and permission', the team added. 'Again, $100K to run a Facebook site was a cost that the party would struggle to find the money [for].' Put briefly, the lack of resources resulted in Labour's largely non-interactive e-campaign.

The team revealed that it was 'extremely keen to put forward a sophisticated digital campaign targeted at specific groups of voters, based on their characteristics and the issues they most care about'. This form of targeted campaign 'seems very useful in terms of allowing parties or candidates to remain in touch with different voters across the spectrum, if overseas experiences – such as Obama's or Kevin Rudd's campaigns – are anything to go by'. Running a sophisticated targeted e-campaign at voters in the end remained as 'an item on a wish list' as opposed to a reality for Labour, however, because of resource constraints. More specifically, large data sets and detailed voter analysis were the central elements of the targeted campaign that the campaign team desired. Yet, those elements were resource-intensive and therefore unaffordable for Labour. As the team elaborated, to set up reliable data sets, 'you need to send armies of people to different parts of the country to politically engage with people in order to collect voter data; then, you need to put the offline data into a database; and then you need to connect the database to another.' This process would not be a 'one-off'; it would have to be repeated regularly to ensure data accuracy and currency, which 'is essential to a precise and meaningful targeted campaign [at voters]'. Moreover, the team would have to purchase voters' data in different contexts from other sources to enrich its own data. To perform detailed voter analysis, the team would have to assign dedicated personnel to 'closely monitor web traffic, clicks, and statistics literally on a daily basis and say, "these are the patterns of the site visitor

we've discovered", or "[web] traffic was up or down today", and take a stab at why'. While those financial, time, and labour resources 'didn't seem to be an issue' for Obama or Rudd, they posed as 'a luxury [the team] simply couldn't afford'. With the scale of Labour's campaign resources, the team could still have 'pulled off a much more watered-down version of the kind of [targeted] campaign [at voters] carried out by Obama or Kevin Rudd', but 'then that would've been so meaningless that it would've simply been a waste of resources in the end'. That being so, the intention of conducting a sophisticated e-campaign targeted at specific voter segments had to be withdrawn. It can be inferred from this instance that the impact of result demonstrability was moderated by resource availability.

Another instance illuminating the negative impact of resource availability on Labour's e-campaigning pertained to support mobilisation. Although Labour's e-campaign exhibited a certain extent of support mobilisation, it 'came nowhere near' what the team initially intended. More precisely, an aspect of Obama's e-campaign aiming at support mobilisation particularly captured Labour's campaign team's attention: Obama's campaign team built a 'state-of-the-art' application that leveraged the key features of the Internet and smartphones to organise offline door knocking performed by the presidential candidate's supporters and volunteers in different parts of the country. Before knocking on any voter's door, those supporters and volunteers received digital maps on their smartphones. The maps showed all houses within the areas where door knocking was performed. The houses had been colour-coded, with sophisticated and expensive data sets and data mining technology, which exhibited the doors of Democrats, Republicans, and swing voters, so that door knockers would avoid approaching any Republican supporters, thereby increasing their efficiency. Moreover, the same application enabled door knockers to update their progress in real time and provide additional notes on any canvassed voters for subsequent follow-ups, which further enhanced the outcome of support mobilisation by Obama's campaign team. Labour's campaign team admitted that it was hugely inclined to replicate the utilisation of ICTs to seamlessly orchestrate the party's offline support mobilisation as observed in Obama's e-campaigning, but stopped short of acting on that because of 'the vast amount of resources needed'. Still, with

its available resources, Labour's campaign team delivered 'a fair bit of' support mobilisation in its e-campaign, which bore little resemblance to the team's initial intention, however. This instance also illustrates that the impact of subjective norm was moderated by resource availability.

It was further suggested that the understanding of the resource-intensive nature of e-campaigning was confined to Labour's campaign team; in other words, 'external people had little idea how expensive and resource-demanding online campaigning could be'. This largely contributed to the instruction from the senior hierarchy of confining the resource spending for e-campaigning to 'free' or 'very cheap'. It rendered the team 'severely under-resourced' in the election and its e-campaigning utilisation 'extra challenging in a lot of respects'.

In all, resource availability not only stimulated but also depressed Labour's e-campaigning utilisation. In other words, the impact of this factor on Labour's e-campaigning consisted of two facets: positive and negative. It is worth highlighting two instances pertaining to the team's decision not to embrace targeted campaigning at specific voter segments and Labour's online support mobilisation; the former illustrates that the impact of result demonstrability was moderated by another factor – resource availability and the latter suggests that the impact of subjective norm was moderated by another factor – resource availability. Labour's campaign team noted that the party's e-campaigning utilisation would be plagued by its limited resource availability beyond this election. The team added that it was 'highly unlikely' that Labour would be able to inject an enormous amount of resources into building a 'sophisticated, cutting-edge' e-campaign in the near future in order to unleash the full potential of e-campaigning, mainly because of the continual dominance of offline campaigning, which had become increasingly costly, and the strict campaign spending limits imposed by electoral law. The team further noted that a sophisticated, 'game-changing' e-campaign needed continuous investment in ICT infrastructure and resources, which required a shift in perception among Labour members that election campaigning 'doesn't necessarily have to be a temporary, short-term event'. In other words, a shift from the traditional perception of election campaigning to the notion of permanent campaigning formed the foundation for continuous investment in e-campaigning.

5.4.5 Subjective norm

Using online photos and videos was considered to be one of the highlights in Labour's e-campaign by the campaign team. This, as noted, was partly motivated by voters' technology access as well as resource availability. Another factor that gave rise to such e-campaigning utilisation was subjective norm.

More specifically, before the election, the team had already decided to incorporate online photos and videos in Labour's e-campaign, but to a lesser extent than 'what [the team] actually put out in the end'. While increasing online photos and videos in Labour's e-campaign was 'without a doubt a good thing to do', to a certain degree it stemmed from competitive pressure from National. As the team explained, throughout the campaign, it 'kept a good eye on' both overseas and domestic e-campaigns, which was believed to be 'a common practice shared by other campaign teams across the spectrum'. An aspect of National's e-campaign that particularly gathered the attention of Labour's campaign team was the extensive use of online images and videos to deliver and reinforce its campaign content. In response, Labour's team strategically decided to scale up its e-campaigning utilisation in the same area; as the team put it, '[in Labour's increased use of images and videos in its e-campaign] there's an element of trying to … stay on top of the game.' Despite being somehow propelled by National's e-campaigning utilisation, Labour's online campaign photos and videos exhibited a marked difference in both style and content.

Another aspect of Labour's e-campaigning that commanded attention was the extent and diversity of the targeted campaigning at National and, particularly, Key. One of the underlying motivations pertained to subjective norm. As the team elaborated, from extensively observing overseas e-campaigns of the political parties and candidates whom Labour's campaign team considered influential, the team identified an emergent, increasingly prevalent feature: a campaign attacking political adversaries. 'And lots of [overseas] voters actually seemed to quite enjoy them,' said the team. This consequently prompted a perception of the team that a global norm had already emerged where negative campaigns were increasingly practised with new ICTs by campaign teams, and widely accepted and demanded

by many voters. This perception then underpinned Labour's extensive e-campaign attacking National and Key.

Labour's lack of extensive interaction and engagement with voters in its e-campaign was also related to subjective norm. More specifically, Labour's campaign team was acutely aware that overseas political parties and candidates were increasingly embarking on interacting and engaging with voters with the advent of new ICTs and related applications, particularly social networking websites. This compelled Labour's campaign team to consider a similar manoeuvre in its own e-campaign. In other words, a subjective norm held by the team inspired its e-campaigning intention relating to voter interaction and engagement. Nevertheless, it was another subjective norm whose impact superseded the previous one. As the team elucidated, it gained a clear impression from the offline feedback specifically on Labour's e-campaign, from both Labour's supporters and voters in general, that 'online interaction, or the lack of it, wasn't particularly an issue'. Put differently, Labour's campaign team did not sense a reverberating demand that it expand its existing online interaction and engagement with voters from those whose opinions were valued considerably by the team. The perception that there was little need to expand Labour's existing online interaction and engagement with voters was reinforced by a subjective norm where other political parties in the election 'were doing pretty much the same' in the respective area, the team added. Consequently, voter interaction and engagement was highly limited in Labour's e-campaigning.

In general, subjective norm propelled as well as undermined Labour's e-campaigning utilisation. Put differently, the impact of the factor on Labour's e-campaigning consisted of two facets: positive and negative. The norms perceived by Labour's campaign team stemmed from competitive pressure as well as the opinions and behaviour of those whom Labour's campaign team valued. It bears reiterating that the lack of interest of Labour's campaign team to increase the party's online interaction and engagement with voters was in part due to a subjective norm held by the team that Labour's counterparts were performing to a similar extent in the same area, as it can be inferred that subjective norm could induce inertia in e-campaigning utilisation.

5.4.6 Image

Image was one of the reasons instigating Labour's opting for a new, campaign-specific website. As the team explained, despite many other political parties claiming to be serious about their e-campaigning, scarcely could any marked difference in content or presentation be discerned when their party websites during the campaign period were compared to the previous ones. This, said the team, could be perceived as only 'business as usual'. 'If you say you're serious about online campaigning, you need to be seen that way by the public, by that I mean all content and material on your website needs to focus on nothing else but campaigning.' This, consequently, contributed to the team's deployment of a new website specifically for Labour's e-campaigning.

Unsurprisingly, the team revealed that image was a significant driver of Labour's constant and fierce targeted campaigning that cast both Helen and Labour in a favourable light and both Key and National to the contrary. More specifically, in this election, the team sensed that traditional media somehow uniformly portrayed National and, in particular, Key as being 'energetic, friendly, and connected' and Labour and Clark, by stark contrast, 'jaded, stroppy, and out of touch with mainstream New Zealand'. More importantly, the team continued, 'John Key's credibility, or lack of it, combined with his political inexperience' – which Labour's campaign team considered to be the Achilles' heel of Key as a potential prime minister – barely received any mention in the media; neither did 'Helen's proven track record, strong leadership, and vast political experience'. Labour's campaign team believed that such portrayals by the media were 'extremely biased' and 'would definitely upset the chance of [Labour] getting re-elected'. Under such circumstances, a significant proportion of Labour's e-campaigning was targeted at both National and Key as the team perceived that it would be able to 'present Helen in as favourable a light as possible, to show she's still in touch and is speaking [about] what people need, and to show the major weaknesses of the National Party's policies and particularly John Key'. Despite conceding its targeted campaigning at the images of Labour, Clark, National, and Key had backfired in the end, Labour's campaign team remained adamant that the targeted campaigning was necessary because it was paramount to seize every

opportunity to promote, maintain, and defend Labour's image in an election, especially the 2008 election.

Labour's campaign team acknowledged that Facebook 'wasn't part of the original [e-campaigning] plan in the election'. More precisely, the team initially opposed using the popular social networking website during the entire campaign period, which also applied to all Labour candidates. That was partly related to concerns over the party's image. As the team explained, the general idea of Facebook was 'to friend people'. In a social context, 'you would normally have some kind of idea about the people you friend on Facebook'. But that 'isn't usually the case' in a political context; that is, people who friend political parties or politicians on Facebook are usually strangers to the parties or politicians. This was perceived to be 'a great risk' to Labour's public image during the election because the party 'could end up unknowingly friending someone who's an axe murderer or something that rings alarm bells'. Put concisely, Labour's campaign team initially intended to steer clear of Facebook in the election for fear that the party could be unknowingly and publicly associated with people with a negative image or personality, thereby tarnishing the party's image. The team's early opposition to Facebook failed to endure, however. As noted, the party was observed to campaign on Facebook under Clark's name, albeit highly restrictedly. As the team elaborated, 'Facebook had become such a big phenomenon around the time our campaign began to kick off that almost everyone we know … reckoned we just had to be in that space, regardless. So it's basically inevitable [to use Facebook as part of Labour's e-campaign].' This suggests that the negative impact of image was moderated by subjective norm.

As noted, National's e-campaign targeted at overseas voters, Internats, incorporated a blog by an ardent National supporter and active political blogger, which chiefly aimed at information dissemination and support mobilisation. This also garnered the attention of Labour's campaign team. The team did not intend to emulate that particular e-campaigning tactic of National, despite praising it as 'a smart move' and Labour itself having plenty of ardent supporters in the New Zealand political blogosphere. The underlying reason, according to the team, was connected to Labour's public image. As the team explained, the author of the blog

included in National's e-campaign targeted at Internats had well established 'a facade of balance' in that the author not only enthusiastically promoted but also constructively criticised National. Because of that, National had 'nothing to lose but everything to gain' relating to its image by publicly associating itself with the author. Labour, on the other hand, 'had no such luck', as left wing political bloggers in New Zealand 'unfortunately shared a bunker mentality when it comes to critiquing political parties, including Labour'. That, according to the team, was 'really unfortunate' as Labour consequently had to distance itself from those bloggers in the election in order to protect its image.

In short, image motivated and dissuaded Labour's e-campaigning utilisation. Put differently, the impact of the factor on Labour's e-campaigning consisted of two sides: positive and negative. It is worth highlighting the instance where the team changed its initial rejection of Facebook as part of Labour's e-campaigning as it suggests that the negative impact of image was moderated by another factor – subjective norm.

5.4.7 Job relevance

In addition to electoral regulations, resource availability, and image, job relevance was an important factor driving Labour's utilisation of a new, independent website, instead of its existing party website, for e-campaigning. More specifically, Labour's campaign team strongly perceived that a party's election policies and leader were the two primary and most important areas of focus to visitors of a political party's campaign website during an election. For that reason, the content and material of Labour's campaign website should concentrate on the party's wide range of election policies and Clark. This, however, would not have been possible with Labour's party website, because 'a fair amount of content on the website wasn't really relevant to the campaign purpose but very important for a party website.' For this reason, the team opted for a campaign-focused website. Also for the same reason, the team limited the number of media and news releases and deliberately omitted Labour's background, Labour candidates' contact information, and offline campaign events on Labour's campaign website. The omission of offline campaign events was particularly noteworthy. Despite

acknowledging that the particular element was relevant to campaigning, the team added that it was 'not something people would normally look for' on a campaign website; 'voters would normally contact Labour's local party office in their own region if they want to be part of any Labour's campaign events'. Consequently, the team did not perceive offline campaign events to be a highly relevant element in Labour's e-campaign.

As noted, the campaign team initially strongly rejected Facebook as part of Labour's or any Labour candidate's e-campaign. In addition to image, this was prompted by job relevance. As the team elucidated, 'Most people sign in to Facebook to socialise and catch up with their family members, friends, and acquaintances. And the last thing on their mind is to follow some parties' or candidates' campaigns.' Moreover, 'during an election period, campaigning on policies and getting support are the things parties and candidates mainly, if not only, care about. Chit-chatting about random things, as you do on Facebook, is simply unrelated to campaigning.' Consequently, the team considered Facebook to be inappropriate for election campaigning. This, compounded with the team's concern over the potentially detrimental effect of using the social networking website on Labour's public image, fortified the opposition to incorporating Facebook in Labour's e-campaigning. As noted, this opposition faded as a result of subjective norm. Put differently, this instance suggests that the negative impact of job relevance was moderated by subjective norm.

An aspect of contemporary e-campaigning, particularly in the US, that Labour's campaign team found 'especially eye-opening' pertained to an unprecedentedly high extent of innovative, and sometimes risk-taking, e-campaigning utilisation. Intrigued as it was, the team acknowledged that it had little intention to steer Labour's e-campaigning utilisation towards the same direction in the election. Consequently, the team described its own e-campaigning utilisation as 'pretty standard and, by and large, risk adverse'. The main reason for that centred on the team's perception of relevance. More specifically, in their election campaigning, overseas parties and candidates constantly faced a challenge of 'campaigning to an extremely large scale of voters spreading across vast electorates with limited resources'. Accordingly, those parties and candidates had to 'aggressively use

technology, especially the latest, to broadcast, communicate, connect, rally support, and raise money'. That in turn led to innovative and risk-taking e-campaigning utilisation as witnessed in many overseas e-campaigns. The pressing campaign challenge confronted by the overseas parties and candidates 'is not particularly the case for us', however, said the team, 'because we've got the luxury of living in a small country with a much smaller scale of voters'. To that end, the team had little intention of conducting innovative, risk-taking e-campaigning. Put succinctly, the perception of Labour's campaign team that the main driver of innovative and risk-taking e-campaigning utilisation was irrelevant to the party's own context resulted in Labour's conventional, safe e-campaigning utilisation.

In all, job relevance incentivised as well as dampened Labour's e-campaigning utilisation. Put differently, the impact of the factor on Labour's e-campaigning consisted of two facets: positive and negative. It is worth highlighting the instance where the team's initial rejection of Facebook as part of Labour's e-campaigning was reversed for it suggests that the negative impact of job relevance was moderated by another factor – subjective norm. The team further noted that the perception of job relevance did not remain static; rather, it was relative to the context and understanding of e-campaigning 'at a particular point in time'.

5.4.8 Output quality

As reported, a notable aspect of Labour's e-campaigning pertained to the party's new approach to support mobilisation. More specifically, visitors to Labour's campaign website were encouraged to spread the party's campaign blog with four social networking services, such as Scoopit, instead of the conventional email approach. This was not inspired by the novelty of the social networking services, but by the perceivably better outcome of the new approach. According to the team, encouraging voters to spread campaign content to others with email often produced a 'very limited' impact, because 'People nowadays have become more and more careful about what they send to their family, friends, or colleagues, simply for the fact that they don't want to be seen as a spammer.' Although some voters were still willing to share campaign content with this conventional technology, the team continued, the number of recipients was generally limited.

By comparison, the four emerging social networking services were perceived by the team to 'deliver a greater result'. As the team explained, each of the social networking services had already been connected with a substantial user base. More importantly, those services essentially functioned as intermediaries between those on the sharing end and the receiving end, effectively tackling the concern over being seen as a spammer. Consequently, the four social networking services were employed in Labour's e-campaigning.

As mentioned, Labour's campaign team had decided before the election to embrace e-campaigning 'with open arms'. This was evident, for instance, in sending campaign staff overseas to observe and learn e-campaigning, opting for a campaign-specific website, and increasing the scope and extent of the party's e-campaigning utilisation. And output quality was a motivating factor. As the team noted, 'the media is a central element in election campaigning, as is the ability to have a firm grip on the campaign agenda'. Yet, those elements 'often don't go hand in hand' for the team in traditional campaigning 'simply because traditional media always has its own agenda, they don't always tell the campaign stories we want or in the way we want'. Put differently, Labour's campaign team often felt that it had lost control, to a varying degree, of its campaign agenda to the media in traditional campaigning, which the team considered 'very frustrating'. That eventuated in the team's exceptional commitment to e-campaigning in the election. As the team explained, the Internet had already become as versatile and powerful as, if not more than, traditional media and, more importantly, the Internet empowered the team to fully control Labour's campaign agenda, messages, narratives, and style. Thus, 'it's a no-brainer we wanted to do more of it [e-campaigning] and take it to a whole other level,' the team pointed out.

Labour's campaign team indicated that among the various approaches to disseminating information and targeted campaigning in Labour's e-campaigning, online videos were most preferred because of the perceived quality. As the team explained, online videos enabled voters to vividly experience 'Labour's passion and enthusiasm', which was difficult or impossible to achieve through other alternatives, for instance, text or images.

Despite being considered by Labour's campaign team to be the most preferred approach in the central parts of Labour's e-campaigning and 'a key attraction' of Labour's e-campaign, Labour's online campaign videos were observably shorter than National's. This, according to Labour's campaign team, was deliberate, due in large part to the output quality as perceived by the team. More specifically, the team believed that voters in general 'have a very short attention span when it comes to anything campaign-related, including online videos'. Moreover, voters 'simply wouldn't spend more than 3 minutes of their time watching videos of politicians talking online' however fun the videos might appear. 'We watched quite a few of National's online videos of John Key talking about various things. Most of them were more than 3 minutes long and, in our opinion, they literally achieved nothing but making John Key a talking head,' the team further commented. Consequently, the team established a rule of keeping each Labour's online campaign video 'well under 3 minutes'. Put concisely, Labour's campaign team decidedly kept the party's online campaign videos short because of the perception that it would perform better.

In brief, output quality stimulated as well as dissuaded Labour's e-campaigning utilisation. Put differently, the impact of the factor on Labour's e-campaigning consisted of two facets: positive and negative.

5.4.9 Result demonstrability

An instance that saw the impact of result demonstrability on Labour's e-campaigning utilisation pertained to resource generation. As noted, Labour's online fundraising was limited and conventional, especially when compared to the party's e-campaigning in areas such as information dissemination and targeted campaigning. More precisely, only a web form was provided for voters to make online donations with credit cards. This observation was shared by Labour's campaign team, who described the party's approach to online fundraising to be 'small scale, pretty average, and not interesting by any measure'. This was not due to neglect – in fact, the team claimed that it was immensely interested in further exploring online fundraising before the election; rather, it was the result demonstrability of Labour's existing online fundraising that dampened the team's

intention to further explore that area. As the team explained, 'many New Zealanders enjoy making donations to support different causes and transacting online with credit cards,' therefore, the team assumed that online fundraising would 'take off'. That said, the team decided to first take 'the basic approach', the online donation form, before committing further resources to other 'more advanced' approaches. By the middle of the campaign period, it had yet become 'crystal clear' to the team if online fundraising 'would really take off'. Consequently, the team stopped short of exploring online fundraising any further.

Nevertheless, result demonstrability did not present itself as merely an inhibitor of Labour's e-campaigning utilisation. For instance, among the various elements in Labour's e-campaign, Labour's campaign team acknowledged that it was especially enthusiastic about the party's online campaign videos and the campaign blog penned by Clark, as they epitomised the modernity of Labour's e-campaign. Furthermore, their continuity and expansion were largely reliant on the tangible results that they exhibited. As the team elaborated, both online videos and Helen's diary were 'relatively new' and, more importantly, required ongoing input of resources and energy; it therefore prompted questions as to whether the two elements would enable Labour to gain traction in the election, and whether it was justified to continue or expand the utilisation of both elements. Not long after implementation, both elements presented abundant tangible results. Notably, a number of stories in Labour's online campaign videos and Helen's diary were mentioned by the mainstream media, and 'a significant surge' in web traffic or viewership was witnessed whenever a new campaign video or Clark's blog post was added to Labour's campaign website. Such tangible results were perceived as 'crucial' by Labour's campaign team; they not only adequately answered the earlier questions but also secured the continuity and expansion of Labour's online videos and Helen's diary.

In short, result demonstrability supported and dampened Labour's e-campaigning utilisation. Put differently, the impact of the factor on Labour's e-campaigning consisted of two facets: positive and negative. Labour's campaign team indicated that it obtained tangible results of the party's e-campaigning utilisation primarily from 'web analytics, such as the number of hits, page views, visits, and unique

visitors'. The team added that those results 'don't always show a full picture of how Internet campaigning is working'. Yet, it was immensely challenging for the team to obtain the full results of a given e-campaigning approach, as the team admitted that it lacked a comprehensive view of e-campaigning. To that end, the team emphasised that 'it's a slippery slope' to steer e-campaigning utilisation on the basis of result demonstrability alone.

5.4.10 Perceived ease of use

'At the end of the day, the Internet, Facebook, YouTube, and such others are just tools or machines. To make the best of them for election campaigning, the key is know-how,' said Labour's campaign team. 'It's fair to say [that] in our Internet campaigning, we stuck to the tools and tactics that we had quite a bit of insight into or didn't take a mountain of effort to grasp,' the team continued, 'on the other hand, we did very little or nothing at all with the ones that were either uncharted territory to us or too hard to get our heads around.' Those words of Labour's campaign team suggest perceived ease of use as a factor influencing its e-campaigning.

A notable instance demonstrating the impact of perceived ease of use pertained to the varying extent of utilising three social networking websites – Facebook, YouTube, and Flickr – by the team in the election.

More specifically, Labour's campaign team acknowledged that although Facebook, YouTube, and Flickr debuted around a similar time and were all part of the party's e-campaigning, YouTube and Flickr were more frequently utilised than Facebook. As the team explained, 'it's very straightforward to understand the purpose of YouTube and Flickr, and how to use them for our campaigning: YouTube is for distributing videos and Flickr for photos.'

Facebook, by comparison, 'was quite tricky'. 'It's not that we didn't understand its general purpose, which, in a nutshell, is for socialising,' said the team. 'The challenging part was knowing how to shift the interest and focus of "Facebookers" from socialising with their family, friends, and acquaintances to engaging with something completely different like election campaigns.' The team indicated that

it received a large volume of friend requests in the election after Labour's Facebook campaign profile went live. It, however, merely reflected 'the fact that many people think it cool to have the prime minister on their friend list'. In other words, the team still lacked 'substantial knowledge and expertise' in election campaigning with the growingly prominent social networking website. And the team did not believe that it could easily acquire such knowledge and expertise in the election. This was accordingly reflected in Labour's 'extremely limited Facebook activities in the election'.

Overall, perceived ease of use encouraged as well as depressed Labour's e-campaigning utilisation. In other words, the impact of the factor on Labour's e-campaigning consisted of two facets: positive and negative.

5.4.11 Summary

Labour's e-campaigning utilisation in the 2008 general election was shaped by the ten factors in Table 2.2, namely, election type, electoral regulations, voters' technology access, resource availability, subjective norm, image, job relevance, output quality, result demonstrability, and perceived ease of use. Each factor in essence represents a unique perspective, therefore, Labour's e-campaigning utilisation has been explained from ten perspectives. Various specific and contextual instances that occurred in Labour's e-campaigning utilisation have been presented to illustrate the factors, lending valuable insights into this unique phenomenon. Table 5.2 highlights the ten factors that influenced Labour's e-campaigning utilisation.

Table 5.2 The factors influencing Labour's e-campaigning utilisation

Factor	Dual impact	Moderated by
Election type	●	
Electoral regulations	●	
Voters' technology access	●	Electoral regulations, resource availability
Resource availability	●	
Subjective norm	●	Electoral regulations, resource availability
Image	●	Subjective norm
Job relevance	●	Subjective norm
Output quality	●	
Result demonstrability	●	Voters' technology access, resource availability
Perceived ease of use	●	

As noted in the table, the impact of any given factor on Labour's e-campaigning utilisation consisted of two facets: positive and negative. This means that each factor was an enabler as well as an inhibitor of Labour's e-campaigning utilisation. The impacts of some factors, such as image, were moderated by other factors, such as subjective norm. Taken together, it suggests that Labour's e-campaigning utilisation was complex, contextual, and dynamic.

5.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the key findings from the case study relating to Labour's e-campaigning utilisation in the 2008 general election. It has comprehensively analysed the breadth and depth of Labour's e-campaigning utilisation. Based on that, it has identified and illustrated in depth the ten factors that influenced Labour's e-campaigning utilisation.

Chapter 6 The Greens' e-campaigning utilisation

6.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter presents the key findings from the third case study: the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation in the 2008 general election. This chapter proceeds as follows: section 6.2 outlines the case background; then, section 6.3 and 6.4 answer the first and second research questions respectively; and last, section 6.5 summarises this chapter.

6.2 Case background

The Greens' origin can be traced back to the Values Party, which stemmed from a meeting held at Victoria University of Wellington in 1972. It was the world's first environmentalist political party at the national level. Besides, the Values Party was known for its 'radical' policies, such as zero economic and population growth, and law reforms ranging from abortion to drugs.

When the Values Party combined with the new Green groups in 1990, it defined the Greens in its present form. The Greens' political stance is generally regarded to be left-wing, with a particular focus on environmental issues. The Greens became a founding member of the Alliance, a left-wing political party, in 1992 but left the party five years later. Since 1999, the Greens has become an independent contestant in New Zealand general elections. With six list MPs in Parliament before the 2008 general election, the Greens was the second largest minor party. The Greens was jointly led by Jeanette Fitzsimons and Russel Norman, who first entered Parliament as an MP in 1996 and 2008 respectively.

Unlike other parties in general elections, the Greens has chiefly focused on the party vote since the introduction of MMP. This formed the overarching goal of the Greens' election campaign in the election. Also, unlike many other parties, the Greens considered e-campaigning and offline campaigning to be equally important. In fact, the Greens perceived itself to be at the forefront of e-campaigning in New Zealand. Two priorities were set by the Greens' campaign

team specifically for the party's e-campaigning in this election: the first focused on 'providing comprehensive, accessible campaign information', and the other on 'interacting and engaging with the voter'. Simply put, the two priorities pertained to information dissemination, and voter interaction and engagement.

Similar to other parties, a campaign team was set up by the Greens prior to the election. The team was responsible for steering all aspects of the Greens' election campaigning; however, it was small, comprising only a few full-time members. And the operation of the Greens' e-campaigning was almost entirely 'picked up' by volunteers from different parts of the country and abroad. For that reason, the Greens' campaign team described the approach to managing the party's e-campaigning as 'networked or distributed'.

The Greens' party website (www.greens.org.nz) was utilised as the primary platform for e-campaigning. Figure 6.1 depicts the home page of the Greens' campaign website. The home page also featured the Greens' simple and direct campaign message: 'Vote for me'.

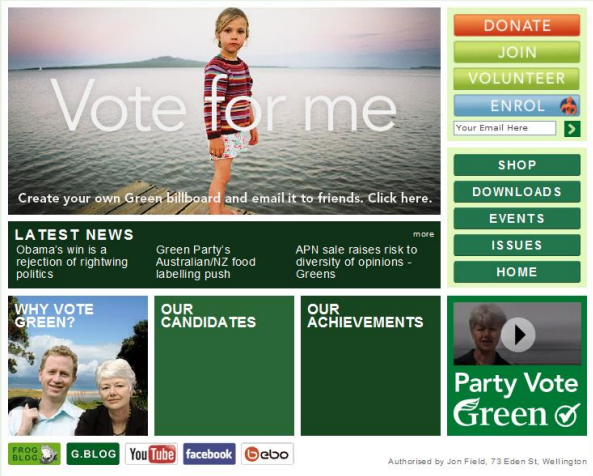

Figure 6.1 The home page of the Greens' campaign website

6.3 The Greens' e-campaigning utilisation and its extent

On the basis of the proposed e-campaigning framework, the Greens' e-campaigning encompassed all five practices, namely, information dissemination, voter interaction and engagement, support mobilisation, targeted campaigning, and resource generation. Those practices were conducted to varying degrees. The analysis in this section is structured according to the practices. This section is conclude with a summary.

6.3.1 Information dissemination

'Minimalist' was the word to describe the home page of the Greens' campaign website. It, however, did not reflect the campaign information disseminated on the website. Overall, the Greens' campaign information was comprehensive and well-structured. The main page of the Greens' website was dominated by recent entries of campaign news, organised in reverse chronological order. Each entry was clickable and displayed with a heading, image, and synopsis. Clicking on an entry exhibited the corresponding news article in full. The organisation and presentation of the Greens' campaign news also applied to the party's press releases. A large volume of speeches were listed on a dedicated page. They were, by default, sorted by date, with the latest entry at the top of the list. Each speech on the list was displayed with its title and speaker. Clicking on a speech title rendered the entire speech where the image of the speaker and the venue of the speech were also included. Two aspects of the Greens' speeches were notable: first, visitors could interact with the Greens' speeches, which is elaborated in section 6.3.2; second, visitors could find speeches delivered prior to the election, as far back as 1996, when the Greens was still part of the Alliance.

Despite being a minor party with a primary focus on the environment, the Greens exhibited wide policy coverage on its campaign website. More specifically, on the 'Policies' page, visitors could browse the party's election policies on various subjects such as 'Economics'. Each election policy was presented in a hypertext link and populated alphabetically. Clicking on a policy rendered a new page that not only detailed the policy but also enabled the policy to be downloaded for

offline viewing. The Greens' website included a webpage called 'Campaigns' in order to emphasise the party's five key election policies, namely, 'Climate Change', 'Peak Oil', 'Food', 'Water', and 'Transport'.

All offline campaign events of the Greens were listed on the 'Events' page. Those events were organised on specific issues by different branches affiliated to the Greens across the country and the world. Each campaign event was displayed along with its organiser, topic, and date as a hypertext link. Clicking on an event rendered its full details, including the background and significance of the particular issue associated with the event. The Greens also offered visitors means to interact with its campaign events, which is elaborated in section 6.3.2.

The Greens' campaign website provided comprehensive information about the party, Green MPs, and Green Candidates. On the 'About Us' page, visitors were informed of the party's principles, vision, values, mission, organisational structure, history, and political achievements in Parliament. The six Green MPs were listed on the 'Our MPs' page. Clicking on an MP's photo or name displayed the MP's background, contact information, and the issues for which the MP was a spokesperson. All Green candidates could be found on the 'Our Candidates' page. Clicking on a candidate's name rendered details of the candidate, such as list position; electorate, if applicable; background; qualifications and training; and community and other involvement. Contact information relating to the Greens' staff, and national and parliamentary offices was also available.

Although the Greens' campaign information was predominantly disseminated in text format, online videos were utilised for the party's election policies, especially the key ones. The home page of the Greens' campaign website indicated the party's presence on three social networking websites, namely, YouTube, Facebook, and Bebo. Given the large volume of campaign information disseminated, a search engine was provided on the website, enabling swift information retrieval.

6.3.2 Voter interaction and engagement

The Greens' campaign website exhibited a few elements for interacting and engaging with voters. Most notably, the website consisted of two blogs, namely

‘frogblog’ and ‘g.blog’. The former was a party blog and the latter was a partisan blog that claimed to be ‘a community of green voices’. The key themes of those blogs differed markedly: the frogblog primarily focused on issues in New Zealand and the Greens’ 2008 election campaign while the g.blog touched on both New Zealand and global ‘green issues’. Despite that, both blogs were interactive. Specifically, they allowed registered visitors to freely post and edit comments, subject to relevant policies – for instance, spamming, defamatory, offensive, or vulgar comments would be moderated or removed. Both blogs often attracted reader comments. Responses from blog authors were frequently observed. Put differently, a three-way communication – author-to-reader, reader-to-author, and reader-to-reader – was evident in the blogs featured on the Greens’ campaign website. In addition, entries on both blogs were tagged with keywords – such as ‘Economy’ and ‘Work & Welfare’, enabling readers to interact and engage with blog content according to topics. The entries on frogblog that related to the Greens’ election campaign were tagged ‘Campaign’. Figure 6.2 exhibits a blog entry on frogblog.

A few interactive features were found on the page relating to the Greens’ campaign events. Specifically, an interactive calendar was utilised to present the Greens’ campaign events. In addition, visitors were able to filter campaign events based on location by clicking on hypertext links, such as ‘Auckland’ and ‘Overseas’. Similarly, visitors were able to filter the Greens’ speeches with relevant drop-down boxes and hypertext links. Another interactive feature on the Greens’ campaign website pertained to web forms allowing visitors to report a technical problem, comment on the Greens’ campaign, and provide general feedback.

The Greens also established its presence on a few social networking websites fostering interaction and engagement, namely, YouTube, Facebook, and Bebo; however, hardly any interaction and engagement was observed, which formed a stark contrast to the blogs that featured on the Greens’ website. Specifically, YouTube was utilised for broadcasting campaign videos that primarily focused on promoting the Greens’ key election policies; both Facebook and Bebo were chiefly for announcing content updates on the Greens’ campaign website. Although visitors were able to comment on those social networking websites, rarely was a

comment found. And the Greens did not appear to respond to visitor comments on those websites.

The crusade
Tuesday October 14th, 2008. 8:59 am by frog

I see John Key launched a crusade for literacy yesterday. Isn't a crusade when a bunch of blood thirsty religious zealots go marauding across Europe pillaging and burning villages in the name of god? If something like that arrived in your local school all armoured and brandishing swords and it didn't inspire kids to read better nothing will.

Well it looks like the Hamlet of Gisborne was the first to have the would be King John storm through it on his charger. Some Dominion Post reports that the literacy problem there might be more related to poverty related health problems than a lack of crusaders, before it concludes with helpful advice from Ms Porou's daughter Irirangi, 11:

> Asked afterwards what she thought Mr Key should do if he were prime minister, she replied: "A really long handstand. Mostly he should have fun. It's really important what they do."

Ka pai Irirangi. If John Key just stuck to that as his policy rather than introducing redundant national standards I'd feel safer.

Bookmark to:

Posted in Campaign | Society & Culture | by frog | Tue, October 14th, 2008 |

This entry was posted on Tuesday, October 14th, 2008 at 8:59 am and is filed under Campaign, Society & Culture. You can follow any responses to this entry through the RSS 2.0 feed. You can email this article to a friend. Printable version of this article. You can leave a response, but trackbacks are not allowed.

15 Responses to "The crusade"

welly Says:
October 14th, 2008 at 9:13 am

Isn't a crusade when a bunch of blood thirsty religious zealots go marauding across Europe pillaging and burning villages in the name of god?

Then perhaps someone should have advised Meteria not to use that language also, "Tour of duty an anti-war crusade"
http://www.greens.org.nz/node/12457

Shunda barunda Says:
October 14th, 2008 at 9:27 am

So frog it is a stupid idea mr Key has come up with then?
Or will it help reverse the dumbing down of societey so you find

Figure 6.2 An entry on frogblog

6.3.3 Support mobilisation

Diverse efforts to garner and mobilise voter support were observed on the Greens' campaign website. Specifically, on the 'Support Us' page, the Greens urged visitors to keep up to date with the party's campaign by signing up to receive the latest press releases and speeches via email on specific issues such as 'Buy Local'. Alternatively, visitors could choose to receive press releases and speeches based on general topics such as 'Community Development'. The Greens also encouraged visitors to subscribe to a series of newsletters that it published, namely, 'GreenWeek e-bulletin' – weekly news relating to the Green MPs' activities,

'Campaign News' – weekly news on the Greens' election campaign, and 'Climate Snippets' – an occasional e-bulletin on domestic and international news and activities associated with climate change. In order to sign up for the Greens' press releases, speeches, or newsletters, relevant web forms needed to be completed and a user account on the campaign website was required.

Also on the 'Support Us' page, a link labelled 'Get Active' was noteworthy. Clicking on the link rendered a new page that began with a personal message from Fitzsimons. The message first highlighted the increasing environmental challenges facing the planet and the Greens' political achievements in tackling some of those challenges. It then asserted that the current number of Green MPs was largely insufficient to deliver further achievements and changes, and therefore urged visitors to support the party in the election.

Fitzsimons' message was followed by several hypertext links, namely, 'Cyber-volunteering', 'Display a web advert', and 'Go to an event'; clicking on a link rendered a new page specifying how visitors could support the Greens in the election. On the 'Cyber-volunteering' page, the Greens suggested two main ways that visitors could lend their support to the party in virtual space. The first was 'spread the word'. Specifically, visitors were encouraged to 'Tell [their] friends, workmates and online contacts about the Green Party website, not just once, but whenever something new and interesting is added.' Visitors were also asked to 'Post messages on blogs, forums, mailing lists, newsgroups and anywhere else where people gather online.' The other was 'Help with the Green Party website'. Specifically, visitors were asked to test the Greens' campaign website and report any issues – either technical or cosmetic – to the party with the email address provided. On the 'Display a web advert' page, visitors were encouraged to download a series of electioneering web banners and endorse them on personal websites or blogs. Those banners included the Greens' party logo and campaign billboards. Visitors were also invited to create their own web banners supporting the Greens and email the banners to the party so that the banners could be shared with other supporters. The "Go to an event' link directed visitors to the 'Events' page, where visitors were urged to participate in the Greens' offline campaign events.

Another web page called 'Why vote Green?' also exhibited the Greens' effort to mobilise support. On this page the party explained the significance of receiving party votes on election day by stating that voting for the party was akin to supporting free annual health check, free education, the Treaty of Waitangi, pollution taxes, efficient and affordable public transport, healthy safe food, clean energy, and a treasured environment. This was followed by personal messages for support from the Greens' co-leaders.

The Greens' campaign website provided a link to the Electoral Commission's website, so that visitors could enrol as voters and cast their party votes for the Greens on election day. The Greens also included a list of links to both national and international supporter groups.

The Greens' support mobilisation in virtual space was not confined to its campaign website. On Facebook, the Greens reminded visitors to enrol as voters and vote for the party. On YouTube, the Greens presented videos of the Greens' co-leaders explaining the importance of receiving party votes on election day. On the two blogs included in the Greens' campaign website, readers were frequently urged to support the Greens in the election in order to expand the Greens' political influence. Figure 6.3 exhibits an entry on g.blog urging readers to support the Greens. Also, frogblog utilised Web 2.0 services for readers to bookmark and share its entries.

Figure 6.3 An entry on g.blog mobilising voter support

6.3.4 Targeted campaigning

On various occasions, the Greens targeted other political parties, namely Labour and National, as part of its e-campaign.

The Greens targeted the two major parties, Labour and National, as a means to champion its key election policies. For instance, in promoting the Greens' water policy, Norman attacked the Labour-led government's treatment of the country's fresh water. More specifically, Norman suggested that Labour 'should be ashamed for allowing the country's waterways to become more polluted under its watch, despite Labour promising at the last election to make rivers safe'. Norman then specifically targeted the then Environment Minister Trevor Mallard, indicating that Mallard 'did little' about the pressing water pollution problem. Following that, Norman began to promote the Greens' water policy, particularly focusing on how the policy would be able to resolve Labour's 'legacy of pollution'. Similarly, when promoting the Greens' transport policy, Fitzsimons attacked National's policy on the same subject, arguing that 'John Key seems to think all the world's problems can be solved by fast-tracking the building of a multi-lane road.'

The Greens' press releases were another area where Labour and National were targeted. For instance, in an article titled 'Labour heats up the left overs and promises hot air' the Greens' co-leaders referred to Labour's election policies on climate change, employment, environment, housing, and water as 'a disappointing mixture of already-announced initiatives and promises so vague they have no real meaning'. In another article titled 'Nat's cut will increase debt, poverty' the Greens' co-leaders aimed at National's tax cut policy. The co-leaders labelled National's proposed tax cut 'a fake free lunch' and 'back-to-the-'90s'. They then targeted National's leader, saying that 'Key pretends he has found a free lunch and will not increase borrowing, but this is a sham.' The article concluded by promoting the Greens' key election policies on economics, science and research, transport, and housing.

The last area of the Greens' e-campaign where Labour and National were targeted pertained to the two blogs that featured on the website, namely frogblog and g.blog. For instance, in an article on frogblog titled 'Campaigning on waste' Labour

was accused of claiming political credit for the Greens' environmental policy on waste. An article on g.blog titled 'John "Palin" Key?' was another example of the Greens' targeted campaigning in the blogosphere. The article was in response to the National leader likening himself to Obama in the election. It argued that rather than Obama, Key was in fact similar to a US Republican politician Sarah Palin (hence the article title), in that they both made numerous 'gaffes' in public and their only qualifications for office were 'looking good', appealing to the middle class, and 'being very good at avoiding making any answer to important questions that might make them look bad'.

Despite targeting other political parties rather regularly, the Greens did not appear to target its e-campaign at any particular voter segment. In other words, the Greens exhibited only one form of targeted campaigning in the virtual space.

6.3.5 Resource generation

The Greens' campaign website presented a number of elements of resource generation. As noted, the Greens invited visitors to become cyber volunteers by giving their time in testing or fixing technical or non-technical issues of the party's campaign website. This can be considered as a form of generating both time and human resources. Furthermore, different web forms could be found that enabled visitors to join the party, become party volunteers, or make financial donations – either one-off or regular – with credit cards or other alternatives, namely, online banking, sending a cheque, and phoning the party.

The 'Green Shop' was particularly noteworthy among the elements of resource generation on the Greens' website. As its name suggested, the Green Shop was an online store featuring six types of Green Party merchandise, namely, t-shirts, badges, bags, bike gear, stickers, and books. Figure 6.4 exhibits the Green Shop.

All items featuring in the Green Shop strongly reflected the Greens' political messages. For instance, the Greens' party logo was embedded in almost all items. Also, it was stated that all t-shirts and badges were 'Kiwi-made', and bags were made of fair trade cotton, which reflected the Greens' trade policy. Moreover, some badges and stickers went so far as to say: 'I only date boys who vote Green' or 'I

only date girls who vote Green'. Figure 6.5 exhibits one such sticker. It is worth noting that the Green Shop was fully functional. Put differently, visitors were able to purchase items directly from the Green Shop with credit cards or bank transfer.

Figure 6.4 The Green Shop

Figure 6.5 A sticker sold in the Green Shop

6.3.6 Summary

Table 6.1 summarises the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation and its extent with the proposed e-campaigning framework. It suggests that the Greens' e-campaigning focused most on information dissemination, support mobilisation, and resource generation. By comparison, voter interaction and engagement appeared to be least focused on.

Table 6.1 The Greens' e-campaigning utilisation and its extent

Campaign practice	Content elements	Present
Information dissemination	Political party's information	●
	Candidate biography	●
	Press releases	●
	Policy statements	●
	Campaign news	●
	Campaign events	●
	Speeches	●
	Contact information	●
	Information relating to the political party's other online presence	●
	Campaign blog without visitor comments allowed	
Voter interaction and engagement	Instant chat or messaging	
	Instant opinion polls	
	Instant surveys	
	Applications for interacting with the political party's policies	
	Interactive calendar of campaign events	●
	Means to contact the political party	●
	Discussion forums	
	Campaign blog with visitor comments allowed	●
	Means to provide feedback	●
Support mobilisation	Means for voters to invite their peers to participate in campaign events	
	Means to inform voters of electoral information	●
	Means for voters to receive campaign information and updates	●
	Means for voters to connect with supporter groups	●
	Means for voters to download campaign material	●
	Means for voters to forward campaign material to others	●
	Means for voters to endorse the political party*	●
	Means to encourage votes*	●
Targeted campaigning	Content targeted at political opponents	●
	Content targeted at political opponents' policies	●
	Content targeted at specific voter segments	
Resource generation	Means to make donations	●
	Online merchandise shop	●
	Means to become a party member	●
	Means to become a volunteer	●

Note: * Not present in the proposed e-campaigning framework

Five areas of the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation deserve highlighting. First, despite the Greens being a minor party, its effort in each e-campaigning practice was comparable to its major counterparts'. Second, although the Greens did not appear to utilise ICTs for voter interaction and engagement as much as the other practices, it is thus far the first party under study that exhibited voter interaction and engagement in the blogosphere. Third, the Greens' support mobilisation was diverse and innovative, in particular, the party encouraged voters to publicly

endorse its campaign banners and invited visitors to create and share their own campaign banners for the party. Fourth, while it was unsurprising that National was targeted in the Greens' negative campaigning because of political ideology, it was unexpected that Labour too was targeted as both Labour and the Greens were on the left of the political spectrum. In fact, Labour was targeted almost as frequently as National. Last, the Greens moved beyond conventional means to generate campaign resources by establishing a fully functional online merchandise store. Also note that two content elements in the Greens' e-campaign are not captured by the proposed e-campaigning framework, namely, means for voters to endorse the political party and means to encourage votes.

6.4 The factors influencing the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation

The Greens' e-campaigning utilisation was attributable to all factors in Table 2.2, namely, election type, electoral regulations, voters' technology access, resource availability, subjective norm, image, job relevance, output quality, result demonstrability, and perceived ease of use. The remainder of this section is structured according to those factors. This section is concluded with a summary.

6.4.1 Election type

As noted, the Greens' election campaign almost entirely centred on the party vote; thus, the election 'couldn't get more party-driven' to the party. This, according to the Greens' campaign team, was 'totally a good thing' for the party's e-campaigning.

More specifically, in contrast to candidate-led elections, New Zealand campaign teams in party-led elections could have a wider reach of resources, a crucial ingredient in expansive, extensive, and innovative e-campaigning, the team claimed. For instance, the Greens' campaign team was small, with extremely limited full-time staff for e-campaigning. The party's e-campaigning, however, was not compromised. The party capitalised on its growing party membership and both domestic and international volunteers to realise the vision of taking its e-campaigning 'to a whole new level'. Most, if not all, of those members and volunteers were affiliated with the party rather than any particular candidate. The

team therefore indicated that it would not have had the same scale of resources to leverage, had it been a candidate-led election. It was also those party members and volunteers whose creative thinking and ideas – such as the Green Shop and 'encouraging voters to create and share their own Green campaigns' – that partly enabled the Greens' e-campaign to 'really stand out in the crowd', said the team.

Simply put, party-led elections were considered to be beneficial to the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation for the team gained greater access to resources and diverse, innovative ideas.

6.4.2 Electoral regulations

Although the Greens was a strong proponent of the EFA 2007, its campaign team 'didn't get away from quite a bit of confusion and anxiety'. As a result, the team 'had to hold back' some e-campaigning activities. In other words, the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation was influenced by electoral regulations.

For instance, it is noted that the Greens' utilisation of Facebook for election campaigning was mainly confined to announcing content updates on the party's campaign website; the party exhibited hardly any voter interaction and engagement on the social networking website. That, according to the Greens' campaign team, was largely due to the EFA 2007. More specifically, under the Act, the party secretary's authorisation was required for messages that persuaded voters to vote or not to vote for a political party or candidate. However, it was ambiguous to the team if that rule also applied to messages posted on the Greens' Facebook campaign page. Such ambiguity caused the team 'a great deal of concern over the legal implications of the EFA if [the team] intended to go all the way on Facebook [for election campaigning]'. After careful consideration, the team had decided to 'put the brakes on' campaigning on Facebook to avoid the risk of breaching the Act.

Nevertheless, the team stressed that although the EFA 2007 had caused 'considerable concern and anxiety', instances where the Act affected the team's e-campaigning were 'only occasional'. The team further noted that the 'unfavourable' impact of the EFA 2007 on its e-campaigning 'should be put into context'. As the

team explained, the Act was so overwhelming in the election only because of its novelty; the team therefore doubted if the Act would affect the Greens' e-campaigning with the same intensity in the next election. However, the team noted that electoral regulations would not cease to affect a party's or candidate's e-campaigning because as e-campaigning evolved, 'there're always new rules and regulations that come along'.

6.4.3 Voters' technology access

To the Greens' campaign team, the 2008 election bore significance; it symbolised 'a brand new chapter of [the Greens'] online campaigning'. The team further noted that 'the increasing access to broadband Internet in the country' was 'a defining factor'. In other words, voters' technology access served a role in the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation.

As noted by the team, the party's e-campaigns in previous elections were 'quite amateur' and 'no more than brochureware'. In comparison, the party's e-campaign in the 2008 election was 'much more polished, professional, and way more than just brochureware'. This, according to the team, 'had a lot to do with the significant uptake of Internet and broadband that occurred only recently'.

As the team explained, in previous elections 'we didn't have many New Zealanders online;' consequently, 'we had to ask, "Why bother doing something that many people had limited access to?"' Also, 'with the slow Internet connection in past elections we couldn't really do anything more with our online campaigning other than treating it like brochureware,' said the team. In the 2008 election, however, 'there're many New Zealanders online doing all sorts of things and, more importantly, there're a growing number of New Zealanders with broadband Internet,' which collectively incentivised the team to 'up [its] game' by professionalising and expanding its e-campaigning utilisation. For instance, the team devoted considerable effort and resources to polishing the appearance and user experience of the Greens' campaign website in response to voters' increasing Internet access. Furthermore, the steady penetration of broadband enabled the campaign team to embrace multimedia campaign content, particularly online videos, and a few bandwidth-intensive e-campaigning activities, such as

downloading and displaying the Greens' web banners, and creating and sharing voters' own Green web banners.

Despite turning a new chapter of its e-campaigning, the team indicated that the party's e-campaigning in this election 'didn't go as far as it could have or many supporters had hoped', especially considering a growing, large party support base that comprised young voters, most of whom were best described as 'tech-savvy' with 'exceptionally high access to different technologies and gadgets'. That was largely due to technology access among another large support base of the Greens.

As the team explained, a sizable portion of the Greens' core supporters was made up of 'grey hairs'; most of them 'are not technologically savvy and are still using basic computers and dial-up at home'. In other words, those supporters were opposite to the Greens' young supporters in technology access. Consequently, those 'grey hairs would've been overwhelmed and singled out, had [the Greens'] online campaign gone too far and been too fancy'. As the team perspicaciously pointed out, when a political party embodied different supporter groups with varying technology access, it was crucial that no group should be excluded from the party's e-campaign because of technological skills and access. For that reason, the team indicated that 'compromises are inevitable and necessary [in the party's e-campaigning utilisation]'.

In brief, voters' technology access stimulated as well as withheld the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation. In other words, the impact of this factor on the Greens' e-campaigning consisted of two facets: positive and negative.

6.4.4 Resource availability

'It's fair to say that what we did and didn't do online, and how we went about it was mostly driven by the amount of resources we already had and what we could get.' These words of the Greens' campaign team suggests the role of campaign resources in its e-campaigning. In other words, the team's resource availability influenced its e-campaigning utilisation.

As noted, the Greens' e-campaigning was largely operated by party members and volunteers. This, according to the team, reflected the amount of resources

available. As the team explained, with the broad penetration of the Internet and the increasing uptake of broadband in New Zealand around the election, 'it's time to expand the scope of [the Greens'] online campaigning and be more professional.' However, the party's limited campaign budget and staff immediately became a major hindrance to achieving that overarching goal. The team did not give up; rather, the party's limited resource availability prompted the campaign team to 'get really creative' about its e-campaigning.

More specifically, the team understood that many members and volunteers of the Greens possessed high computer literacy. 'They're highly capable of taking up the operational side of the Green Party's online campaigning, provided there's some clear direction in place,' said the team. For that reason, the team decided to primarily focus on the managerial and strategic side of the Greens' e-campaigning while inviting party members and volunteers to take charge of the operational side. Such a decision might have appeared unorthodox to other campaign teams in the election, said the team, but it creatively enabled the team to achieve the e-campaigning goal. The team added that it encouraged those involved in the Greens' e-campaigning operation to utilise open-source software and applications that they were familiar with, as the team could not afford commercial software and training respectively.

The Greens' campaign team believed that traditional means still performed better in some areas of election campaigning; however, the team admitted that it mostly utilised the Internet in those areas in actuality. Such a contradiction, according to the team, was ascribed to the availability of the Greens' campaign resources. This also suggests that the impact of output quality was moderated by resource availability. 'The newspaper', for instance, 'is still the most effective and powerful way of campaign advertising,' said the team. However, 'It's also very expensive and, more importantly, the impact is ephemeral in the sense that if you place an ad in the paper it's gone tomorrow.' 'If you want to maintain the impact,' the team continued, 'you have to keep on paying, which wasn't feasible to us as we didn't have a big budget at our disposal.' Campaign advertising online, by comparison, 'is exceptionally cheaper and produces a way more persistent impact'; it consequently became the team's preferred means.

Nevertheless, there were a few occasions that saw the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation be obstructed by resource availability. For instance, the team believed that voter interaction and engagement on the Greens' Facebook page constantly required 'a significant amount of time' and, more importantly, should be carried out by the Greens' MPs because of authenticity. However, it was impractical for the MPs to 'spend a huge chunk of their limited time on only one of many aspects of election campaigning'. Furthermore, the team believed that it had to recruit at least one full-time campaign staff in order to 'fully run [the Greens'] Facebook page', which the Greens could not afford. Consequently, there was limited voter interaction and engagement on the party's Facebook campaign page. Put succinctly, the level of voter interaction and engagement on the Greens' Facebook page was in part compromised by the party's limited financial and time resources.

In short, resource availability propelled as well hindered the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation. Put differently, the impact of the factor on the Greens' e-campaigning consisted of two facets: positive and negative. It is worth highlighting the instance where the Greens preferred campaign advertising online for it suggests the impact of output quality was moderated by another factor – resource availability.

6.4.5 Subjective norm

'In the past, political parties could get away with not doing anything online for their election campaigning', said the Greens' campaign team, 'but that's no longer the case this time around.' 'There's this wide expectation that not only should political parties have their own online presence,' the team continued, 'but more importantly, they should be seen actively doing all sorts of things for campaigning in a sophisticated way.' As the team indicated, such an expectation inspired the Greens' expansive and polished e-campaigning.

As noted, some policies received particular emphasis in the Green's e-campaigning, so much so that the party provided a separate web page for further promoting them in addition to the 'Policies' page, where those policies and other Green policies were particularised. This, according to the team, was another instance where external expectations inspired the Greens' e-campaigning. As the team

explained, 'When voters visit a political party's website, there're always certain things they expect to see or see more of.' The team perceived that the Greens was expected to especially focus on issues and, more importantly, the Greens' solutions relating to the environment, climate change, public transport, food, and water. If voters failed to see that, 'it's not the Green Party's campaign to them.' For that reason, the Greens' policies on climate change, peak oil, food, water, and transport were especially focused on in the party's e-campaigning.

'What others were doing, and how, in the same or a similar context', or simply referred to as 'the industry trend', formed another source of inspiration in the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation. The team perceptively indicated that the utilisation of ICTs in a commercial context was primarily driven by industry. Put differently, 'When the industry promoted certain IT trends – such as using IT to do certain things or in certain ways, most firms tended to follow.' Political parties' e-campaigning, said the team, followed a similar trajectory. In other words, political parties' e-campaigning was 'largely driven by what others were doing, and how, in the same or a similar context'. A specific instance was provided to further illustrate that. According to the team, a blog debuted chiefly as an interconnected platform for an individual to publish thoughts and exchange opinions. It was then widely promoted in the political context as a modern campaign vehicle for parties and politicians to advocate their ideologies and policies, and seek feedback from the general public. Such a trend was accordingly followed by parties and politicians in many parts of the world, hence the Greens' frogblog. 'Of course there're many different means to promote policies and gather feedback in the election,' said the team. And Frogblog was the predominant means 'simply because it reflected the current trend in the campaign landscape'. Put succinctly, the team favoured a blog over other alternatives as its primary means to publicly promote the party's policies and values and solicit feedback because the team perceived that to be the current trend.

There were also other instances, albeit seldom, where the norm perceived by the team curbed the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation. Most notably, a few social networking platforms were utilised in the Greens' e-campaigning, Twitter, however, was excluded. That was due to subjective norm. The team acknowledged

that it had pondered incorporating Twitter as part of its e-campaign in the election, especially considering the increasing popularity of this social networking platform among many New Zealanders. Nonetheless, the team did not perceive campaigning on such an emerging social networking platform to be a significant trend in the 2008 election. In fact, the team believed that most of its counterparts held a 'wait-and-see' attitude towards Twitter in the election. In addition, the team did not feel, from interacting with the Greens' supporters, that it was expected to utilise Twitter in the election. Consequently, Twitter was omitted from the Greens' e-campaigning. Put differently, the Greens' campaign team excluded Twitter from the party's e-campaigning as it did not sense a trend nor an external expectation to act otherwise.

In all, subjective norm encouraged and dissuaded the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation. In other words, the impact of the factor on the Greens' e-campaigning consisted of two facets: positive and negative. The norms perceived by the Greens' campaign team were derived from voters' expectations and e-campaigning trends. The team further pointed out that hardly any trend remained static by nature. That is, 'what political parties did [for their e-campaigning], and how, in this election wouldn't be the same in future elections.' For instance, at the end of the 2008 election the team sensed an emerging trend where Twitter would replace blogs as an important campaign vehicle for parties to interact with voters; this trend, according to the team, would be accordingly reflected in many parties' future e-campaigning. This also suggests that subjective norm plays an ongoing role in e-campaigning utilisation.

6.4.6 Image

As noted, Labour was one of the main objects of the Greens' targeted campaigning. This was rather unexpected as both parties were situated at the same end of the political spectrum and were widely considered as natural political allies. According to the campaign team, the inclusion of Labour in the Greens' targeted campaigning was essential as it publicly demonstrated the party's impartiality and determination to adhere to its own belief and values irrespectively, thereby strengthening its political credibility. Put differently, Labour was attacked in the

Greens' e-campaign because the team perceived such a move to be beneficial to the Greens' political image.

Thus far, the Greens is the first political party under study that enabled the audience of its blogs to post and edit comments. This was largely due to image considerations. More specifically, the team understood that enabling reader comments on a party's campaign blog could be 'risky', especially during an election, as it could attract malicious attacks, tarnishing the party's political image. For that reason, the team believed, some political parties were reluctant to invite comments on their blogs. Despite that, the Greens welcomed 'all sorts of comments from [its] blog visitors'. As the team explained,

> Online campaigning has to be authentic and genuine, first and foremost. … When you endorse a blog or any social media, you are signalling [that] you want to interact and have a two-way conversation with people. People are going to make great comments and bad comments; they are going to throw stones at you and abuse you. So what? It's just part of the normal ebb and flow of human interaction; it's no different from what you get from talking about politics with people at the pub. … Taking away others' opportunities to talk back online is no different from standing on the street corner with a megaphone, yelling at people about your ideas but expecting everyone else to just shut up and listen. That's not an authentic or genuine interaction or conversation and would end up looking seriously bad, in fact, far worse than people making a few bad comments towards you.

Put succinctly, the Greens' campaign team perceived that' taking away' visitors' ability to comment on the party's campaign blog would appear unauthentic and disingenuous, resulting in greater damage to the party's political image than enabling visitors to post comments that could be perceived as negative.

There were other situations where the team had to moderate some aspects of its e-campaigning because of the Greens' image. Notably, the team acknowledged that although it was able to 'see the large potential of online campaign videos, [it] had not done much'. As the team explained, it was salient for the Greens and its MPs to 'look their best' in the party's campaign videos. To achieve that, 'certain professional standards, such as lighting, recording, and editing, had to be met'. However, the campaign videos that the team could afford to produce 'fell short of those standards by any measure'. Consequently, the team presented limited

campaign videos in the Greens' e-campaign. This instance also suggests the impact of resource availability.

In sum, image propelled as well as discouraged the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation. Put differently, the impact of the factor consisted of two facets: positive and negative.

6.4.7 Job relevance

As noted, the Greens promoted its key election policies partly through a noticeable portion of its e-campaign targeted at its major counterparts, namely Labour and National. While that might be considered negative by some, thereby potentially affecting the Greens' image, the Greens' campaign team was adamant that such a tactic was integral to election campaigning. As the team explained, 'It's part of the job description for any political party to advocate its own policies, and challenge and debate other parties' policies, especially during an election.' The team further noted that it would not fully be an election campaign if political parties refrained from 'taking a swipe at' each other's stance and policies. In other words, the campaign team targeted the Greens' major counterparts in its e-campaigning as it perceived the tactic to be relevant to election campaigning.

The team noted that the choice of the social networks to endorse in the election chiefly 'came down to their relevance to [the party's] election campaigning'. The team indicated that it 'knew of quite a few [social networks] before the election'. Most of them, however, had been excluded from the Greens' e-campaigning because they were perceived 'irrelevant' by the team. For instance, the team was acutely aware that Myspace and Bebo were 'also very popular' around the election. However, the team perceived that the former was 'all about music' and the latter was occupied primarily by 'the demographic that's simply not old enough to vote'. The team subsequently decided to 'rule out' those social networks because they were deemed 'irrelevant' in that they could neither serve as an additional campaign platform nor increase the Greens' votes in the election.

It bears noting that Bebo was actually included in the Greens' e-campaigning. This apparent contradiction, the team believed, could be that some of the Greens'

members or volunteers 'might think it's a nice idea to have Bebo for whatever reason and subsequently acted on that'.

In general, job relevance motivated as well as dissuaded the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation. In other words, the impact of the factor on the Greens' e-campaigning consisted of two facets: positive and negative.

6.4.8 Output quality

As mentioned, the Greens' campaign team perceived that campaign advertising in the newspaper produced the strongest impact; however, the Internet was the preferred means partly because it left a more enduring impact. This suggests the role of output quality in the Greens' e-campaigning. The team noted other instances where the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation was shaped by output quality.

Notably, the team claimed that the Greens' fundamental approach to election campaigning had always been policy-driven. For that reason, the largest proportion of the Greens' election campaign had long been devoted to championing the party's election policies. This had been almost entirely handled by traditional means, particularly door knocking, television, radio, and the newspaper, until the 2008 election, when the Internet served as the primary and 'preferred' means. Such a switch was based on the team's perception that e-campaigning could outperform its traditional counterpart in the most significant part of the Greens' election campaign. This perception, according to the team, could be understood from two angles.

First, unlike its traditional counterpart, 'the Internet is the least polluted and restrictive medium for communicating outwards.' More specifically, the team felt that traditional media was laden with filters and biases. Consequently, the team found it immensely challenging, if not impossible, to promote election policies with integrity intact through that media. 'Offline campaign billboards allow you to say what you want so they are unpolluted; however, they are highly restrictive, you can't just stick them up when and where you want,' said the team. The Internet, in stark contrast, was considered by the team to be 'largely free of "noise" and

restraints', which resulted in a facet of the team's perception that e-campaigning outperformed its traditional counterpart in policy promotion.

Second, the team indicated that door knocking was a major means for the Greens to promote policies in prior elections. Despite offering face-to-face communication between the party and voters, which was important, door knocking consisted of 'a couple of critical limitations potentially hampering the outcome'. 'To begin with,' the team explained, 'door knocking, especially on a regular basis, is very hard to organise because it requires a group of random people to all be available at a particular time and location.' Moreover, 'the best you can do with door knocking is hand over a flyer or leaflet with your key policies on it.' Consequently, the team continued, 'all your key policies have to be reduced to a few sound bites. That's just superficial and nowhere close to what's considered policy-driven.' The team perceived that with e-campaigning, it was able to promote the Greens' policies in their entirety, as opposed to sound bites, anytime and anywhere; that is, overcoming the limitations of door knocking. This accordingly formed the second facet of the team's perception that e-campaigning outperformed its traditional counterpart in policy promotion.

There were, however, situations where the team primarily employed traditional means for election campaigning because of output quality. For instance, the team acknowledged that in the election it was given more means of fund raising with e-campaigning, most notably, the Green Shop. Despite that, the team 'mainly stuck to' traditional means as they were considered 'to still do a better job' than e-campaigning in that they enabled the team to 'raise larger funds within a shorter time', which was immensely critical during elections.

Overall, output quality encouraged as well as dampened the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation. In other words, the impact of this factor on the Greens' e-campaigning consisted of two facets: positive and negative. The team perceived that e-campaigning generally performed as well as, if not better than, its traditional counterpart. It therefore held an 'optimistic' attitude towards e-campaigning and treated both forms of election campaigning equally in general.

6.4.9 Result demonstrability

The Greens' campaign team indicated that when it was proposed a new approach to raise funds and for voters to show party support by including the Green Shop in the Greens' e-campaign, it 'didn't take long to get [the team's] full support'. The primary reason was that the team was able to 'get a clear, concrete idea about how it [the approach] went by just looking at the level of sales, very direct, no guessing'. It bears noting that the online store 'didn't sell just anything; it sold products branded with the Green Party logo and, in some cases, the party's campaign message'. 'So,' the team continued, 'buying something from the Green Shop wasn't the same as buying from any other shop; it actually meant endorsement of the party.' Because of that, the level of sales served as a tangible indication of both the campaign funds and the level of voter support generated by the approach.

Encouraging voters to create and share their own Green digital campaign banners was another new e-campaigning approach that was employed because of result demonstrability. According to the team, the purpose of the approach was to garner and mobilise voter support. As the team put it, the level of voter support was an element that most, if not all, political parties were eager to 'get a clear view on' yet often remained intangible. The approach, however, enabled this important and often intangible element to be apparent to the team. More specifically, the level of voter support garnered and mobilised by the approach was demonstrable through the number of participants and the extent of participation. To that end, the team 'had no hesitation to embrace [the new approach] with open arms'.

Although result demonstrability appeared to produce a positive impact on the Greens' e-campaigning – that is, the factor motivated the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation, the team was wary of acting on the implication of the factor alone. This, according to the team, was due to two main problems. First, some e-campaigning activities were unlikely to deliver tangible results but were essential. For instance, the team indicated that it was difficult to discern the impact of promoting election policies online; this, however, would not limit or prevent the team's engagement in the activity for it was the core of the Greens' e-campaign. Second, to be able to discern the results or impact of e-campaigning, said the team, it was crucial to

know 'what to look for', as well as 'when, where, and how to look for it'. Since the team sometimes found itself struggling with that in the election, it treated the implication of result demonstrability cautiously. The team further suggested that the second problem would be 'half solved' when 'someone comes up with a clear, holistic view of e-campaigning'.

6.4.10 Perceived ease of use

The Greens' campaign team pointed out that 'Today, it's too simplistic to see e-campaigning as just another channel for election campaigning.' As the team put it, 'E-campaigning requires its own sets of knowledge, skills, and insights, so it's fair to say e-campaigning, in many ways, is a speciality in its own right.' To that end, the team found that 'you would only do it [e-campaigning] or do more of it when you find it easy to get your head around or it doesn't take a lot to get your head around'. Those words suggest the impact of perceived ease of use on e-campaigning utilisation, evident in some parts of the Greens' e-campaigning.

As noted, in order to deal with its limited campaign resources, the Greens' campaign team invited the party's members and volunteers to participate in the party's e-campaigning operation. In particular, the team encouraged the participants to use applications that they were familiar with. This led to 'a few compatibility glitches further down the track', requiring the team's scarce campaign resources to rectify them. The team acknowledged that had it specified the applications for the Greens' e-campaigning operation, instead of allowing the participants to choose their own, those compatibility issues would not have existed. Nevertheless, the team maintained that 'it's a good decision to let [the participants] use applications of their own choice,' and the team 'wouldn't have it any other way'. As the team explained, when people were encouraged to perform tasks with the tools that they felt most comfortable and familiar with, they often found the tasks 'more straightforward' and consequently, would be more motivated to perform and contribute. This, according to the team, was 'exactly what happened' to the participants of the Greens' e-campaigning operation. Put differently, the team encouraged the participants to operate the Greens' e-

campaign with applications that they felt most comfortable and familiar with, based on perceived ease of use.

The team further indicated that most who were involved in the Greens' e-campaigning, from the strategic to the operational level, possessed extensive knowledge and skills that could be applied to e-campaigning, such as e-commerce, online marketing, and database administration. Also, a number of them had been previously exposed to e-campaigning. They accordingly found many aspects of e-campaigning 'quite straightforward and relatively easy to get your head around'. Consequently, the Greens experienced expansive e-campaigning in the election.

In brief, perceived ease of use contributed to the Greens' expansive and extensive e-campaigning utilisation. In other words, the impact of the factor on the Greens' e-campaigning was positive. It is worth noting that perceived ease of use in e-campaigning 'is an evolving subject in some respects', according to the Greens' campaign team. More specifically, political parties perceived e-campaigning to be more straightforward and easier to navigate as they acquired and accumulated knowledge, insights, and experiences pertaining to e-campaigning. The campaign team further noted that 'it's almost definite that there will be new technologies, applications, and tactics coming into the mix [for e-campaigning] in future elections,' resetting perceptions about the ease of use relating to e-campaigning. These indications suggest that the role of perceived ease of use in e-campaigning utilisation would be ongoing.

6.4.11 Summary

The Greens' e-campaigning utilisation in the 2008 general election was shaped by the ten factors in Table 2.2, namely, election type, electoral regulations, voters' technology access, resource availability, subjective norm, image, job relevance, output quality, result demonstrability, and perceived ease of use. Each factor in essence represents a unique perspective, therefore, the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation has been explained from ten perspectives. Various specific and contextual instances that occurred in the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation have been presented to illustrate the factors, lending valuable insights into this unique

phenomenon. Table 6.2 highlights the ten factors that influenced the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation.

Table 6.2 The factors influencing the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation

Factor	Dual impact	Moderated by
Election type		
Electoral regulations		
Voters' technology access	●	
Resource availability	●	
Subjective norm	●	
Image	●	
Job relevance	●	
Output quality	●	Resource availability
Result demonstrability		
Perceived ease of use		

As noted in the table, the impacts of several factors, such as voters' technology access, consisted of two facets: positive and negative. This means that those factors were enablers as well as inhibitors of the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation. On one occasion, the impact of output quality was moderated by resource availability. Taken together, it suggests that the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation was complex, contextual, and dynamic.

6.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the key findings from the case study relating to the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation in the 2008 general election. It has comprehensively analysed the breadth and depth of the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation. Based on that, it has identified and illustrated in depth the ten factors influencing the Greens' e-campaigning utilisation.

Chapter 7 ACT's e-campaigning utilisation

7.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter presents the key findings from the fourth case study: ACT's e-campaigning utilisation in the 2008 general election. This chapter proceeds as follows: section 7.2 outlines the case background; then, section 7.3 and 7.4 answer the first and second research questions respectively; and last, section 7.5 summarises this chapter.

7.2 Case background

Established in 1994 jointly by Roger Douglas and Derek Quigley, ACT is a relatively young, minor political party in New Zealand. ACT is an acronym for the Association of Consumers and Taxpayers. Both founders had been cabinet ministers prior to the establishment of the party. Richard Prebble, a former Labour cabinet minister, was the first party leader. ACT was founded on two principles: first, 'individuals are the rightful owners of their own lives and therefore have inherent rights and responsibilities'; and second, 'the proper purpose of government is to protect such rights and not to assume such responsibilities'. On that note, the chief objective of the party 'is to promote an open, progressive and benevolent society in which individual New Zealanders are free to achieve their full potential'. ACT is situated towards the right of the political spectrum and is widely considered as a close political ally of National.

ACT was led by Rodney Hide in the 2008 general election. Hide first entered Parliament as a list MP of ACT in 1996. He then succeeded Prebble as ACT's leader in 2004. Having won the Epsom electorate in the 2005 general election, Hide became an electorate MP. Before the 2008 election, ACT held two seats in Parliament. Under MMP, a political party must win at least one electorate seat or 5 per cent of the party vote in order to be in Parliament. Since ACT came considerably under the party vote threshold in the previous election, securing Hide's hold of the Epsom electorate formed the principal aim of ACT's election campaigning. ACT had 'an extremely small campaign team' in the election. ACT's campaign team claimed that the party 'is definitely no stranger to' e-campaigning.

The team further noted that in the previous election, ACT had already employed blogging as a main campaign instrument while many other parties were merely 'covering the basic stuff online'. According to the team, blogging continued to be the main feature of ACT's e-campaign in the 2008 election. The team also pointed out that instead of any particular vision or strategy, only a few objectives were present for the party's e-campaigning in this election; most notably, 'putting everything that's campaign-related into one place [ACT's campaign website]' and ensuring prompt, up-to-date, and accurate information on ACT's campaign website. ACT utilised its party website (www.act.org.nz) as the primary platform for e-campaigning. The campaign message was: 'Be the Difference – ACT Now'. Figure 7.1 exhibits the home page of ACT's campaign website.

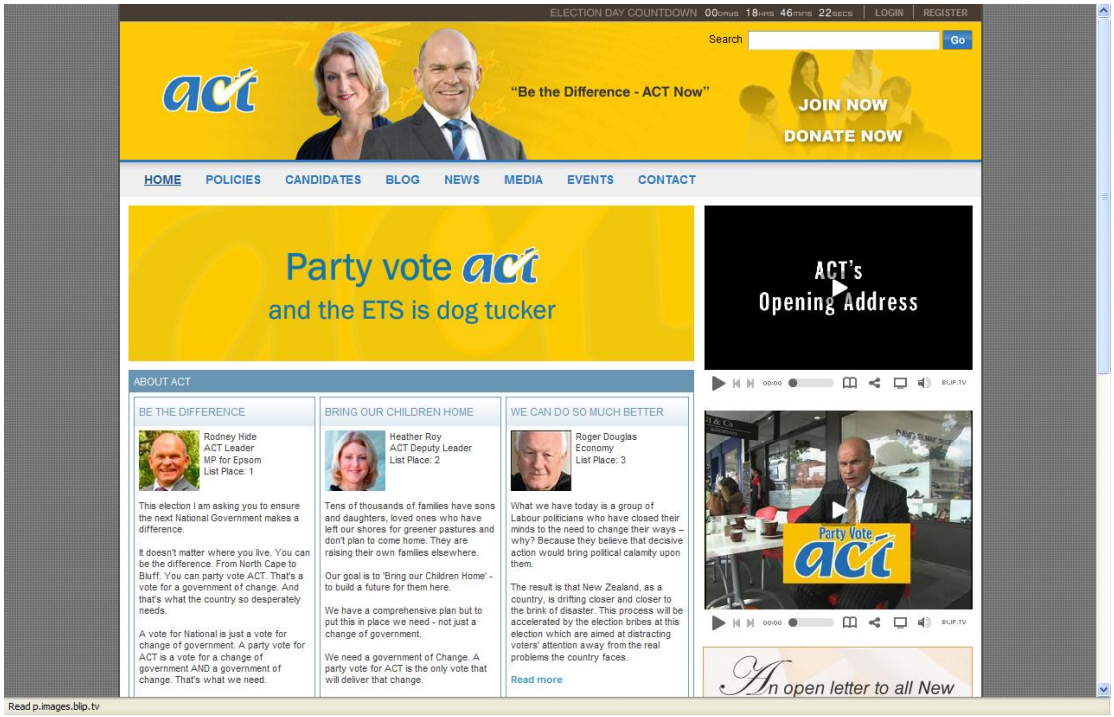

Figure 7.1 The home page of ACT's campaign website

7.3 ACT's e-campaigning utilisation and its extent

On the basis of the proposed e-campaigning framework, ACT's e-campaigning utilisation encompassed all five practices, namely, information dissemination, voter interaction and engagement, support mobilisation, targeted campaigning, and resource generation. Those practices were conducted to varying degrees. The

analysis in this section is structured according to the practices. This section is concluded with a summary.

7.3.1 Information dissemination

The campaign information disseminated on ACT's campaign website was diverse and well-structured. Images of ACT's party leader and deputy leader, Hide and Heather Roy, along with ACT's campaign message consistently featured on the top of all web pages. All election policies of ACT were alphabetically filed on the 'Policies' page. Despite being a minor party, ACT exhibited broad policy coverage. More specifically, the party's election policies encompassed 20 areas, such as local government, and privatisation. Each policy was presented as a hypertext link, along with brief statements of the key actions and benefits associated with the policy. Clicking on a policy rendered a policy document that fully described the goal, background, principles, and details of the policy. The policy document could also be downloaded for offline viewing.

ACT's campaign news, speeches, and press releases were put together in reverse chronological order under the 'News' page. The page comprised two main sections, one listing clickable entries and the other displaying the selected entry in full. There were a large number of entries on the page, many of them predated the election. Each entry was attached with a time stamp. It can be inferred from the time stamps that the 'News' page was frequently updated, especially during the weeks leading up to election day. Furthermore, on the 'Media' page ACT provided external links to select items featuring ACT in the New Zealand news media, such as news articles and poll results.

All ACT candidates were listed under the 'Candidates' page. Each candidate was displayed with the candidate's name, photo, rank on the party list, and electorate. Clicking on a candidate's name or photo rendered further details of the candidate: the candidate's contact information, background, and key responsibilities.

Offline campaign events could be found on the 'Events' page. Each event was attached with its date, time, location, and key theme. The contact information relating to the party's candidates, parliamentary office, head office, and board was

listed under the 'Contact' page. Also included on the page was Hide's electorate office. Information relating to ACT's background and principles was absent from the party's campaign website.

Occasionally, ACT's campaign information was disseminated in other formats besides text, namely, image, audio, and online video. It is worth mentioning that all ACT's online campaign videos were centralised on the 'Media' page, as depicted in Figure 7.2. Most videos on that page pertained to ACT candidates promoting some of ACT's key election policies relating to the New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme, law and order, and early childhood education. The remaining videos were used to depict some of ACT's campaign trail. The page also provided a link to ACT's YouTube page, an alternative location for the party's online campaign videos.

Figure 7.2 ACT's 'Media' page

7.3.2 Voter interaction and engagement

The elements on ACT's campaign website relating to voter interaction and engagement merely centred on links that enabled visitors to directly email ACT's candidates, staff, and board members, and the ability to filter content and post comments in some parts of ACT's e-campaign. It could be said that ACT's online

voter interaction and engagement was rather limited; however, there were some notable areas.

More specifically, the 'Blog' page of ACT's campaign website, exhibited in Figure 7.3, centralised campaign blogs penned by four ACT candidates, including ACT's leader and deputy leader. The 'Blog' page provided two forms of interaction with its content for readers. First, blog entries could be filtered according to author by simply clicking on a name. Second, readers were able to post comments on any blog entry, provided that they had been registered and logged in. In general, comments on ACT's blog entries were limited, so was the number of readers posting comments. However, none of the blog authors appeared to respond to reader comments. It was unnecessary to be registered or logged in, in order to read others' comments.

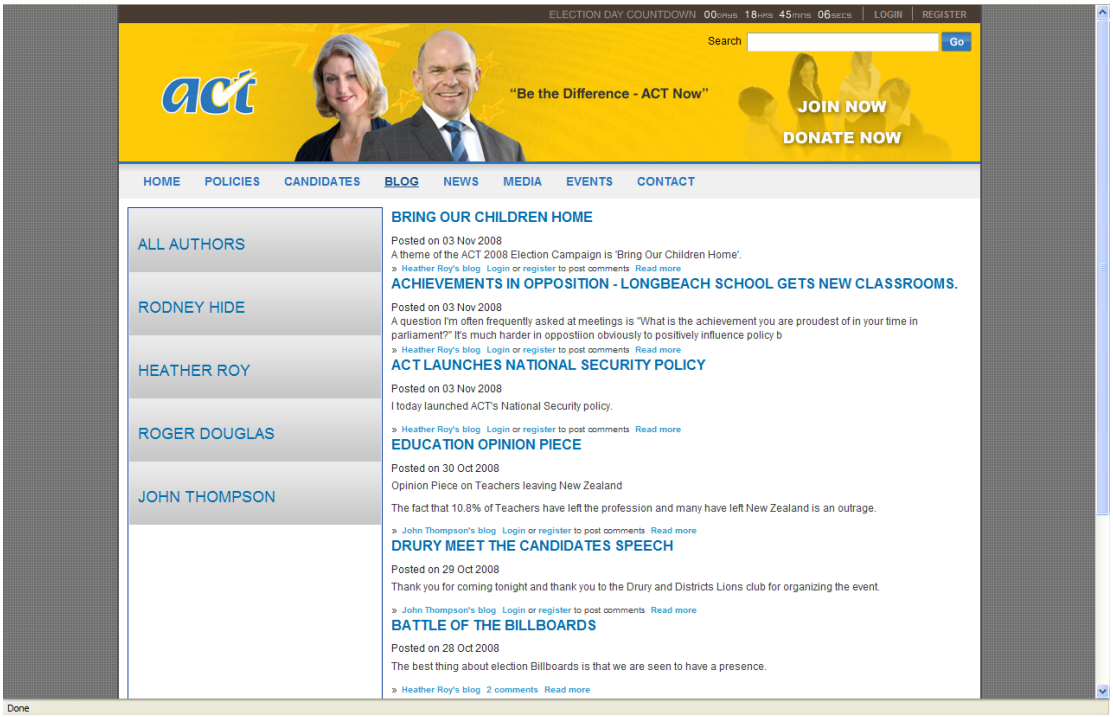

Figure 7.3 ACT's 'Blog' page

The 'News' page was another area offering voter interaction and engagement. Similar to the 'Blog' page, visitors were able to interact with content on the 'News' page based on keywords, the associated policy domain; entry format, namely, audio, video, and text; entry type, namely press releases, speeches, and Hansard; and time range. Registered and logged-in visitors were allowed to post comments

on any entry. Rarely was a reader comment posted, however. ACT's YouTube page also enabled viewers to comment or rate its entries. Again, both comments and viewers posting comments were limited. Moreover, the party did not seem to respond to any viewer comment.

7.3.3 Support mobilisation

ACT's efforts to generate and mobilise voter support were observable in the party's e-campaign, albeit restricted. Typically, on the 'Media' page ACT provided an external link to the Electoral Commission's website for voter enrolment. In addition, three instances relating to support mobilisation in ACT's e-campaign were noteworthy, namely an open letter, an invitation, and online videos.

Centrally featuring on the home page of ACT's campaign website was a clickable image that read 'An open letter to all New Zealanders'. The letter was written by Hide and titled 'OK, We Know We're In a Hole – Now It's Time to Stop Digging'. Hide began the letter by boldly stating that 'New Zealand is facing an extraordinary situation in its history.' He then described the 'mire the current Labour government has placed us in and that National refuses to acknowledge'. Following that, Hide claimed that ACT had devised a plan 'to get New Zealand out of the mire'. In order to realise the plan, it was essential for ACT to become part of the upcoming government – led by National – by obtaining the party vote, according to the party leader. Hide concluded the letter by saying 'If … you're concerned as to where our country is heading, and want to see ACT stand by the new National Government and help it stay on track, then please give your party vote to ACT on November 8 [the election day].'

Occasionally, visitors were greeted by an invitation also penned by Hide on the home page of the ACT's campaign website. Depicted in Figure 7.4, the invitation was orientated towards capturing the party vote, which was similar to, but shorter than, the open letter. The message stressed the significance of every party vote for ACT under MMP. To further illustrate this, Hide provided some specific examples. For instance, securing an electorate and 3 per cent of the party vote would translate into four ACT MPs in Parliament, despite not reaching the 5 per cent

party vote threshold. It is worth noting that the invitation disappeared from the website in the weeks leading up to the election.

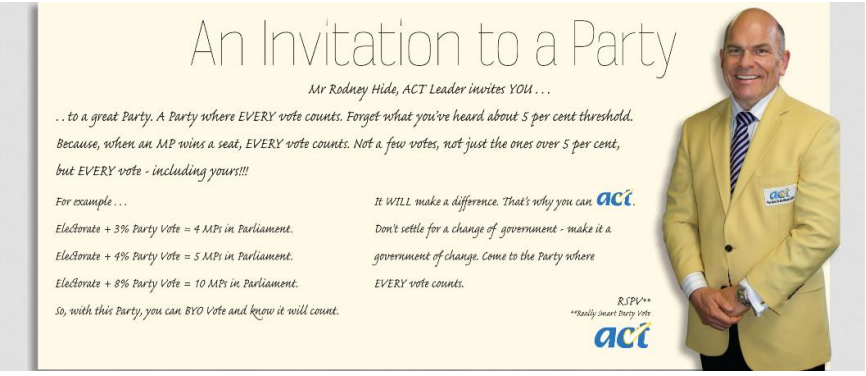

Figure 7.4 An invitation from Hide

The majority of ACT's online campaign videos concentrated on disseminating the party's campaign information, as noted; the remainder pertained to garnering voter support, conducted by several high-ranking ACT candidates in addition to the party leader. For instance, in a video John Boscawen, the fourth candidate on ACT's list, reinforced the significance of each party vote for ACT, similar to the primary message in Hide's invitation; in another video Douglas, one of the co-founders of ACT and the third candidate on the party list, explained the influence of voting ACT in the election on both the overthrow of the Labour-led government and the formation of a National-led government. ACT's televised campaign advertisement soliciting the party vote also featured on the party's campaign website.

As depicted, ACT's efforts to mobilise voter support in its e-campaign almost entirely concentrated on the party vote. Although the party indicated that ensuring Hide's hold of his constituency formed the central theme of ACT's election campaign, support mobilisation concerning that particular aspect was not observed in ACT's e-campaign.

7.3.4 Targeted campaigning

Labour, ACT's political adversary, and some of its ministers were targeted in ACT's e-campaign. For instance, in his open letter Hide attacked the Labour-led government by labelling it 'cynical', 'blind', 'deceit', and 'faint-hearted'. Hide

further criticised Labour for focusing on proffering election bribes paid for with taxpayers' money rather than extricating New Zealand from the financial misfortune that ACT held Labour accountable for. Also, in his blog post titled 'Cullen Has Lost the Plot', Hide argued that Cullen, the then finance minister, lacked sound economic management. Hide further asserted that 'Cullen's response to the global financial crisis has been woeful' because the mere economic solution Cullen was capable of propounding was increasing the expenditure of taxpayers' money in good or bad times. The ACT's leader concluded that Cullen and Labour could only worsen the financial crisis confronting New Zealand.

ACT always explicitly positioned itself as a close, if not the closest, political ally of National, so much so that ACT constantly expressed that it wanted the upcoming government to be led by National and supported by ACT. That, however, did not exempt National from being another target of ACT's negative campaigning. For instance, in the open letter where Labour was heavily attacked, Hide also criticised National for refusing to acknowledge the financial mire that the Labour-led government was responsible for. ACT's targeted campaigning at National's policies could be noted in some blog entries on ACT's campaign website. For instance, in his blog post titled 'John Key's Economic Plan', Hide described National's fiscal plan as disappointing. He further suggested that National's economic policy was indistinguishable from Labour's in that both parties considered increasing expenditure of taxpayers' money to be the chief solution to the financial crisis facing New Zealand, which could not alleviate the financial burden on New Zealanders. To that end, Hide argued that 'a party vote for the National Party will dump Helen Clark but keep Michael Cullen's economic policy.' The ACT leader went on to claim that 'A party vote for ACT will dump Helen Clark and Cullen's economic policy.' Put differently, Hide attempted to mobilise support for ACT through attacking National's policy.

A discernible portion of ACT's e-campaign was targeted at a particular voter segment. More specifically, ACT's election policies were bilingually presented. As illustrated in Figure 7.5, the summary of ACT's 20 main election policies could be rendered in English or Chinese by simply clicking on a link in the corresponding language. This suggests that Chinese-speaking voters were particularly targeted

in ACT's e-campaign. It also suggests that ACT segmented voters partly based on language or ethnicity.

Figure 7.5 ACT's e-campaign targeted at Chinese-speaking voters

ACT's campaign advertisement on Facebook was another instance of the party's targeted campaigning at a particular voter segment. More specifically, during the election period, Facebook featured an election advertisement of ACT with a title and a subtitle that respectively read 'Why Nats Should Vote ACT' and 'The Guts to Do What's Right'. As depicted in Figure 7.6, the advertisement encouraged National's supporters to click and find out 'the reasons … that National party supporters are better off voting ACT with their party vote'. Upon clicking, the visitor was redirected to ACT's campaign website. This instance suggests that another approach of ACT to voter segmentation was based on political leaning.

Figure 7.6 ACT's election advertisement on Facebook

7.3.5 Resource generation

ACT's e-campaign exhibited several ways to generate campaign resources. More specifically, on the 'Media' page, ACT provided options to join, donate, or volunteer by clicking on the corresponding button.

It cost $20 to join. To do so online, visitors needed to complete a web form soliciting a few personal details, namely email address and first and last names. Alternatively, visitors could click on a button called 'Join Offline' to download, print, and complete ACT's membership form and then return the form to the postal address provided.

Visitors were able to make financial contributions to ACT's election campaign online by filling in a secure web form. The form solicited the donor's personal information and credit card details, if the donor elected credit card as the payment method. Two areas relating to ACT's online fundraising were noteworthy. First, the party allowed the donor, in principle, to freely nominate the amount of donation instead of choosing a predetermined figure. In practice, however, there were limitations on the amount that a donor was allowed to contribute. More specifically, ACT indicated that under the EFA 2007, a donor's identity must be disclosed if the donor contributed over $10,000 during an election year, spanning from 1 January to 31 December. The party further stated that it could not accept more than $1,000 from any overseas donor under the Act. Second, ACT offered PayPal as a payment method, in addition to credit card.

Similar to joining or donating to ACT, becoming an ACT campaign volunteer online was straightforward by completing a web form. It is worth noting that despite exhibiting several means to generate different campaign resources, ACT did not appear as proactive in this practice as in others, such as targeted campaigning or support mobilisation.

7.3.6 Summary

Table 7.1 summarises ACT's e-campaigning utilisation and its extent with the proposed e-campaigning framework. It suggests that ACT's e-campaigning focused most on information dissemination and targeted campaigning. By comparison, voter interaction and engagement as well as support mobilisation were least focused on.

Table 7.1 ACT's e-campaigning utilisation and its extent

Campaign practice	Content elements	Present
Information dissemination	Political party's information	
	Candidate biography	●
	Press releases	●
	Policy statements	●
	Campaign news	●
	Campaign events	●
	Speeches	●
	Contact information	●
	Information relating to the political party's other online presence	●
	Campaign blog without visitor comments allowed	
Voter interaction and engagement	Instant chat or messaging	
	Instant opinion polls	
	Instant surveys	
	Applications for interacting with the political party's policies	
	Interactive calendar of campaign events	
	Means to contact the political party	●
	Discussion forums	
	Campaign blog with visitor comments allowed	●
	Means to provide feedback	
Support mobilisation	Means for voters to invite their peers to participate in campaign events	
	Means to inform voters of electoral information	●
	Means for voters to receive campaign information and updates	
	Means for voters to connect with supporter groups	
	Means for voters to download campaign material	●
	Means for voters to forward campaign material to others	
	Means to encourage votes*	●
Targeted campaigning	Content targeted at political opponents	●
	Content targeted at political opponents' policies	●
	Content targeted at specific voter segments	●
Resource generation	Means to make donations	●
	Online merchandise shop	
	Means to become a party member	●
	Means to become a volunteer	●

Note: * Not present in the proposed e-campaigning framework

Five areas of ACT's e-campaigning utilisation deserve highlighting. First, ACT is thus far the first party that opened multiple avenues, such as campaign blogs, news, and speeches, for visitors to post comments. Second, ACT employed diverse means to encourage votes, such as an open letter and online videos; this, however, is not captured by the proposed framework. Third, ACT is the second party in this study that also attacked its political ally, namely National. Fourth, ACT is the second party in this study that enabled some of its campaign content to be rendered in a foreign language. Last, although ACT indicated that securing the electorate vote

for Hide was the primary focus of the party's election campaigning, it was not reflected in ACT's e-campaigning. Rather, ACT's e-campaign appeared to be orientated towards the party vote.

7.4 The factors influencing ACT's e-campaigning utilisation

ACT's e-campaigning utilisation was attributable to five factors in Table 2.2, namely, voters' technology access, resource availability, subjective norm, image, and output quality. The remainder of this section is structured according to those factors. This section is concluded with a summary.

7.4.1 Voters' technology access

ACT's campaign team indicated that 'in many ways' the party's 2008 e-campaign was highly similar to that in the previous election cycle. The primary feature that differentiated the two e-campaigns pertained to online campaign videos. Further, the team considered online campaign videos to be crucial, in that they added a personal dimension to ACT's e-campaign, making the e-campaign 'come across as being more real and more convincing'.

Despite their significance to ACT's e-campaigning, ACT's online videos 'wouldn't have been possible' had the Internet access in this election remained the same as that in the previous cycle. More specifically, ACT's campaign team indicated that 'to run online videos effectively requires broadband Internet'. In the 2005 general election, 'the majority of New Zealanders were still dial-up users', rendering the inclusion of online videos in e-campaigning completely infeasible. It was 'the sharp uptake of broadband Internet [in New Zealand] just before the kick-off of this election' that convinced the team to employ online videos as a significant part of its e-campaigning.

Nevertheless, ACT's campaign team further indicated that it had 'held back' the quantity of online campaign videos and the existing videos 'could've been of much better picture quality'. The main contributing factor pertained to New Zealand voters' broadband access. As the team explained, most broadband subscribers in

New Zealand were given a comparatively low allowance of broadband data. Once that allowance was reached, those subscribers' Internet access would be downgraded to dial-up speed, unless they were willing to spend quite considerably on an additional allowance, which 'wouldn't be the case for many people'. And the team 'just didn't see it happening' that most New Zealand broadband subscribers would 'go overboard with' a political party's campaign material that was bandwidth-intensive. Consequently, ACT's campaign team had to limit the offering of online campaign videos and accept the picture quality of its videos might not always be ideal. Put differently, despite the sharp uptake of broadband Internet in New Zealand in this election, the tight, expensive allowance of broadband data essentially limited voters' access to broadband content, such as online videos. This accordingly constrained ACT's e-campaigning.

In short, New Zealand voters' broadband access encouraged as well as withheld ACT's e-campaigning utilisation. In other words, the impact of this factor on ACT's e-campaigning consisted of two facets: positive and negative.

7.4.2 Resource availability

ACT's campaign team admitted that 'in a sense', it favoured e-campaigning over traditional campaigning because of the campaign resources available at its disposal. As the team explained, although the candidate vote for Hide in Epsom was extremely critical for ACT's survival after the election, the party had never lost sight of the party vote for it affected not only ACT's survival but also ACT's political influence in the new parliament if the party survived the election.

For ACT to court party votes in traditional campaigning, according to the team, it typically involved erecting campaign hoardings, dropping pamphlets, and knocking on doors. Those campaign activities became increasingly resource-intensive; worse yet, they had to be repeated 'many times in many parts of the country' in order to maximise their impact, and yet they represented only a few fragments of election campaigning. That constantly posed an 'extraordinary' challenge to the team as it operated with 'an unbelievably small scale of resources', especially when compared to some of its counterparts. In stark contrast, said ACT's campaign team, e-campaigning consumed far fewer resources and, more

importantly, did not require repetition, fitting well the reality where the team was 'persistently under-resourced'. To that end, the campaign team intended to expand its e-campaigning utilisation in the election by including most, if not all, ACT's offline campaign practices.

As ACT's campaign team further moved into the campaign period, it was revealed on a few occasions that the team's resource availability obstructed ACT's e-campaigning utilisation to a varying extent. Most notably, during the campaign period, ACT's e-campaign had undergone several 'very noticeable' changes, reflected in redesigning the appearance of ACT's campaign website, adding new campaign practices and content elements, and completing the campaign content that went live albeit unfinished. The team acknowledged that those changes should have been avoided, particularly the one relating to incomplete campaign content going live. However, the team indicated that it could not have prevented those changes because they directly represented the campaign resources available to the team. More specifically, the team pointed out that it did not receive all the financial and human resources required for fully implementing ACT's e-campaigning before the election. Rather, it had extremely limited funding and campaign personnel at the beginning of the campaign period and 'gradually got more [resources] as [the team] went'. For that reason, the team could not operate beyond its means and had to accept a few 'setbacks and compromises'.

Resource availability not only influenced ACT's e-campaigning but also moderated the impact of another factor. For instance, considering the high mobile phone access in New Zealand, ACT's campaign team was 'seriously keen on carrying out a mobile messaging campaign to voters' as part of its e-campaigning. The team, however, 'had to accept [that] the idea couldn't go ahead in the end' due to the lack of financial resources. Put succinctly, resource availability moderated the positive impact of voters' technology access on ACT's e-campaigning utilisation.

In general, resource availability motivated as well as hindered ACT's e-campaigning utilisation. In other words, the impact of the factor on ACT's e-campaigning consisted of two facets: positive and negative. It is worth highlighting the instance where the team had to give up the intention of carrying out a mobile

messaging campaign, as it suggests that the impact of voters' technology access was moderated by another factor – resource availability.

7.4.3 Subjective norm

As illustrated, the team's intention of embracing online videos in its e-campaigning was mainly motivated by voters' technology access. This intention was solidified by subjective norm. More specifically, the team noted a widespread trend in this election cycle that its counterparts, be they national or international, employed online videos, either on their websites or YouTube, as a campaign tool to inform, engage, mobilise, or raise funds. Consequently, the team felt that it 'just had to have some videos on [ACT's] website in this election, no matter what', so that ACT 'wouldn't end up being on the wrong side of the trend'. Put differently, ACT's campaign team was compelled by perceived competitive pressure as well as an overseas trend to embrace online videos in e-campaigning.

Another instance demonstrating the impact of subjective norm on ACT's e-campaigning utilisation pertained to the party's campaign blogs. As ACT's campaign team explained, in the previous election, the party's campaign blogs penned by Hide and Roy had drawn considerable public attention and recognition. The team felt a significant expectation from voters that blogging would remain a key activity of ACT's e-campaigning and more ACT candidates would participate. In response, a page on ACT's campaign website was dedicated to campaign blogs, contributed by various ACT candidates. The subjective norm in this instance stemmed from a perceived expectation.

Occasionally, the impact of subjective norm on ACT's e-campaigning utilisation was moderated by another factor. More specifically, ACT's campaign team sensed a strong expectation from its supporters that the party would deliver more and continue to be innovative in its e-campaigning in this election. The team was unable to fully conform to that expectation because of resource poverty. In other words, the impact of subjective norm was moderated by resource availability in this instance.

In all, subjective norm propelled ACT's e-campaigning utilisation. The norms perceived by the campaign team were derived from voters' expectations, competitive pressure, and overseas trends. It is worth noting the instance where ACT's campaign team was unable to fully conform to a strong expectation sensed by the team that the party would deliver an expansive, extensive, and innovative e-campaign. The instance suggests that the impact of subjective norm was moderated by another factor – resource availability.

7.4.4 Image

ACT's campaign team noted that many of its counterparts considered that allowing visitors to post comments on campaign content could tarnish their political branding. The team, however, held a different perception; that is, disabling visitor comments would damage ACT's political image. As the team explained, the freedom and rights of individuals had always been championed by ACT; so much so that it was a founding principle of the party. In that light, the team perceived that it would severely blemish ACT's image to deny a visitor's ability to express opinions on the party's campaign website, as ACT would appear hypocritical. To that end, ACT's campaign team embraced visitor comments 'wherever possible' in its e-campaigning, resulting in ACT being the first party thus far that opened various avenues in its e-campaign for voters to voice thoughts and opinions.

As highlighted, National and some of its policies were attacked in ACT's e-campaigning. This seemingly contradicted ACT's constant claim that it was a staunch political ally of National and always supported a National-led government. ACT's campaign team refuted that the party's e-campaigning targeted at National and its policies was inconsistent with its political positioning. It was suggested that the targeted campaigning reflected ACT's consideration over its political image. More specifically, being a minor party and a close ally of a major party often cast an assumption among voters that the minor party was obsequious, said ACT's campaign team. Because of that, the targeted campaigning at National and some of its policies perceivably enabled ACT to establish and reinforce the image that despite being small and a staunch supporter of National, ACT was able to form its

views independently and was not hesitant to 'take a stand'. Simply put, ACT took aim at National in its e-campaigning because it perceived that it could establish and reinforce a positive political image as a result.

In sum, image motivated ACT's e-campaigning utilisation. In other words, the impact of the factor on ACT's e-campaigning was positive.

7.4.5 Output quality

As noted, part of ACT's e-campaign, the summary of ACT's 20 election policies, could be rendered in Chinese. This approach was motivated by output quality. More specifically, ACT's campaign team noted a substantial number of Chinese-speaking voters in this election. Gaining votes from even a fraction of them would have already resulted in a significant difference for ACT, said the team. To win support from voters, the team believed, 'it's critical to develop a bond and trust with them. And there's no better way to do that than communicating the most important component of an election campaign – election policies – in their native language.'

Although ACT's campaign team claimed that the key focus of the party's election campaigning was on the candidate vote for Hide, ACT's e-campaigning appeared to solely focus on the party vote. This, according to the team, was based on the perceived outcome. As the team explained, it was a safe assumption that most visitors to ACT's campaign website were from outside Hide's constituency. Had ACT's e-campaigning primarily concentrated on the candidate vote for Hide, they would have found it largely irrelevant and therefore been driven away. And that would have been an 'absolutely disastrous' outcome for the team as 'election campaigning in any way, shape, or form is about drawing people in instead of sending them away.' To that end, the team decisively focused ACT's e-campaigning on the party vote, especially given the two-fold significance of the party vote to ACT as noted.

Although campaign blogging had been introduced in ACT's e-campaigning since the previous election and considered to be 'quite successful', the team took a different approach in this election, driven by the perceived outcome. As the team

elaborated, in the last election the campaign blog penned by Hide was published under his own website as opposed to the party's campaign site. That, however, had unintendedly resulted in a noticeable number of visitors who were chiefly interested in Hide's campaign blog not visiting the party's campaign website. Put differently, visible web traffic to ACT's campaign website had been lost from keeping Hide's campaign blog separate. The loss of web traffic also meant a loss of exposure relating to other important parts of ACT's campaign, defeating the purpose of e-campaigning, said the team. In this election the team decided to employ a different approach to campaign blogging by centralising all ACT's campaign blogs under the party's campaign website because the team perceived that in doing so, it could increase web traffic and exposure of various aspects of ACT's campaign, thereby enhancing the outcome of ACT's e-campaigning.

In all, output quality encouraged as well as dissuaded ACT's e-campaigning utilisation. In other words, the impact of the factor on ACT's e-campaigning consisted of two facets: positive and negative.

7.4.6 Summary

ACT's e-campaigning utilisation in the 2008 general election was shaped by five factors in Table 2.2, namely, voters' technology access, resource availability, subjective norm, image, and output quality. Each factor in essence represents a unique perspective, therefore, ACT's e-campaigning utilisation has been explained from five perspectives. Various specific and contextual instances that occurred in ACT's e-campaigning utilisation have been presented to illustrate the factors, lending valuable insights into this unique phenomenon. Table 7.2 highlights the five factors that influenced ACT's e-campaigning utilisation.

Table 7.2 The factors influencing ACT's e-campaigning utilisation

Factor	Dual impact	Moderated by
Voters' technology access	●	Resource availability
Resource availability	●	
Subjective norm		Resource availability
Image		
Output quality	●	

As noted in the table, the impacts of some factors, such as voters' technology access, consisted of two facets: positive and negative. This means that those factors were enablers as well as inhibitors of ACT's e-campaigning utilisation. Occasionally, the impacts of voters' technology access and subjective norm were moderated by another factor – resource availability. Taken together, it suggests that ACT's e-campaigning utilisation was complex, contextual, and dynamic.

7.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the key findings from the case study relating to ACT's e-campaigning utilisation in the 2008 general election. It has comprehensively analysed the breadth and depth of ACT's e-campaigning utilisation. Based on that, it has identified and illustrated in depth the five factors that influenced ACT's e-campaigning utilisation.

Chapter 8 The Progressives' e-campaigning utilisation

8.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter presents the key findings from the fifth case study: the Progressives' e-campaigning utilisation in the 2008 general election. This chapter proceeds as follows: section 8.2 outlines the case background; then, section 8.3 and 8.4 answer the first and second research questions respectively; and last, section 8.5 summarises this chapter.

8.2 Case background

The Progressives was launched in 2002 with a particular emphasis on full employment, high incomes, skills, and innovation. The party was established just before the 2002 general election as a result of Jim Anderton, the party's founder and leader, departing from the Alliance, a left-wing political party no longer represented in Parliament. The Progressives positioned itself as a close political ally of Labour, supporting only a Labour-led government. Since its formation, the Progressives had twice been in coalition with Labour. The party held one seat in Parliament before the 2008 general election, making it the smallest party in Parliament.

Anderton first entered Parliament as a Labour electorate MP in 1984. In less than two years, however, he became an independent MP. He was then involved in two other political parties before the Progressives. In his political career thus far Anderton had held various ministerial portfolios, such as agriculture, health, and tertiary education. In this election Anderton contested the Wigram electorate, which he had held since 1996.

A 'micro', central campaign team was set up to take charge of all aspects of the Progressives' election campaign. Because of the inability to reach, or even come close to, the 5 per cent party vote threshold in any past general election, the party's campaign team indicated that the electorate vote for Anderton formed the core of the Progressives' election campaigning in this election. The party also attempted

to return at least its deputy leader to the next parliament chiefly with party votes. Put differently, the Progressives' election campaigning embraced both the party and electorate votes with the latter being the core focus.

The Progressives' website (www.progressive.org.nz) was employed as the only platform for the party's e-campaigning. It is worth noting that the party's website was completely revamped solely for the purpose of election campaigning. Figure 8.1 depicts the home page of the campaign website. The Progressives' campaign team indicated that it did not intend to run an 'aggressive' e-campaign and the primary focus of the party's e-campaign was on increasing the awareness and exposure of the party and its key election policies – in other words, disseminating campaign information. That, said the team, was prompted by several surveys conducted by the party, indicating that only 18 per cent of voters 'had ever heard of the Progressives' and the party leader was better known than the party.

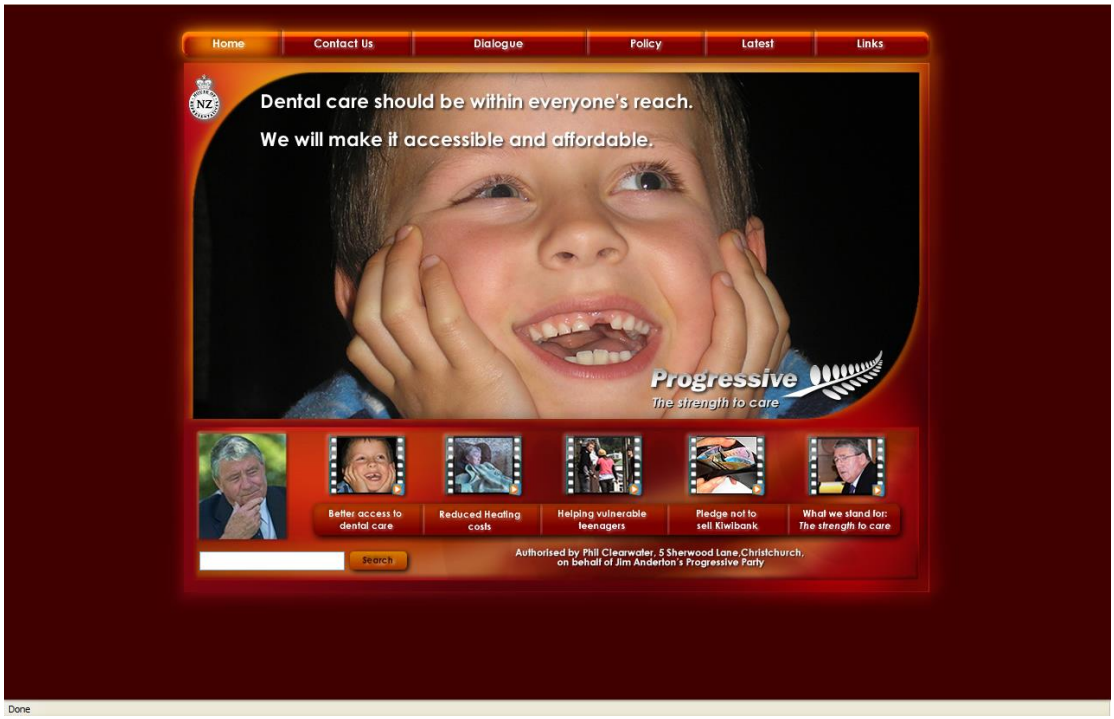

Figure 8.1 The home page of the Progressives' campaign website

8.3 The Progressives' e-campaigning utilisation and its extent

On the basis of the proposed e-campaigning framework, the Progressives' e-campaigning encompassed four campaign practices, namely, information dissemination, voter interaction and engagement, support mobilisation, and targeted campaigning. Those practices were conducted to varying degrees. The analysis in this section is structured according to the practices. This section is concluded with a summary.

8.3.1 Information dissemination

Disseminating campaign information was prominent on the Progressives' campaign website, in line with the primary focus of the party's e-campaigning as indicated by the campaign team. More specifically, the home page was dominated by a slideshow of several images with the campaign slogan, 'The strength to care', and specific campaign messages. Each of those images, also displayed in a smaller size beneath the slideshow, represented an election policy. Based on this, the Progressives' key election policies pertained to dental care, power costs, vulnerable teenagers, and Kiwibank. Clicking on a smaller image representing a particular policy rendered the 'Policy' page, which could also be accessed by clicking on a text button with the same name on the top of all web pages. Despite being a minor party, the Progressives exhibited broad policy coverage on the policy page, touching on diverse subjects, such as broadband Internet, health, and immigration. The key election policies were situated above other policies that were in alphabetical order. Each key policy was accompanied by a professionally-produced online video that featured the party leader succinctly explaining the rationale and significance of the particular policy. All online videos were provided in two file formats. Clicking on any policy rendered its full details.

The Progressives' news, speeches, and press releases were deposited under the 'Latest' page, collectively forming another main segment of the party's campaign information. Each item on that page was listed as a clickable headline with its release date. Clicking on an item rendered its full content. Further, based on the time stamps, the content on the 'Latest' page was frequently refreshed, especially

in the lead-up to polling day. It is worth noting that each news article, speech, or press release was attached with a disclaimer. It first indicated that the article, speech, or press release was issued by Anderton. It then suggested that 'MPs' press releases and speeches are part of the normal course of business of elected representatives. We do not believe they are election advertisements within the Electoral Finance Act, and nor was the Act intended to apply to them.' 'However,' it continued, 'because some people are confused about the Act, and because the Progressive Party is proud to confirm our responsibility for what we say.' The disclaimer was concluded with the party's authorising statement.

Other campaign information on the website included contact details and party information. The former were located under 'Contact Us' and the latter was disseminated in an online video, under the policy page, in which Anderton highlighted the values and principles of the party. A search engine was provided on the website, enabling information retrieval with keywords. It is however worth noting that information relating to the party's candidates and campaign events was absent.

8.3.2 Voter interaction and engagement

The Progressives' e-campaign consisted of two features of voter interaction and engagement. The first pertained to three email links for directly interacting with the party's head office, Anderton, and his electorate office.

The second feature was especially noteworthy. More specifically, on the 'Dialogue' page, voters were encouraged to initiate discussions or post comments. Each discussion or comment was displayed as a short phrase with a time stamp. Clicking on it rendered its full content. The subjects involved were diverse, ranging from the Progressives' performance on a televised election debate to the Progressives' key election policies. Also, some discussions and comments consisted of multimedia content, namely, image, audio, and video. The number of discussions and comments suggests a noticeable level of voter participation. It was somewhat unorthodox to participate, however. More specifically, instead of directly initiating a discussion or posting a comment, voters first needed to click on a link and submit any discussion or comment for review. The discussion or

comment would then be published on the 'Dialogue' page if it was deemed both inoffensive and constructive. It is worth noting that the party leader's participation was often observed. Figure 8.2 depicts the 'Dialogue' page.

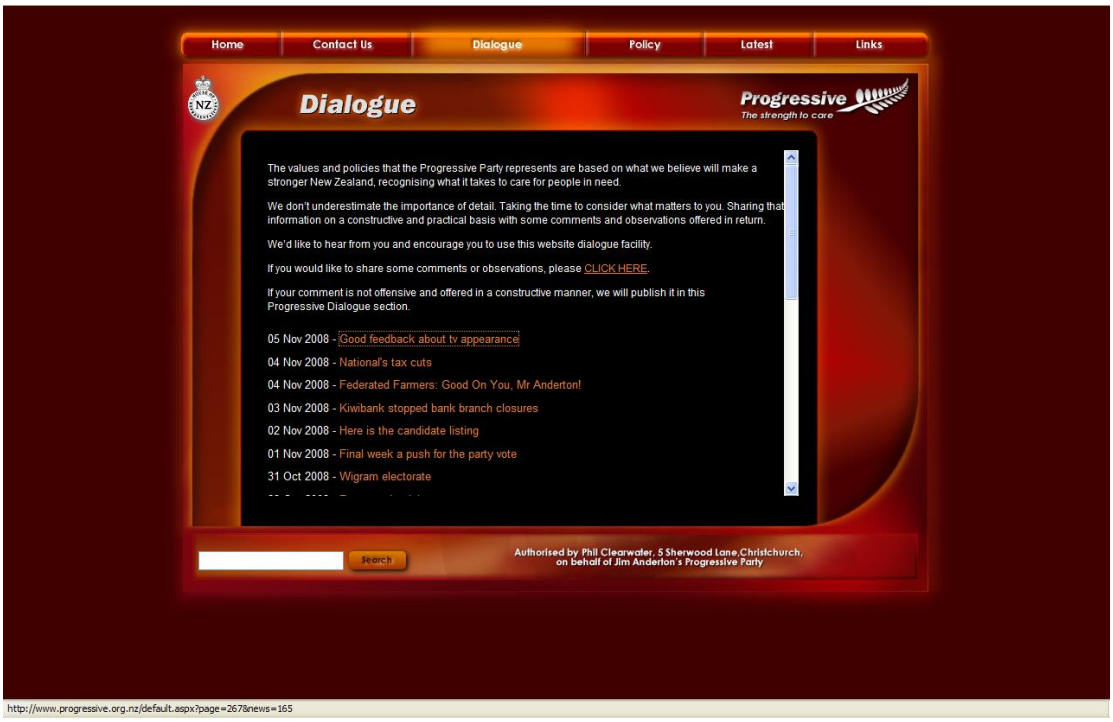

Figure 8.2 The 'Dialogue' page on the Progressives' campaign website

8.3.3 Support mobilisation

The Progressives' e-campaign consisted of a link to an external website named 'Support Progressive'. As its name clearly suggested, that website was intended for mobilising voter support for the party. Its appearance was almost identical to the Progressives' campaign website, as depicted in Figure 8.3. Three unique features on the external website were worth noting.

First, the website included a party list of 27 candidates in the election. An image and a brief profile was provided for each candidate. As noted, the list and candidate information was absent from the Progressives' campaign website. Second, the external website consisted of another professionally-produced video that featured Anderton highlighting the significance of casting votes for his party. In other words, the online video was aimed at encouraging votes for the Progressives. Last, the website for supporting the Progressives enabled online donations directly to the party. This involved a credit card and completing a secure

web form. An online video was also provided in which Anderton explained the difference each donation made in empowering his party to fight for and achieve its political causes.

Figure 8.3 The website for supporting the Progressives

The last speech by Anderton before the election also exhibited strong vote encouragement. More specifically, in his speech titled 'A Final Word from Jim', Anderton suggested that the election was essentially a choice between 'a government that has the strength to care for its people' and '[a] return to the failed policies in the past'. The party leader then asserted that his party belonged to the former and urged voters to give the Progressives their party votes in order to 'achieve even more progress'.

8.3.4 Targeted campaigning

National and some of its policies were repeatedly targeted in the Progressives' e-campaigning. For instance, in promoting its policies on Kiwibank and paid annual leave, the Progressives respectively criticised National, if in government, for planning to sell Kiwibank, the only bank owned by New Zealanders, and trade the worker's work-life balance for the employer's additional financial gain.

Another instance could be located in the Progressives' news, speeches, or press releases. More specifically, in a news article, Anderton attacked National's tax policy by describing it as 'destructive', 'anti-business', and 'anti-family'.

A particular voter group also formed an object of the Progressives' targeted campaigning. More specifically, in a press release Anderton indicated that the demise of New Zealand First, a political party that also provided the Labour-led government with confidence and supply, was imminent after the election. Therefore, a vote for New Zealand First in the upcoming election, said Anderton, was almost certainly a 'wasted' vote. To that end, Anderton suggested that supporters of New Zealand First should instead cast their votes for the Progressives. Simply put, part of the Progressives' e-campaign was specifically targeted at New Zealand First supporters.

8.3.5 Summary

Table 8.1 summarises the Progressives' e-campaigning utilisation and its extent with the proposed e-campaigning framework. It suggests that the Progressives' e-campaigning focused most on targeted campaigning, closely followed by information dissemination. By comparison, support mobilisation was least focused on.

Four areas of the Progressives' e-campaigning utilisation deserve highlighting. First, although the Progressives' campaign team indicated that the electorate vote for Anderton formed the core focus of the party's election campaigning in general, it was not reflected in the party's e-campaigning. Rather, the Progressives' e-campaigning appeared to embrace only the party vote. Second, the Progressives' campaign videos appeared to be professionally produced and highly polished. Third, the Progressives is thus far the first party in this study that provided a facility akin to a discussion forum. Last, the party leader also participated in discussions and commenting, which appeared to stimulate and maintain voter participation. It is also worth noting that the Progressives' e-campaign exhibited various means to encourage votes; this, however, is not captured by the framework.

Table 8.1 The Progressives' e-campaigning utilisation and its extent

Campaign practice	Content elements	Present
Information dissemination	Political party's information	●
	Candidate biography	
	Press releases	●
	Policy statements	●
	Campaign news	●
	Campaign events	
	Speeches	●
	Contact information	●
	Information relating to the political party's other online presence	
	Campaign blog without visitor comments allowed	
Voter interaction and engagement	Instant chat or messaging	
	Instant opinion polls	
	Instant surveys	
	Applications for interacting with the political party's policies	
	Interactive calendar of campaign events	
	Means to contact the political party	●
	Discussion forums	●
	Campaign blog with visitor comments allowed	
	Means to provide feedback	●
Support mobilisation	Means for voters to invite their peers to participate in campaign events	
	Means to inform voters of electoral information	
	Means for voters to receive campaign information and updates	
	Means for voters to connect with supporter groups	
	Means for voters to download campaign material	
	Means for voters to forward campaign material to others	
	Means to encourage votes*	●
Targeted campaigning	Content targeted at political opponents	●
	Content targeted at political opponents' policies	●
	Content targeted at specific voter segments	●

Note: * Not present in the proposed e-campaigning framework

8.4 The factors influencing the Progressives' e-campaigning utilisation

The Progressives' e-campaigning utilisation was attributable to five factors in Table 2.2, namely, electoral regulations, resource availability, image, job relevance, and output quality. The remainder of this section is organised according to those factors. This section is concluded with a summary.

8.4.1 Electoral regulations

The Progressives' campaign team indicated that early in the campaign period the party was reported to the police by the Electoral Commission for breaching the

EFA 2007. More specifically, the Progressives was alleged to have campaigned on different occasions without a promoter statement or an accurate one. Because of that, said the team, every news article, speech, and press release on the Progressives' campaign website carried a promoter statement. This illustrated the impact of electoral regulations on the Progressives' e-campaigning. The team further described other notable instances related to this factor.

As mentioned, the Progressives' party website was completely revamped solely for the purpose of election campaigning. This was partly prompted by the EFA 2007. As the team explained, the Act specifically recognised the distinction between parliamentary and party resources; election campaigning in any form with parliamentary resources was strictly prohibited. Accordingly, the team 'had no choice but to rebuild [the Progressives'] party website from the ground up' for election campaigning because the original website was considerably supported by parliamentary resources. The team further indicated that the absence of fundraising on the Progressives' campaign website was, in part, for the same reason.

The team pointed out that the Progressives' post-election survival was exclusively contingent on the re-election of Anderton because various pre-election opinion polls constantly had the party at below 1 per cent of the party vote, 'well short of the 5 per cent threshold needed to return to Parliament'. The candidate vote for Anderton therefore formed the core focus of the Progressives' election campaigning in general. However, as highlighted, the focus was not at all observed in the party's e-campaigning. Rather, the Progressives' e-campaigning appeared to concentrate on the party vote. This seeming inconsistency was ascribed to electoral regulations. As the team explained, there were strict spending caps on both party and candidate campaigning. Had the Progressives' e-campaigning chiefly focused on the candidate vote for Anderton, it could have been perceived by the public, particularly the Electoral Commission, as a candidate campaign rather than a tactic of party campaigning. Accordingly, most, if not all, costs of the Progressives' e-campaigning would have been counted towards the spending limit of Anderton's candidate campaigning as opposed to party campaigning. That, said the team, would have substantially compromised other crucial campaign activities

designated for Anderton's candidacy in order to 'stay within the law'. Consequently, the team 'made damn sure that [the Progressives'] web campaign didn't come across as electorate-centric'.

In general, electoral regulations both propelled and restrained the Progressives' e-campaigning. The EFA 2007 was the primary regulation influencing the Progressives' e-campaigning. Although the Act propelled the party to completely revamp its website for election campaigning, which 'was a good thing in some ways', its impact on the Progressives' e-campaigning was mainly 'unfavourable', said the team. The team further stressed that it was the poor clarity and 'incompetent' administration of the Act, rather than the spirit of it, that 'caused headaches and frustration' in the Progressives' e-campaigning.

8.4.2 Resource availability

According to the campaign team, the Progressives' campaign budget was 'extraordinarily tiny'. More than half of the budget came from funds allocated by the Electoral Commission for producing and broadcasting the party's election programmes on designated national television and radio. Then, a considerable amount had to be spent on legal costs because the party was reported to the police on different occasions for allegedly contravening the EFA 2007, of which the party was a vocal proponent. Subsequently, barely any financial resources remained for campaigning. In addition, the human resources available for the party's election campaigning were 'remarkably small'. Consequently, the team decided to chiefly engage in e-campaigning and lessen or forgo some prominent traditional campaign activities.

As the team explained, for a long time, the Progressives' party campaigning had strongly featured 'putting up election billboards, dropping campaign leaflets, writing letters, and door-to-door canvassing'. All those activities were 'heavy' on campaign resources, namely, money, time, and campaign personnel. Moreover, for those activities to be 'meaningful', they had to be 'carried out on a national scale'; in other words, they had to be duplicated in various regions across the country. Needless to say, the Progressives' traditional election campaigning required 'tremendous' campaign resources. For that reason, resource availability had

always been a 'compelling' obstacle in the Progressives' campaigning. And it was more so in this election because of the unexpected expenditure on legal costs. The team found that in stark contrast, it consumed far fewer resources to post the content on the campaign website that normally featured in the party's election billboards, campaign leaflets, letters to voters, and door-to-door canvassing. And, more importantly, the reach of the website was beyond regional and even national; 'it's international.' This meant that duplicating campaign activities as commonly found in the Progressives' traditional campaigning was unnecessary. Given the especially limited campaign resources available to the Progressives' campaign team, the team decided to chiefly engage in e-campaigning and reduce or 'drop' some of the party's long-established campaign activities, such as leaflet dropping and door-to-door canvassing.

Still, there were occasions where resource availability restricted the Progressives' e-campaigning utilisation. For instance, the team indicated that the fundraising element on the Progressives' previous party website could not be migrated to the party's campaign website as the element was 'paid for by the taxpayer earlier'. However, the team did not intend to develop a new fundraising element partly due to limited resource availability.

In stark contrast to many of its counterparts, the Progressives did not include any social media, such as Facebook or YouTube, in e-campaigning. That was partly ascribable to resource availability. As the team explained, 'doing anything beyond a simple, static website is enormously expensive – we're talking about at least hundreds of thousands of dollars – and it takes a good chunk of time to plan, build, implement, and manage'. It was therefore 'pointless to even think about having an interactive website, such as Facebook', based on the limited campaign resources available to the team.

In short, resource availability encouraged as well as constrained the Progressives' e-campaigning utilisation. In other words, the impact of the factor on the Progressives' e-campaigning consisted of two facets: positive and negative.

8.4.3 Image

As noted, the EFA 2007 left the Progressives' campaign team with no choice but to revamp the party's website for election campaigning. According to the team, even without the Act, the website would have been rebuilt for campaigning, due to the team's consideration of the Progressives' 'branding'. In other words, image was another factor prompting the rebuild of the Progressives' website for election campaigning. More specifically, the team noted that the previous party website was 'dull', 'very average', and 'quite unmemorable'. And these were not the characteristics with which the team wanted the party to be associated, especially in an election. As the team pointed out, 'People simply wouldn't think much of a party if its presence is boring and forgettable.' Accordingly, the team decided to present a unique, striking, and appealing website that 'would stand out in the crowd'. As the team put it, 'When people visited the [revamped] website, they would go, "This is a very different sort of political party; it is bold, sharp, and refreshing."'

As highlighted, the Progressives' e-campaign featured a series of campaign videos that appeared to be professionally produced and highly polished. This, according to the team, was inspired by the consideration of the party's image. More specifically, the team indicated that all the party's online campaign videos were indeed 'very professionally written, shot, produced, and edited', so that the party would appear conscientious, sharp, and polished in the election. The team added, 'It's extremely critical to spend a decent amount of time and effort on presentation because … no one wants themselves or anything they're promoting to look shoddy.'

Although the Progressives' e-campaign strongly encouraged visitors to post comments or initiate discussions on any subject, restrictions were imposed. As noted, no comments or discussions by visitors would become public without first being reviewed by the campaign team and subsequently being considered to be inoffensive and constructive. This was solely driven by the team's concern over the Progressives' image. As the team pointed out, without any restrictions, the party's campaign website would have attracted 'highly motivated people who would say all sorts of untruthful, cynical, and abusive stuff – for example, "Oh you

dirty socialist!" – just to wreck the party's image and reputation'. In addition, the team admitted that criticism of the party or the party's election policies was not published. As the team put it, 'no shops would ever publish their customer complaints at the front door, saying "Hey, come and read them". It's all about image.' Simply put, the team perceived that imposing restrictions on comments and discussions by visitors would protect the Progressives' political image. The team added that moderating every comment and discussion was time-consuming, which went against any implication purely based on resource availability. However, the team continued, the party's image took precedence over any other consideration. This suggests that the impact of resource availability was moderated by image.

The campaign team claimed that the Progressives' e-campaigning chiefly focused on promoting the party's election policies, which were wide-ranging. However, policy promotion in the Progressives' e-campaigning was confined to the policies pertaining to dental care, power costs, vulnerable teenagers, Kiwibank, and paid annual leave; other policies received no attention from the team. This, said the team, was shaped by image considerations. As the team explained, had the Progressives campaigned on 'too many' policies that it wanted to pursue if in government, it would have 'instantly looked like a political party with very little credibility because people would go, "You're such a small party; you just can't do it"'. In order to appear credible in the election, the Progressives' policy promotion was confined to 'a very small fraction' of its wide-ranging election policies.

In general, the team's consideration of the Progressives' political image inspired as well as restricted the party's e-campaigning utilisation. In other words, the impact of the factor on the Progressives' e-campaigning consisted of two facets: positive and negative. It is worth highlighting the instance relating to restrictions being imposed on comments and discussions by visitors, as it suggests that the impact of resource availability was moderated by another factor – image.

8.4.4 Job relevance

As noted, National and some of its policies were frequently targeted in the Progressives' e-campaigning. This was partly motivated by job relevance. As the

team explained, in election campaigning or, in a broader context, politics, 'it's an integral and very significant part of the job [that] political parties take aim at their opponents'. The team further noted that in this election, some of the Progressives' core election policies and political achievements were often under National's attacks, for instance, National announced in the election that if in power, it intended to completely abolish the $700 million private-public research partnership that was set up by the Progressives and regarded as a key political achievement of the party. To that end, the team considered it 'completely necessary and appropriate' to attack National and some of its stances as part of Progressives' campaigning.

Another factor that dissuaded the Progressives' campaign team from rebuilding a fundraising element with the party's campaign resources for e-campaigning pertained to job relevance. More specifically, the team pointed out that its US counterparts had always enthusiastically devoted 'a massive amount of campaign effort' to soliciting campaign donations from many individual voters because 'that's a huge part of election campaigning over there'. However, the team perceived that election campaigning in New Zealand 'is mostly about promoting policies and rallying support; asking for money from multiple individual voters represents only a tiny part [of election campaigning]'. This, combined with the availability of the Progressives' campaign resources, prompted the team to exclude online donation from the party's revamped website.

The Progressives' campaign team indicated that its decision to forfeit social media in e-campaigning was informed by two factors. One, as noted, pertained to resource availability and the other job relevance. As the team pointed out, the Progressives 'isn't a broad church party'. On that note, the party's voter base was small and specific. The team continued to note that in this election, it was predominantly young people who engaged in social media, such as Bebo, Facebook, and YouTube. They were not part of the Progressives' target voters. Therefore, 'What's the damn point of going to some place to preach where the majority of people aren't even your target audience?' said the team. Simply put, the exclusion of social media from the Progressives' e-campaigning was partly due to the team's

perception relating to the relevance of social media to the target audience of the party's election campaign.

Overall, job relevance motivated as well as discouraged the Progressives' e-campaigning utilisation. In other words, the impact of the factor on the Progressives' e-campaigning consisted of two facets: positive and negative.

8.4.5 Output quality

That National and some of its policies were frequently targeted in the Progressives' e-campaigning was also inspired by output quality. As the team explained, despite the advent of e-campaigning, regular exposure in the mainstream media remained crucial. However, the team continued, the media was chiefly interested in the two major parties, small parties such as the Progressives barely got mentioned in the media, let alone on a regular basis. The team believed that 'the best way' to occupy a regular spot in the mainstream media during the entire election was to attack National and some of its policies in the Progressives' e-campaigning. More specifically, by frequently attacking National over some of its 'stupid election promises like selling Kiwibank' on the Progressives' campaign website, it could cause strong controversy. This could subsequently result in the Progressives being mentioned or even interviewed by different media outlets because of the perceived partiality of the media for controversy. In turn, the team added, more voters might want to 'find out what [the Progressives] is on about', thus boosting the traffic to the Progressives' campaign website, which formed additional desirable outcomes. Simply put, National and some of its policies were frequently targeted in the Progressives' e-campaigning partly because of three desirable outcomes perceived by the team, namely, regular exposure of the Progressives in the mainstream media, growing voter interest in the party, and increasing web traffic to the party's campaign website.

As noted, the content or activities beyond the Progressives' election policies were sparse in the party's e-campaigning. This, according to the party's campaign team, was due to the perceived outcome. More specifically, the team noted that it wanted the attention of all visitors to the Progressives' campaign website to be engaged by the party's election policies above all. Further, the attention span of the average

voter pertaining to an election campaign was perceived as short. Consequently, any non-policy-related e-campaigning content or activities could perceivably distract visitors' attention from the Progressives' election policies, an undesirable outcome. To that end, the campaign team intentionally limited e-campaigning content or activities unrelated to the Progressives' election policies in order to avoid derailing the main purpose of the party's e-campaigning – promoting the Progressives' election policies.

The campaign team expressed that mobilising voters to attend any offline campaign event promoting the Progressives' election policies was particularly excluded from the party's campaign website because it was perceived to result in a 'disastrous' outcome. More specifically, the team believed that to mobilise voters to attend an offline event promoting the party's election policies, it would have to refrain from publishing those policies on the party's campaign website beforehand – otherwise, it would be repetitive, therefore wasting campaign resources and disincentivising voters from attending the event. On that note, 'What's going to happen', asked the team, 'when people come to [the Progressives'] website, wanting to learn about [the Progressives'] policies, only to be told [that] they won't be able to find out anything unless they come to this offline meeting … or come back to the website after the meeting?' 'Most of them are going to roll their eyes and be pissed off; they won't be bothered to visit the website ever again. That's certainly not the outcome we would want,' the team continued. It was also pointed out that in the overseas e-campaigns that the team closely followed, mobilising voters to participate in offline campaign events not only consumed campaign resources 'enormously' but also 'failed badly'. That reinforced the team's belief that online efforts to mobilise voters to attend offline campaign events would not lead to any desirable outcome, hence the exclusion.

In all, output quality stimulated as well as dampened the Progressives' e-campaigning utilisation. That is, the impact of the factor on the Progressives' e-campaigning consisted of two facets: positive and negative.

8.4.6 Summary

The Progressives' e-campaigning utilisation in the 2008 general election was shaped by five factors in Table 2.2, namely, electoral regulations, resource availability, image, job relevance, and output quality. Each factor in essence represents a unique perspective, therefore, the Progressives' e-campaigning utilisation has been explained from five perspectives. Various specific and contextual instances that occurred in the Progressives' e-campaigning utilisation have been presented to illustrate the factors, lending valuable insights into this unique phenomenon. Table 8.2 highlights the five factors that influenced the Progressives' e-campaigning utilisation.

Table 8.2 The factors influencing the Progressives' e-campaigning utilisation

Factor	Dual impact	Moderated by
Electoral regulations	●	
Resource availability	●	Image
Image	●	
Job relevance	●	
Output quality	●	

As indicated in the table, the impact of any given factor on the Progressives' e-campaigning utilisation consisted of two facets: positive and negative. This means that each factor was an enabler as well as an inhibitor of the Progressives' e-campaigning utilisation. On one occasion, the impact of resource availability was moderated by another factor – image. Taken together, it suggests that the Progressives' e-campaigning utilisation was complex, contextual, and dynamic.

8.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the key findings from the case study relating to the Progressives' e-campaigning utilisation in the 2008 general election. It has comprehensively analysed the breadth and depth of the Progressives' e-campaigning utilisation. Based on that, it has identified and illustrated in depth the five factors that influenced the Progressives' e-campaigning utilisation.

Chapter 9 United Future's e-campaigning utilisation

9.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter presents the key findings from the final case study: United Future's e-campaigning utilisation in the 2008 general election. This chapter proceeds as follows: section 9.2 outlines the case background; then, section 9.3 and 9.4 answer the first and second research questions respectively; and last, section 9.5 summarises this chapter.

9.2 Case background

United Future was founded in 2000 as a result of an amalgamation of two minor political parties, namely the United New Zealand Party and the Future New Zealand Party. United Future is underpinned by several principles collectively promoting 'a fair, democratic and open society, founded on role of law, integrity and justice'. Despite being a vital support partner of the Labour-led government before the election, United Future positions itself as a centrist, liberal party, focusing on 'New Zealand's best interests'. The party occupied three seats in Parliament before the 2008 general election.

Since its birth, United Future has been led by Peter Dunne. Unlike his party, Dunne was not a newcomer to New Zealand politics. He first entered Parliament in 1984 as a Labour MP for the Ohariu electorate and has held the electorate since. Dunne left Labour in 1994. Following that, he became an independent MP and was then involved in two minor political parties prior to United Future. Dunne has held various ministerial portfolios under both National-led and Labour-led governments.

A central campaign team with 'only a handful of people' was established in the election, overseeing and executing various facets of United Future's election campaign. The campaign team noted that United Future fell significantly below the 5 per cent party vote threshold in the 2005 general election, which was expected to continue in the 2008 election according to various opinion polls. Because of that,

United Future's survival after the election was mainly reliant on Dunne getting re-elected in his electorate. To that end, the candidate vote for Dunne formed a crucial focus in United Future's election campaigning. The team emphasised that attracting party votes for United Future was not 'off the table' as they determined the number of the party's list MPs in the next parliament. In other words, United Future contested both the party vote and the candidate vote. The team further suggested that United Future was 'the party that probably used web-based campaigning least of all', because the chief focus of the party's e-campaigning was confined to ensuring all key campaign information – such as policy documents, news articles, and speeches – were expeditiously and correctly placed on the party's website (www.unitedfuture.org.nz). This also suggests that United Future's party website served as the only platform for the party's e-campaigning. The team further pointed out that most of the content on United Future's campaign website predated the campaign period. Figure 9.1 exhibits the home page of United Future's campaign website.

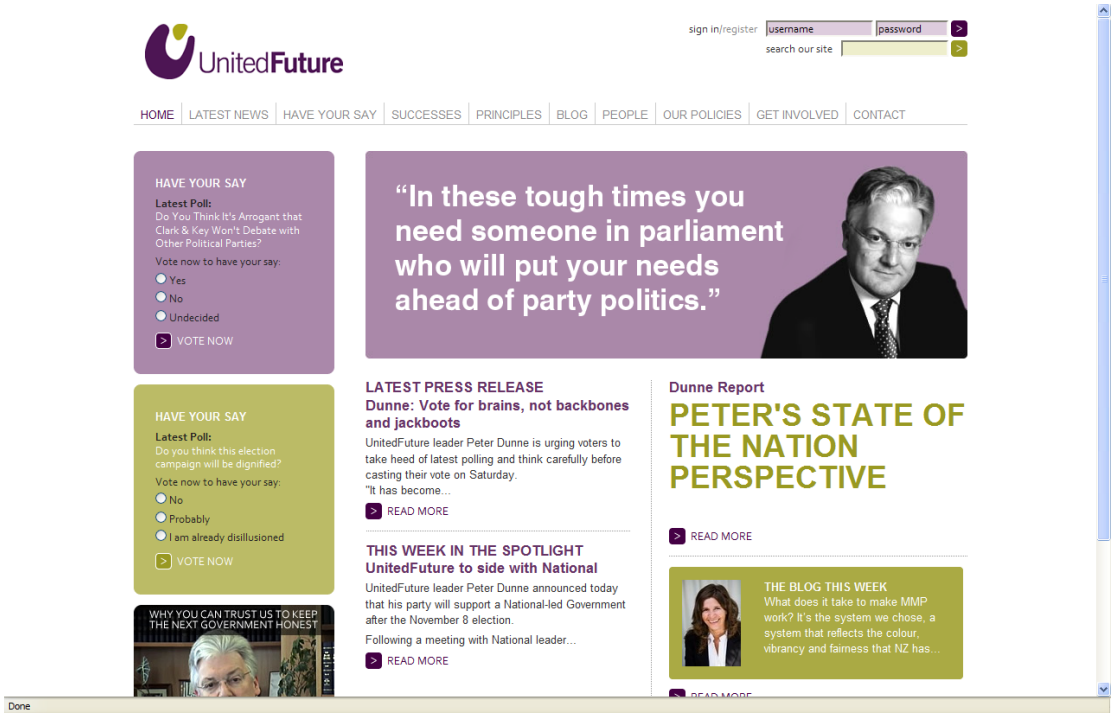

Figure 9.1 The home page of United Future's campaign website

9.3 United Future's e-campaigning utilisation and its extent

On the basis of the proposed e-campaigning framework, United Future's e-campaigning encompassed all five practices, namely, information dissemination, voter interaction and engagement, support mobilisation, targeted campaigning, and resource generation. Those practices were conducted to varying degrees. The analysis in this section is structured according to the practices. This section is concluded with a summary.

9.3.1 Information dissemination

Information dissemination was significant in United Future's e-campaigning. In general, United Future's campaign information was thorough and well-structured. Prominently featuring on United Future's home page was an image of Dunne with the party's campaign message: 'In this tough time you need someone in Parliament who will put your needs ahead of party politics.' Also note that United Future's campaign comprised several campaign messages, which periodically rotated on the party's website. The latest press release and campaign news were partially displayed at the centre of the home page. Upon clicking, the press release or the campaign news was rendered in full on a new page called 'Latest News', where all press releases, speeches, and news articles were collectively located. The news page comprised two main sections: one listing clickable entries and the other displaying the chosen entry in its entirety. Each entry was attached with a time stamp. Based on the time stamps, United Future's campaign news, speeches, and press releases were frequently refreshed, especially in the lead-up to the election.

Extensive party information was disseminated. More specifically, the 'Principles' page detailed the party's mission and founding principles. The 'Successes' page highlighted a selection of the party's political achievements, such as raising the driving age, extending daylight saving time, and ensuring stable government under MMP. Also on that page was a section called 'What Others Are Saying'. The section was in essence a selection of opinion pieces penned by different recognised political commentators and published in different outlets during 2007. Those opinion pieces praised the political performance of United Future and its

leader, particularly for the party ensuring the stability and accountability of the Labour-led government. The contact information of the party and its board members was also detailed.

All United Future's election policies were put under 'Our Policies'. The policy page comprised two main sections: one listing clickable policy topics and the other displaying the policy relating to the chosen topic in full. Despite being a minor party, United Future exhibited broad policy coverage. The policy page consisted of 39 policy topics, ranging from 'Climate Change' to 'Savings'. Each policy could be downloaded for offline viewing. The page also contained a document titled 'The Dunne Report: Peter's State of the Nation Perspective', highlighting the party's key election policies associated with tax reform, children, family, health care, and outdoor recreation. The link to the report also prominently featured on the home page. United Future's key election policies were further promoted in the party's campaign blogs penned by Judy Turner and Denise Krum, the deputy leader and the party president respectively.

All United Future candidates' biographies were provided under the 'People' page. In general, each biography contained a candidate's photo, contact information, education and work background, and notable achievements. Information relating to the party's offline support events was listed by region under 'Get Involved'.

A search function was included on United Future's website, allowing the party's comprehensive campaign information to be retrieved with keywords. Also note that United Future's campaign information was disseminated almost entirely in text form.

9.3.2 Voter interaction and engagement

United Future's efforts to interact and engage with voters in its e-campaigning were notable. The home page featured two recent opinion polls that were related to the election and conducted by United Future. One poll questioned: 'Do you think it's arrogant Clark & Key won't debate with other leaders?' The other asked: 'Do you think this election campaign will be dignified?' Each poll consisted of three options and a text button labelled 'Vote Now'. After casting a vote, a new page

rendered. The page was called 'Have Your Say', where 'you can read what others think on key issues, and you can let us know your views,' said the party. In other words, the page entirely focused on voters. The party also stated on the page, 'the only reason for our existence is to represent the voice of the people in our parliament. Any party that is not constantly in touch with the views of the people is simply not doing its job.' The page allowed visitors to view both 'current' and previous polls. As depicted in Figure 9.2, if a current poll was selected, the context of the poll question was provided. In addition, visitors were allowed to comment and view others' comments. After participating in a current poll, visitors were able to view its latest results. Visitors were unable to vote in previous polls; they could, however, view the results and comments of any previous poll.

Figure 9.2 A current poll conducted by United Future

United Future's website published three campaign blogs penned by Dunne, Turner, and Krum. They all enabled visitors to post and view comments. In addition to the polls and blogs, visitors were able to comment on the party's campaign news, speeches, and press releases.

In general, United Future attracted a noticeable number of visitor comments in its polls, blogs, campaign news, speeches, and press releases. Also, the party exchanged comments with visitors on various topics, which, as a result, appeared to stimulate and maintain visitors' participation. In order to post comments,

visitors were required to be registered and logged-in. All visitor comments were subject to the party's moderation. It is worth noting that when visitors chose to post or view comments on a topic, they were directed to another page called 'Discussion Forum', depicted in Figure 9.3. There, they could also post and view comments associated with other topics from the party's polls, blogs, campaign news, speeches, and press releases. However, visitors were unable to start their own discussion topics, a major feature of a discussion forum.

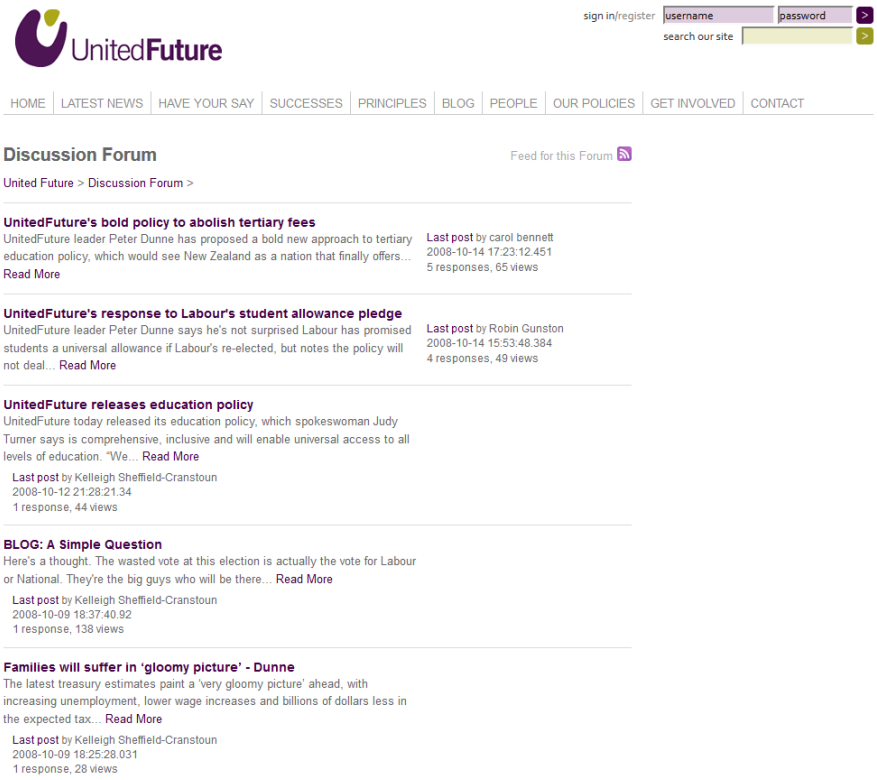

Figure 9.3 United Future's discussion forum

Other instances relating to United Future's online interaction and engagement with voters included directly emailing a candidate or board member by simply clicking on a link, and providing feedback to the party by completing a simple web form under the 'Contact' page.

9.3.3 Support mobilisation

Several elements on United Future's website related to the party's intention to generate and mobilise voter support. United Future enabled visitors to receive the latest campaign content with RSS. The content pertained to the party's campaign

blogs and discussion forum. Furthermore, the party provided links for visitors to spread the party's campaign news, speeches, press releases, and blogs to their friends via email. As noted, the website enabled visitors to download part of United Future's campaign material, namely the party's policy documents.

Only one campaign video was deployed in United Future's e-campaign, which was located on the home page of the party's website. The video, professionally produced and near five minutes in length, featured Dunne concentrating on explaining in depth the significance and benefits of United Future returning to the next parliament; for instance, Dunne asserted that 'We're going to be the party that you can rely on to keep the government honest, on track, and worthy of your trust.'

Support mobilisation was also profoundly reflected in United Future's campaign blog penned by Dunne, also referred to by the party as 'Peter's Position'. For instance, in a highly emotive blog post titled 'Our Time Is Coming', Dunne encouraged voters to lend United Future their support on polling day because, to name a few, the party offered 'fresh ideas', 'put families and communities first', and represented 'a genuine beacon of hope for the future'. On the basis of some visitor comments it received, the post appeared to generate or mobilise voter support to some extent; for instance, 'That's certainly a clear set of good enough reasons for anyone to support United Future!'

9.3.4 Targeted campaigning

During the campaign period, Dunne explicitly indicated that his party would support Labour's chief opponent, National, to form the next government. It was unsurprising that Labour and some of its key policies were targeted in United Future's e-campaigning. Notably, United Future's only online campaign video began with targeting Labour. More specifically, Dunne expressed that 'I'm one of those people who sat back over the last few years with increasing anger at the way in which the [Labour-led] government has stopped working with us, and it has started telling us what we have to do.' In a press release promoting United Future's tertiary education policy, United Future targeted one of Labour's key campaign pledges relating to a universal student allowance, describing it as merely a short-term solution.

Although United Future claimed to support National to lead the next government, it did not exclude this potential political partner from United Future's targeted campaigning. For instance, in a press release Dunne targeted National's income tax policy, describing it as complicated and unfair for some. He concluded by suggesting that 'If Kiwis want a tax system that is simple and fair, and won't break the bank, then they should vote United Future.' Put differently, targeted campaigning at other political counterparts formed another means for United Future's support mobilisation. In Dunne's blog post titled 'Memo to Helen Clark and John Key', both Labour and National were targeted. More specifically, Dunne began the post by agreeing with both Clark and Key that trust was unprecedentedly pivotal in this election. He however argued that neither of the major parties should be completely trusted to govern alone because while in government over the years, they both 'have become arrogant and have lost touch with ordinary New Zealanders'. Dunne then indicated that in stark contrast, United Future was entirely dependable for it had not 'overplayed its hand, or lied to people', but had consistently kept both major parties 'honest and in check'.

Though rare, two particular voter groups were targeted in United Future's e-campaigning. More specifically, in his blog post titled 'A Simple Question', Dunne suggested that votes for Labour or National were 'wasted' votes because 'They're the big guys who will be there anyway, whatever happens.' He then indicated that 'The most important vote is the one for the little guy who will keep the big guy honest and on track.' On that basis, Dunne concluded that votes should undoubtedly be cast for United Future. Put succinctly, both Labour and National voters were specifically targeted in United Future's e-campaigning in order to increase its votes.

9.3.5 Resource generation

Visitors were strongly encouraged to become a member of United Future. As the party stated, 'United Future makes a difference when our members make a difference.' The main benefits of becoming a party member were also outlined, for instance, 'You join this party because you know real people, with real names, and want to make a real difference in their lives. Unite with others around the country

in a cause that's bigger than us all.' It cost $15 to join United Future. It also involved completing a web form that solicited some personal information, namely, name, postal and email addresses, and a contact number. It is worth noting that online payment was not available. According to the website, once the web form had been completed and submitted, an email would be sent, advising payment options. Alternatively, visitors could download, print, and complete a membership form provided on the website, and post it to the party.

Financial contributions towards United Future's election campaign were also encouraged. The process was identical to that of becoming a party member. More specifically, donors were asked to complete and submit the same web form of becoming a party member. The party would then advise payment details by email. Alternatively, the membership form could be used for offline donations.

9.3.6 Summary

The table below summarises United Future's e-campaigning utilisation and its extent with the proposed e-campaigning framework. It suggests that United Future's e-campaigning focused most on targeted campaigning, closely followed by information dissemination. By comparison, resource generation was least focused on.

Six areas of United Future's e-campaigning utilisation deserve highlighting. First, although United Future's campaign team indicated that the candidate vote for Dunne formed the chief focus of the party's election campaigning in general, it was not reflected in the party's e-campaigning. Rather, United Future's e-campaigning appeared to solely concentrate on the party vote. Second, the political credibility and credentials of United Future and its leader penetrated deep into the party's e-campaigning. Third, United Future is the only party in this study that utilised opinion polls to interact and engage with voters. And the party exchanged comments with visitors, which seemed to stimulate and maintain voter interaction and engagement. Fourth, United Future is the second party in this study that opened multiple avenues, such as campaign news, speeches, press releases, campaign blogs, and opinion polls, for visitors to post comments. Fifth, multimedia content was rarely observed in United Future's e-campaigning. And last, not only

its political opponents but also its potential ally was targeted in United Future's e-campaigning. Also note that a content element in United Future's e-campaign is not captured by the proposed framework, namely means to encourage votes.

Table 9.1 United Future's e-campaigning utilisation and its extent

Campaign practice	Content elements	Present
Information dissemination	Political party's information	●
	Candidate biography	●
	Press releases	●
	Policy statements	●
	Campaign news	●
	Campaign events	●
	Speeches	●
	Contact information	●
	Information relating to the political party's other online presence	
	Campaign blog without visitor comments allowed	
Voter interaction and engagement	Instant chat or messaging	
	Instant opinion polls	●
	Instant surveys	
	Applications for interacting with the political party's policies	
	Interactive calendar of campaign events	
	Means to contact the political party	●
	Discussion forums	●
	Campaign blog with visitor comments allowed	●
	Means to provide feedback	●
Support mobilisation	Means for voters to invite their peers to participate in campaign events	
	Means to inform voters of electoral information	
	Means for voters to receive campaign information and updates	●
	Means for voters to connect with supporter groups	
	Means for voters to download campaign material	●
	Means for voters to forward campaign material to others	●
	Means to encourage votes*	●
Targeted campaigning	Content targeted at political opponents	●
	Content targeted at political opponents' policies	●
	Content targeted at specific voter segments	●
Resource generation	Means to make donations	●
	Online merchandise shop	
	Means to become a party member	●
	Means to become a volunteer	

Note: * Not present in the proposed e-campaigning framework

As noted, United Future's campaign team claimed that compared to its counterparts, the party probably exhibited the most limited e-campaigning utilisation during the election. There seems to be a discrepancy between that claim and the observation of this study. Such an apparent discrepancy, however, could

be largely explained by the team's indication, as noted, that a considerable portion of the content on the website predated the election.

9.4 The factors influencing United Future's e-campaigning utilisation

United Future's e-campaigning utilisation was attributable to six factors in Table 2.2, namely, voters' technology access, resource availability, subjective norm, image, output quality, and result demonstrability. The remainder of this section is organised according to those factors. This section is concluded with a summary.

9.4.1 Voters' technology access

United Future's online campaign video was one of the few elements specifically produced for the party's e-campaigning, according to the campaign team. The element was considered by the team as 'absolutely essential' to United Future's e-campaigning. The presence of this essential element in United Future's e-campaign was in part prompted by voters' technology access. As the team explained, in the previous election, broadband Internet was not widely accessible in New Zealand. It was therefore unsound for the team to pursue any online campaign video in the party's e-campaigning as broadband Internet was required. This election, however, presented 'a very different scenario'. The team noted that this election saw broadband Internet being accessible to a substantial number of New Zealand voters, making it 'compelling and worthwhile' for the team to deploy the online campaign video. Put succinctly, improved New Zealand voters' access to broadband Internet incentivised the team to incorporate the video in e-campaigning.

While broadband Internet access in New Zealand presented a crucial opportunity for United Future's e-campaigning utilisation in this election, it also served as a hindrance. As the team pointed out, broadband access was not optimal in the election. Notably, this Internet technology was still inaccessible in several parts of the country, particularly remote areas. Further, unlike other countries, broadband usage in New Zealand was highly restricted and expensive. Those limitations of broadband access consequently impacted on United Future's e-campaigning

utilisation. For instance, the team had to reduce the rendition quality of the professionally-produced campaign video. Also, the team had to limit the presence of multimedia content in United Future's e-campaign.

In general, New Zealand voters' broadband access encouraged as well as constrained United Future's e-campaigning utilisation. In other words, the impact of the factor on United Future's e-campaigning consisted of two facets: positive and negative.

9.4.2 Resource availability

As noted, United Future's campaign team considered its e-campaigning utilisation in the election to be probably the lowest among all parliamentary parties, largely because it primarily focused on ensuring key campaign information was expeditiously and accurately disseminated on the party's website. Such a narrow e-campaigning focus in part reflected the impact of resource availability.

More specifically, the team had an extremely limited budget covering all aspects of United Future's election campaign – online and offline, national and local. Over half of the campaign budget represented allocated funding from the Electoral Commission for producing and broadcasting United Future's election programmes on television and radio. And the remainder almost entirely went to other traditional campaign activities. In other words, hardly any financial resources were present for the party's e-campaigning in the election. Moreover, as a minor party, United Future had 'only a handful of people' undertaking the party's election campaigning. While e-campaigning 'might very well be resource-friendly, it's certainly not resource-free', said the team. On that note, United Future's e-campaigning primarily focused on 'covering the basic stuff, [which was] making sure all important campaign documents were put on the website correctly and as soon as possible. Anything else was just an added bonus'. This, said the team, meant that the party's e-campaigning was 'static', 'minimal,' and 'very passive', reflecting the amount of campaign resources available for United Future's e-campaigning. The team further suggested that it would have considered escalating United Future's e-campaigning utilisation – such as producing more campaign

videos or publishing more blog posts, had it had more campaign resources, namely, money, time, and campaign personnel.

Put succinctly, the availability, or more precisely the unavailability, of campaign resources forced United Future's campaign team to limit the primary focus of its e-campaigning utilisation to the extent that the party's e-campaigning was described by the team as 'static', 'minimal', and 'passive'. That is, the impact of resource availability on United Future's e-campaigning utilisation was negative.

9.4.3 Subjective norm

A key characteristic of the election, according to the campaign team, pertained to the emergence of various trends in e-campaigning. Some of them influenced United Future's e-campaigning utilisation. Notably, the team felt a new trend, both nationally and internationally, that political parties and candidates produced their own online videos for 'all sorts of things related to election campaigning'. Under the influence of that trend, the team perceived that it was 'absolutely essential' to deploy at least one campaign video of its own on the party's website in the election, or the party 'would be on the back foot'. That, together with the dramatically increased broadband Internet access in New Zealand, propelled the team to present the online campaign video that featured Dunne primarily mobilising voter support.

Campaign blogging was another e-campaigning trend influencing United Future's e-campaigning utilisation. More specifically, the team noticed an unprecedented phenomenon that campaign blogging formed a major constituent of many parties' e-campaigning in the election. It further convinced the team that campaign blogging had to be present and active in United Future's e-campaigning despite resource availability having already been the major constraint. As indicated, United Future's e-campaigning consisted of three campaign blogs, collectively focusing on information dissemination, voter interaction and engagement, support mobilisation, and targeted campaigning. This instance suggests that the impact of resource availability was moderated by subjective norm.

The campaign team added that it was highly selective in adopting any e-campaigning trend, because 'election campaigning of any kind is less about starting or going for new technological trends and more about getting core messages out to voters, engaging with them, and, hopefully, winning their support.'

As indicated, the primary focus of United Future's e-campaigning in this election was set on information dissemination, which almost certainly rendered the party's e-campaigning 'static', 'minimal', and 'passive'. Nevertheless, the team was unconcerned by that, partly due to the impact of subjective norm. As the team explained, most of United Future's supporters and target voters 'don't just sit on the computer all day and all night'; rather, 'they watch mainstream TV, listen to the radio, read the newspaper, and do other things.' Because of that, the team did not sense an expectation among the party's supporters and target voters that it had to deliver an extensive and expansive e-campaign. To that end, the team remained unperturbed if United Future's e-campaign appeared 'static', 'minimal' and 'passive' to the public.

In short, subjective norm encouraged and dissuaded United Future's e-campaigning utilisation. In other words, the impact of the factor on United Future's e-campaigning consisted of two facets: positive and negative. As illustrated, the norms perceived by the campaign team originated from e-campaigning trends, competitive pressure, or external expectations sensed by the team. It is worth noting the instance pertaining to campaign blogging for it suggests that the impact of resource availability was moderated by another factor – subjective norm. Also, it can be inferred from the team's perception relating to the essence of election campaigning that e-campaigning, as a form of election campaigning, is shaped by campaign practices, such as information dissemination, and voter interaction and engagement, as opposed to emergent technologies or applications. This resonated with the stance taken in this study.

9.4.4 Image

Among all pages under United Future's website, 'Have Your Say' particularly attracted attention in that it entirely focused on voters. More specifically, the page encouraged voters to express and exchange opinions on various topics through

voting in opinion polls or commenting. The page had existed before the campaign period. In other words, it was not specifically intended for United Future's e-campaigning. However, it was turned into a campaign vehicle for the party in the election. That was partly due to the team's consideration over United Future's image. As the team explained, in order to gain voter support, it was crucial for United Future to be seen as a party that 'listens to people', 'stays closely connected with people', and 'put people at centre stage'. The 'Have Your Say' page was perceived by the team to be instrumental in achieving that. Consequently, the page was retained and became a major constituent of United Future's e-campaigning.

United Future was one of the few parties in this study that not only encouraged but also participated in commenting on various topics. This reflected considerations relating to the party's image. As the team indicated, participating in comment exchange with voters was an ongoing and, more importantly, resource-intensive undertaking. It was not advisable according to the campaign resources available to the party. However, it could have appeared to be merely 'a PR exercise', had visitors not received any acknowledgement or response in return from the party. To that end, the party actively participated in exchanging comments with voters on various topics to ensure a positive public perception of its online interaction and engagement with voters.

As noted, extensive information pertaining to United Future's background was disseminated on the party's website. This, according to the team, was deliberate, motivated by the team's concern over the party's image. As the team explained, the Future New Zealand party, a founding party of United Future, was deeply rooted in Christianity. Because of that, a false perception was held by a conspicuous number of voters that United Future was naturally a 'religious', 'conservative', and 'dogmatic' party. The team found such a misconception to be especially damaging to the party's 'brand', which could then lead to a loss of considerable new support for the party. Under such circumstances, a significant portion of United Future's e-campaign was devoted to describing at length the party's mission, vision, values, principles, and policy orientation, as the team believed that it would demonstrate the party to be in fact 'secular', 'modern', and 'liberal'.

In all, image propelled United Future's e-campaigning utilisation. In other words, the impact of the factor on United Future's e-campaigning was positive. It is worth highlighting the instance where United Future actively participated in comment exchange with voters for it suggests that the impact of resource availability was moderated by another factor – image.

9.4.5 Output quality

The opinion polls in United Future's e-campaign provided different questions for visitors to vote on and discuss. The approach to defining the poll questions was chiefly prompted by output quality. More specifically, the team revealed that the poll questions were derived from recent political affairs featuring in New Zealand's mainstream news media; for instance, the poll question 'Do you think it's arrogant that Clark & Key won't debate with other leaders?' stemmed from a news article published in The New Zealand Herald that both major party leaders unanimously refused to be joined by their minor counterparts in an important televised election debate. Such an approach, the team believed, would render the opinion polls 'fresh', 'topical', and 'widely familiar', ultimately leading to increased voter participation.

A significant portion of United Future's e-campaign was targeted at the party's counterparts and some of their key election policies. That, according to United Future's campaign team, was driven by output quality. More specifically, the team perceived it to be essential to 'mention' other parties or their policies in some important campaign messages, such as United Future's shifting support from Labour to National to form the next government, as it contextualised those messages, thereby strengthening their persuasiveness and intelligibility.

As noted, the candidate vote for Dunne formed the central focus of United Future's election campaigning in general, as the party's survivability after the election hinged chiefly on Dunne's re-election in his electorate. The focus, however, was not observed in United Future's e-campaigning. That, according to the campaign team, was informed by output quality. More specifically, the team believed that Dunne held 'a much better chance' of winning his electorate by engaging in traditional campaigning – such as visiting the malls, and appearing in the

community newspapers and community radio – rather than 'sitting behind the computer screen'. In other words, the team perceived that traditional campaigning offered a significantly better outcome for Dunne's re-election than did e-campaigning. To that end, United Future's e-campaigning barely touched on Dunne's candidacy.

In sum, output quality propelled and discouraged United Future's e-campaigning utilisation. That is, the impact of the factor on United Future's e-campaigning consisted of two facets: positive and negative.

9.4.6 Result demonstrability

A major difference between offline and online campaigning, according to United Future's campaign team, lied within result demonstrability. 'At the end of the day, election campaigning is about getting votes,' the team explained. 'So when you engage with voters in face-to-face settings,' the team continued, 'you normally can get a clear sense if you're going to get their support or not, but that's not really the case in Internet campaigning.' That, said the team, formed another reason that United Future focused its e-campaigning on 'the basics', and 'put most energy and resources into offline campaigning'.

The team continued to suggest that the impact of result demonstrability was relative to resource availability. As the team put it, 'If you have lots of resources, you could give most things [related to e-campaigning] a go and be less concerned about whether you're going to see anything concrete out if it … But it's a totally different story if you have very limited resources.' This suggests that the impact of result demonstrability on e-campaigning utilisation could be moderated by resource availability.

Put succinctly, result demonstrability discouraged United Future's e-campaigning utilisation. In other words, the impact of the factor on United Future's e-campaigning was negative. It is worth highlighting the relation between result demonstrability and resource availability as suggested by the team.

9.4.7 Summary

United Future's e-campaigning utilisation was shaped by six factors in Table 2.2, namely, voters' technology access, resource availability, subjective norm, image, output quality, and result demonstrability. Each factor in essence represents a unique perspective, therefore, United Future's e-campaigning utilisation has been explained from six perspectives. Various specific and contextual instances that occurred in United Future's e-campaigning utilisation have been presented to illustrate the factors, lending valuable insights into this unique phenomenon. Table 9.2 highlights the six factors that influenced United Future's e-campaigning utilisation.

Table 9.2 The factors influencing United Future's e-campaigning utilisation

Factor	Dual impact	Moderated by
Voters' technology access	●	
Resource availability		Subjective norm, image
Subjective norm	●	
Image		
Output quality	●	
Result demonstrability		Resource availability

As noted in the table, the impacts of half of the factors, such as voters' technology access, consisted of two facets: positive and negative. This means that those factors served as enablers as well as inhibitors of United Future's e-campaigning utilisation. The impacts of some factors, such as resource availability, were moderated by other factors, such as subjective norm. Taken together, it suggests that United Future's e-campaigning utilisation was complex, contextual, and dynamic.

9.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the key findings from the case study relating to United Future's e-campaigning utilisation in the 2008 general election. It has comprehensively analysed the breadth and depth of United Future's e-campaigning utilisation. Based on that, it has identified and illustrated in depth the six factors that influenced United Future's e-campaigning utilisation.

Chapter 10 Cross-case analysis

10.1 Chapter introduction

Based on the previous case studies of the six parliamentary parties' e-campaigning utilisation in the 2008 general election, this chapter conducts a cross-case analysis. In contrast to the microscopic view adopted in the case studies, a broad view is taken in this chapter, aiming to identify notable, emergent themes, patterns, similarities, or differences across the six cases. This chapter is organised according to the research questions of this study. More specifically, section 10.2 pertains to the six parties' e-campaigning utilisation and section 10.3 the factors influencing those parties' e-campaigning utilisation. This chapter is concluded with a chapter summary.

10.2 The political parties' e-campaigning utilisation

The analysis in this section is organised according to the five campaign practices in the proposed e-campaigning framework, namely, information dissemination, voter interaction and engagement, support mobilisation, targeted campaigning, and resource generation. The analysis is concluded with a brief summary.

10.2.1 Information dissemination

Disseminating campaign information was a prominent practice across all political parties, based on the number of related content elements observed and the frequency of those elements being refreshed during the campaign period. All parties' e-campaigns featured press releases, policy statements, campaign news, speeches, and contact information. Most parties provided party information, candidate biographies, and campaign events. It is worth noting that minor parties, such as United Future, tended to emphasise their values, principles, and political achievements. If applicable, parties also indicated their other online presence, such as Facebook. Multimedia, particularly online video, was used by all parties to broadcast campaign information, such as election policies. Nearly all parties also promoted their campaign information through blogging. Further, most party

leaders actively participated in campaign blogging in this election, which was unprecedented. National was the only party that used online videos for campaign blogging.

10.2.2 Voter interaction and engagement

All parties attempted to interact and engage with voters in their e-campaigning. Compared to other practices, such as information dissemination, voter interaction and engagement did not appear to be pivotal in any party's e-campaigning. Major parties' online voter interaction and engagement centred on key election policies while minor parties' on direct dialogues with and between voters. Among the parties that blogged in the election, only minor parties enabled reader commenting. A few minor parties, such as ACT, also enabled reader commenting in other areas of their e-campaigns, such as campaign news and speeches. Some minor parties, such as the Progressives, not only encouraged but also keenly participated in commenting. This, however, was not observed in major parties' e-campaigns. In general, the number of visitor comments was limited in any party's e-campaign. Only one minor party's e-campaign featured opinion polls. Only two minor parties included discussion forums in their e-campaigns. Social media, such as Facebook, debuted as part of most parties' e-campaigning in this election. However, it was primarily for broadcasting campaign information; in other words, the interactive nature of social media was barely exploited by any party.

10.2.3 Support mobilisation

All parties exhibited efforts to mobilise voter support to markedly varying degrees in their e-campaigns. Every party encouraged votes, commonly observed in campaign news, speeches, blogs, or online videos. Most parties urged visitors to enrol as voters, subscribe to campaign updates, download campaign material, and spread their campaigns to others. It is worth noting that Web 2.0 services, such as RSS, were used for campaign subscription or promulgation by a small number of parties. The campaign material available for download varied, ranging from a campaign billboard to policy documents. No parties encouraged visitors to invite others to participate in offline campaign events. Only two parties, namely National and the Greens, enabled visitors to endorse them online or offline and connect

with supporter groups. The Greens was the only party that encouraged voters to create and share online campaign material.

10.2.4 Targeted campaigning

All political parties targeted others and their key election policies in e-campaigning. This was commonly found in campaign news, speeches, and press releases. Labour's targeted campaigning at National as well as Key was particularly notable as it was also identified in many other areas such as the party's online videos and campaign blog. Further, only minor parties targeted their opponents as well as allies. Irrespective of its diverse manifestations, parties' targeted campaigning at their counterparts all aimed at growing their own political appeal while dimming their counterparts'.

Specific voter segments were also targeted in most parties' e-campaigns. This was observable in diverse areas, such as speeches, campaign blogs, or campaign segments in other languages. National was the only party that dedicated a sub-site to each particular voter segment, for instance, the SuperBlues site was dedicated to National's supporters aged 60 and above. Nearly all minor parties' e-campaigns consisted of segments targeted at specific voters. Further, political counterparts and their policies tended to be the focus of parties' targeted campaigning.

10.2.5 Resource generation

Most parties' e-campaigns consisted of soliciting financial donations, expanding party membership, and recruiting campaign volunteers. Their approaches were generally identical, passive, and conventional, which primarily relied on visitors taking the initiative to complete and submit relevant web forms. The Greens was the only party that included an online store in e-campaigning to generate further financial resources.

10.2.6 Summary

The cross-case analysis of the six political parties' e-campaigning utilisation is summarised in Table 10.1.

Table 10.1 The six political parties' e-campaigning utilisation in the election

Campaign practice	Content elements	N	L	G	A	P	U
Information dissemination	Political party's information	●		●		●	●
	Candidate biography	●	●	●	●		●
	Press releases	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Policy statements	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Campaign news	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Campaign events	●		●	●		●
	Speeches	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Contact information	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Information relating to the political party's other online presence	●	●	●	●		
	Campaign blog without visitor comments allowed	●	●				
Voter interaction and engagement	Instant chat or messaging						
	Instant opinion polls						●
	Instant surveys						
	Applications for interacting with the political party's policies	●	●				
	Interactive calendar of campaign events	●		●			
	Means to contact the political party	●		●	●	●	●
	Discussion forums					●	●
	Campaign blog with visitor comments allowed			●	●		●
	Means to provide feedback	●	●	●		●	●
Support mobilisation	Means for voters to invite their peers to participate in campaign events						
	Means to inform voters of electoral information	●	●	●	●		
	Means for voters to receive campaign information and updates	●	●	●			●
	Means for voters to connect with supporter groups	●		●			
	Means for voters to download campaign material	●	●	●	●		●
	Means for voters to forward campaign material to others	●	●	●			●
	Means for voters to endorse the political party*	●		●			
	Means to encourage votes*	●	●	●	●	●	●
Targeted campaigning	Content targeted at political opponents	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Content targeted at political opponents' policies	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Content targeted at specific voter segments	●			●	●	●
Resource generation	Means to make donations	●	●	●	●		●
	Online merchandise shop			●			
	Means to become a party member	●		●	●		●
	Means to become a volunteer	●	●	●	●		

Note: * Not present in the proposed e-campaigning framework; N: National; L: Labour; G: the Greens; A: ACT; P: the Progressives; U: United Future

Overall, despite the underlying technologies and applications being almost identical, the six political parties' e-campaigning utilisation in the 2008 general

election varied discernibly beyond information dissemination and targeted campaigning at political counterparts. All parties in this election introduced online videos, blogs, and social media in their e-campaigning, primarily for information dissemination. However, instances of innovative or creative e-campaigning beyond information dissemination were generally rare.

10.3 The factors influencing the parties' e-campaigning utilisation

The six parties' e-campaigning utilisation reflected the impacts of various factors, namely, election type, electoral regulations, voters' technology access, resource availability, subjective norm, image, job relevance, output quality, result demonstrability, and perceived ease of use. The analysis in this section is organised according to those factors and concluded in a brief summary.

10.3.1 Election type

Half of the parties – namely, National, Labour, and the Greens – suggested that the election being party-led affected their e-campaigning utilisation. The major parties generally considered that party-led elections hindered e-campaigning utilisation while their minor counterpart perceived the opposite. Only one party, namely Labour, experienced both sides of the impact of election type. In one case, namely National's e-campaigning, the impact of election type was moderated by another factor, namely result demonstrability.

10.3.2 Electoral regulations

Most parties indicated that their e-campaigning utilisation was influenced by electoral regulations. The impact of the factor consisted of two aspects: positive and negative. In other words, electoral regulations could propel and also dampen e-campaigning utilisation. However, only half experienced the positive aspect. Despite New Zealand general elections being governed by various electoral laws and regulations, only the EFA 2007 was noted by the parties. This, according to some parties, was largely due to the novelty and, more importantly, the ambiguity of the Act. In one case, namely National's e-campaigning, the impact of electoral

regulations was moderated by another factor, namely subjective norm. This, however, was not observed in other cases.

10.3.3 Voters' technology access

Nearly all parties expressed that voters' technology access served a noticeable role in their e-campaigning utilisation. In particular, they all found that New Zealanders' access to broadband Internet in this election cycle markedly stimulated e-campaigning utilisation; however, they also noted that New Zealand broadband access in the election was attached with several limitations, which in turn dampened their e-campaigning utilisation. That is, the impact of voters' technology access was double-sided. In addition to broadband Internet, voters' access to mobile technologies was touched on by some parties. In three cases, the impact of voters' technology access was moderated by another factor. More specifically, the impact of voters' technology access was moderated by resource availability in National's e-campaigning, by electoral regulations and resource availability in Labour's, and by resource availability in ACT's.

10.3.4 Resource availability

All parties evinced that their e-campaigning utilisation was profoundly influenced by the availability of their campaign resources, namely, time, human, and financial resources. Most parties were propelled by their limited campaign resources to embrace e-campaigning. On the other hand, all parties indicated that the presence of their campaign resources inhibited sophisticated or full e-campaigning utilisation. In short, the impact of resources availability was two-faceted to almost all parties. Both the major parties attributed the limited interaction and engagement with voters in their e-campaigning primarily to resource availability. In three cases the impact of resource availability was moderated by another factor. More specifically, the impact of resource availability was moderated by result demonstrability and subjective norm in National's e-campaigning, by image in the Progressives', and by subjective norm and image in United Future's.

10.3.5 Subjective norm

Almost all parties' e-campaigning utilisation reflected the impact of subjective norm. Over half of those parties pointed out that the impact on their e-campaigning utilisation was both positive and negative, while the remainder observed only the positive side of the impact. The subjective norms noted in the case studies were generally formed by perceived trends, competitive pressure, or perceived voter expectations. In three cases the impact of subjective norm was moderated by another factor. More specifically, the impact of subjective norm was moderated by resource availability, image, and job relevance in National's e-campaigning, by electoral regulations and resource availability in Labour's, and by resource availability in ACT's.

10.3.6 Image

All parties acknowledged that their e-campaigning utilisation was partly affected by consideration of political image. The impact induced by image on most parties' e-campaigning utilisation was twofold; that is, consideration of political image both stimulated and constrained those parties' e-campaigning utilisation. It is worth noting that the major parties limited, while minor parties embraced, online interaction with voters, due in large part to this factor. In one case, namely Labour's e-campaigning, the impact of image was moderated by another factor, namely subjective norm.

10.3.7 Job relevance

Most parties suggested that their e-campaigning utilisation was influenced by job relevance. Almost all of them discerned two facets of the impact; in other words, their e-campaigning utilisation was encouraged as well as discouraged. Both major parties further noted that perceptions relating to job relevance were subjective, contextual, and evolving. That is, a particular e-campaigning idea or approach could be deemed irrelevant by one party but otherwise by another; further, a particular e-campaigning idea or approach could be perceived inapplicable in one election but otherwise in another. In one case, namely Labour's

e-campaigning, the impact of job relevance was moderated by another factor, namely subjective norm.

10.3.8 Output quality

All parties indicated that output quality affected their e-campaigning utilisation. They all encountered two sides of the impact induced by output quality; that is, output quality not only motivated but also restricted all parties' e-campaigning utilisation. In one case, namely the Greens' e-campaigning, the impact of output quality was moderated by another factor, namely resource availability.

10.3.9 Result demonstrability

Most parties noted that result demonstrability played a role in their e-campaigning utilisation. Half of them observed both positive and negative sides of the impact induced by result demonstrability. The majority of the parties were wary of reacting to any implications relating to result demonstrability alone, primarily due to the lack of comprehensive knowledge of e-campaigning. It is worth noting that the result demonstrability of a new e-campaigning idea or approach tended to attract more attention from the parties. One party, namely United Future, suggested that the impact of result demonstrability could be moderated by resource availability.

10.3.10 Perceived ease of use

Half of the parties, both major and one minor, disclosed that their e-campaigning utilisation was influenced by perceived ease of use. The major parties experienced both positive and negative sides of the impact. Compared to their counterparts, the parties that observed the influence induced by perceived ease of use exhibited a greater extent of e-campaigning utilisation overall. Put differently, the impact of perceived ease of use did not seem to be apparent to parties with relatively limited e-campaigning utilisation.

10.3.11 Summary

The cross-case analysis of the factors influencing the six political parties' e-campaigning utilisation was encapsulated in Table 10.2 and Table 10.3. In general,

each political party's e-campaigning utilisation, irrespective of its extent, was shaped by various factors. Among them, voters' technology access, resource availability, subjective norm, image, and output quality were particularly prominent. The impact induced by every factor consisted of two facets: positive and negative. This, however, was not experienced by all parties. The analysis also indicates that the impact of any factor except perceived ease of use was subject to the moderation of another factor, which, again, was not experienced by all parties.

Table 10.2 The factors influencing the parties' e-campaigning utilisation (part 1)

Factor	National			Labour			the Greens		
	Present	Dual impact	Moderated by	Present	Dual impact	Moderated by	Present	Dual impact	Moderated by
Election type	●		Result demonstrability	●	●		●		
Electoral regulations	●		Subjective norm	●	●		●		
Voters' technology access	●	●	Resource availability	●	●	Electoral regulations, resource availability	●	●	
Resource availability	●	●	Result demonstrability, subjective norm	●	●		●	●	
Subjective norm	●		Resource availability, image, job relevance	●	●	Electoral regulations, resource availability	●	●	
Image	●	●		●	●	Subjective norm	●	●	
Job relevance	●			●	●	Subjective norm	●	●	
Output quality	●	●		●	●		●	●	Resource availability
Result demonstrability	●	●		●	●	Voters' technology access, resource availability	●		
Perceived ease of use	●	●		●	●		●		

Table 10.3 The factors influencing the parties' e-campaigning utilisation (part 2)

Factor	ACT			the Progressives			United Future		
	Present	Dual impact	Moderated by	Present	Dual impact	Moderated by	Present	Dual impact	Moderated by
Election type									
Electoral regulations				●	●				
Voters' technology access	●	●	Resource availability				●	●	
Resource availability	●	●		●	●	Image	●		Subjective norm, image
Subjective norm	●		Resource availability				●	●	
Image	●			●	●		●		
Job relevance				●	●				
Output quality	●	●		●	●		●	●	
Result demonstrability							●		Resource availability
Perceived ease of use									

10.4 Chapter summary

This chapter has conducted a cross-case analysis. More specifically, it has highlighted the themes and trends of the six parties' e-campaigning utilisation in the 2008 election. It has also identified the patterns relating to the factors that influenced the six parties' e-campaigning utilisation in the election.

Chapter 11 Discussion

11.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter presents a discussion focusing on the two research questions, based on the main findings from both academic literature and the empirical data. More specifically, section 11.2 and section 11.3 pertain to the first and second research questions respectively. This chapter is concluded with a brief summary.

11.2 The political parties' e-campaigning utilisation

This section is organised on the basis of the e-campaigning framework proposed in this study. More specifically, the discussion pertaining to the six political parties' e-campaigning utilisation is arranged according to the five campaign practices in the framework, namely, information dissemination, voter interaction and engagement, support mobilisation, targeted campaigning, and resource generation. This section is concluded with a brief summary, including any suggested change to the proposed framework resulting from the discussion.

11.2.1 Information dissemination

Scholars observe that overall, information dissemination is the most prominent in e-campaigning (e.g., Bentivegna, 2008; Gibson & McAllister, 2008; Lilleker et al., 2011; Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008). This observation is shared by this study. All associated content elements have been identified. However, rarely did a party exhibit all content elements associated with information dissemination.

This study has found that in order to confine visitors' limited attention to their election policies, some parties, such as the Progressives, intentionally reduced other campaign information or the extent of other campaign practices. This finding is not present in the literature and therefore extends the understanding of e-campaigning.

11.2.2 Voter interaction and engagement

Except 'instant chat or messaging' and 'instant surveys', all content elements related to voter interaction and engagement in the framework have been found in this study. However, all parties under study exhibited sparse content elements associated with this practice in their e-campaigns; that is, online voter interaction and engagement in general was limited. This supports the findings noted by Ward, Owen, et al. (2008).

This study has found that in online voter interaction and engagement, the major parties focused on key election policies while minor parties on direct dialogues with and between voters. This study has further discovered that most minor party leaders keenly participated in direct dialogues with voters, in stark contrast to their major counterparts. Collectively, it appears that minor parties tended to embrace online interaction with voters more openly and keenly than their major counterparts. However, both major parties revealed in interviews that they were also highly interested in conversing or discussing with voters in their e-campaigns. That remained as an intention in the end, according to the parties, primarily because of resource availability.

Some scholars note that political parties or candidates generally tend to avoid interaction with voters in their e-campaigning, predominantly due to the concern that it could attract abuse or attacks from their opponents or opponents' supporters, consequently derailing their own campaign agendas (e.g., Coleman, 2001; Gibson & Ward, 2012; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). Such concern was shared by some parties in this study, National, for instance. However, rather than desisting from online interaction with voters, they employed online moderation to tackle the concern.

Boas (2008) points out that when a party's or candidate's online interaction and engagement with voters is carefully framed so that it is closely aligned with the party's or candidate's ideology and causes, such interaction and engagement lacks openness and is propaganda in disguise. Most parties in this study embraced conversations and discussions with voters in their e-campaigns. However, those conversations and discussions were generally aimed at promoting the parties and

their key election policies. In accordance with Boas' view, those parties' online conversations and discussions with voters could be perceived as propaganda in disguise.

Most parties in this study introduced emergent social media, such as Facebook, as part of their e-campaigning in this election. As mentioned, it was chiefly for information dissemination; the interactive nature of social media remained largely unexploited. The same is noted by Gibson and Cantijoch (2011) as well as Karlsson et al. (2013).

11.2.3 Support mobilisation

Support mobilisation has been identified in this study, so have all related content elements except 'means for voters to invite their peers to participate in campaign events'. However, rarely did a party in this study extensively mobilise voter support in e-campaigning. None of the instances noted in the literature depicting the innovative use of social media for support mobilisation in the US (e.g., Bimber, 2014; Gibson, 2012; Graf, 2008; S. Hill, 2009) or anything similar has been observed in this study. That said, some parties in this study, such as United Future, rallied support with their campaign blogs. This bears some resemblance to Dean's use of blogging for generating and mobilising voter support in a US election, an exemplar of support mobilisation with ICTs noted in the literature (Bimber, 2014; Gibson, 2012; Gibson & Rommele, 2005; Graf, 2008).

In the literature, specific instances of support mobilisation in e-campaigning are generally sparse and mostly confined to the US context (e.g., Gibson, 2012; Gibson & Ward, 2012; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). Therefore, the associated understanding is limited. This study has presented various detailed instances of support mobilisation, accordingly deepening the understanding of this practice. Among those instances, two particularly deserve highlighting because of their creativity: one pertains to National encouraging voters to obtain and play its campaign song in order to show their support, the other pertains to the Greens inviting voters to create web banners endorsing the party and share those banners through the party's website. Those two instances also represent means for party endorsement. However, this element, means for voters to endorse the party, is not present in the

proposed framework. It therefore suggests the first area of change to the framework. In this study, every party's e-campaign consisted of an element that urged voters to cast their votes for the party. This element is clearly associated with support mobilisation yet not captured in the proposed framework, therefore suggesting a second area of change to the framework.

Gibson (2012) notes that political scientists in general remain sceptical about the mobilisation effects produced by ICTs, despite some studies claiming that there is a strong association between e-campaigning and a higher share of votes. One party in this study, namely the Progressives shared this scepticism. More specifically, the party's campaign team rejected any online mobilisation in the election because it perceived that this particular campaign practice would not lead to any favourable outcome.

11.2.4 Targeted campaigning

This study has found that targeted campaigning at other political parties as well as their policies, also referred to as negative campaigning, was strongly present in parties' e-campaigning. In particular, it is worth highlighting 'John Key Double Talk', part of Labour's targeted campaigning at the credibility of the National leader, as it strongly resembles McCain's targeted campaigning at Obama's credibility in the 2008 US presidential election as observed by Stirland (2008) and noted in section 2.3.3.4. It is also worth noting the interactive web application deployed by Labour to target National's election policies pertaining to income tax and KiwiSaver for its creativity.

Although targeted campaigning at political opponents and their policies is considered to be common in e-campaigning, specific examples of this practice are generally limited in the literature. This study has detailed various instances of targeted campaigning at other political parties and their policies in cyberspace. This therefore enriches the associated knowledge.

It is suggested that political parties' or candidates' negative campaigning may depress voter turnout (Farrell & Schmitt-Beck, 2002). The parties under study did not appear to share that view. More specifically, all parties indicated that while

targeting political rivals and, more importantly, their policies, could be at times perceived as negative by some, it was widely expected from voters to be a vital function of a politician or party.

This study has found that some political parties, such as ACT, targeted both opponents and allies; however, only the former are captured in the proposed framework. This suggests a third area of change to the framework.

This study has observed targeted campaigning at particular voter segments, also known as narrowcasting, in parties' e-campaigning. It is noted in the literature that narrowcasting is commonly conducted by focusing on issues that are of particular interest to target voters (Bimber, 2014; S. Hill, 2009; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). This has been observed in National's e-campaign; for instance, National targeted its supporters aged 60 and over by deploying a dedicated sub-site called SuperBlues, focusing solely on the party's policies especially relevant to senior citizens, such as aged care. United Future's and the Progressives' narrowcasting is also noteworthy for representing a variant of the practice. More specifically, both minor parties targeted beyond, as opposed to within, their own voter bases – United Future targeted both National's and Labour's voter bases and the Progressives targeted New Zealand First's voter base. The tailored campaign messages delivered by both parties simply urged the targeted voters to switch their votes to the parties as opposed to focusing on any specific issues particularly significant to them. Taken together, therefore, both parties' narrowcasting aimed to expand their existing voter bases as opposed to maximising the impact of information dissemination. This alternative form of narrowcasting, however, is not commonly noted in the literature.

This study has found that parties targeted particular voter segments with ubiquitous, simple web technologies and applications, such as blogs, instead of unique, sophisticated ones as observed in Obama's e-campaigning in 2008 (e.g., Bimber, 2014). This, according to some of the parties, was chiefly due to resource availability.

11.2.5 Resource generation

Resource generation and all associated content elements have been observed in this study. However, rarely did all content elements related to this practice feature in a party's e-campaign.

In the literature, resource generation, particularly fundraising, is an intriguing aspect of e-campaigning, as it often exhibits creativity, diversity, and compelling results (e.g., Bimber, 2014; S. Hill, 2009). For instance, as noted in section 2.3.3.5, Edwards, a candidate in the 2008 US Democratic primaries, raised campaign donations of $300,000 within a week from a video that he posted on YouTube featuring him and his campaign strategist making a pecan pie.

In stark contrast, this study has hardly discerned any creativity or diversity in parties' online resource generation. More specifically, all parties raised campaign resources online with generally identical, passive, and conventional approaches that relied on visitors taking the initiative to complete and submit relevant web forms, except the Progressives and the Greens – the former excluded resource generation from its campaign website and the latter generated campaign resources from its online merchandise store as well. While the parties in this study were all content with the results of their online resource generation, those results, according to the parties, were incomparable with many of their overseas counterparts', especially Obama's. Put shortly, in this study, rarely did a party's online resource generation exhibit creativity, diversity, or compelling results.

11.2.6 Summary

The above discussion encompasses various aspects that support, contradict, or extend the existing knowledge relating to e-campaigning utilisation. Moreover, this study reinforces the observations in the literature that e-campaigning utilisation varied within the same election, and innovative e-campaigning beyond the US context is the exception rather than the norm.

While the proposed framework in general is empirically relevant, accurate, and adequate, three minor areas of change have been suggested in order to enhance the framework. First, 'means for voters to endorse the political party' should be

incorporated as a content element for support mobilisation. Second, 'means to encourage votes' should be incorporated as another content element for the same practice. Third, both 'content targeted at political opponents' and 'content targeted at political opponents' policies' should be respectively rephrased as 'content targeted political *counterparts*' and 'content targeted at political *counterparts*' policies', in order to reflect the phenomenon that has been observed in this study where not only political opponents or their policies but also political allies or their policies were targeted. Table 11.1 depicts the revised framework for e-campaigning utilisation.

Table 11.1 Revised e-campaigning framework

Campaign practice	Content elements
Information dissemination	Political party's information
	Candidate biography
	Press releases
	Policy statements
	Campaign news
	Campaign events
	Speeches
	Contact information
	Information relating to the political party's other online presence
	Campaign blog without visitor comments allowed
Voter interaction and engagement	Instant chat or messaging
	Instant opinion polls
	Instant surveys
	Applications for interacting with the political party's policies
	Interactive calendar of campaign events
	Means to contact the political party
	Discussion forums
	Campaign blog with visitor comments allowed
	Means to provide feedback
Support mobilisation	Means for voters to invite their peers to participate in campaign events
	Means to inform voters of electoral information
	Means for voters to receive campaign information and updates
	Means for voters to connect with supporter groups
	Means for voters to download campaign material
	Means for voters to forward campaign material to others
	Means for voters to endorse the political party
	Means to encourage votes
Targeted campaigning	Content targeted at political counterparts
	Content targeted at political counterparts' policies
	Content targeted at specific voter segments
Resource generation	Means to make donations
	Online merchandise shop
	Means to become a party member
	Means to become a volunteer

11.3 The factors influencing the parties' e-campaigning utilisation

This section is organised according to the factors that influenced the six political parties' e-campaigning utilisation in this study, namely, election type, electoral regulations, voters' technology access, resource availability, subjective norm, image, job relevance, output quality, result demonstrability, and perceived ease of use. This section is concluded with a brief summary.

11.3.1 Election type

It is believed in the literature that e-campaigning utilisation is influenced by election type, party- or candidate-led (e.g., Anstead & Chadwick, 2009; Gibson & Ward, 2012; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). Notably, Anstead and Chadwick (2009) theorise that in party-led elections, campaign teams can capitalise on their parties' long-established public profiles, mostly offline communication networks, party membership, and stable resources for election campaigning, thereby dampening e-campaigning utilisation. In stark contrast, according to Anstead and Chadwick, the absence or limited presence of public profiles, offline communication networks, permanent loyalists, and stable resources for election campaigning in candidate-led elections propels e-campaigning utilisation in order to rapidly establish those critical campaign elements. It can be inferred from Anstead and Chadwick's theory that the impact of election type on e-campaigning utilisation consists of two sides: positive and negative, and only the negative side is present in party-led elections.

The impact of election type has been identified in this study. Some parties, such as National, indicated that party-led elections discouraged e-campaigning utilisation. However, their rationale differs from Anstead and Chadwick's (2009). More specifically, those parties pointed out that party-led elections typically entailed a more complex and hierarchical decision-making process, which often depressed e-campaigning utilisation by causing distractions, frustration, or delay. Some parties, such as the Greens, observed that party-led elections were in fact beneficial to e-campaigning utilisation. According to those parties, it was the distinguishing features of party-led elections, party membership in particular, that

enabled them to broaden their e-campaigning vision and alleviate their internal resource gaps. This finding is irreconcilable with Anstead and Chadwick's premise that the prominence of party profiles, communication networks, party membership, and stable resources in party-led elections dampens e-campaigning utilisation, and the common belief that the impact of party-led elections on e-campaigning utilisation is only negative.

This study has observed in one instance that the impact of election type was moderated by another factor. More specifically, there was an occasion in National's e-campaigning where the negative impact of party-led elections was moderated by result demonstrability. That the impact of election type is subject to the moderation of another factor, however, is not present in the literature.

11.3.2 Electoral regulations

It is commonly considered in the literature that e-campaigning utilisation is shaped by electoral regulations (e.g., Anstead, 2008; Gibson et al., 2008; Kluver, 2008; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). For instance, in the US, electoral regulations prohibit institutional campaign donations and impose a strict limit on an individual's campaign donations. Further, spending on election campaigning is uncapped. These accordingly motivate the campaign teams to embrace online fundraising (Anstead, 2008). In the UK, electoral regulations permit institutional campaign donations and do not impose any limit on campaign donations. However, strict spending caps are imposed on election campaigning. These, as a result, discourage the campaign teams from fully engaging in Internet fundraising (Anstead, 2008). Those examples also suggest that the impact of electoral regulations on e-campaigning utilisation comprises two facets: positive and negative.

The majority of the parties in this study discerned the impact of electoral regulations. Rarely, the factor propelled some parties' e-campaigning utilisation. For instance, the Progressives' deployment of a new website specifically for its e-campaign was partly stimulated by the EFA 2007. However, the factor mostly dampened e-campaigning utilisation. Notably, Labour restricted voter interaction and engagement in its e-campaigning because of the election spending cap.

In National's e-campaigning, the negative impact of electoral regulations was moderated by subjective norm. In other words, the impact of electoral regulations could be moderated by another factor. This finding is not present in the literature.

11.3.3 Voters' technology access

It is suggested in the literature that e-campaigning utilisation is guided by voters' technology access (e.g., Dader, 2008; Hameed, 2007; Wlezien, 2014). More specifically, a high level of technology access tends to elevate e-campaigning utilisation, conversely, a low level of technology access often depresses e-campaigning utilisation (Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). For instance, in countries such as Indonesia and Spain where voters' access to ICTs is low or modest, e-campaigning utilisation is limited; in countries such as the UK and the US where levels of technology access are high, expansive e-campaigning utilisation is commonly observed (Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). It can be inferred that the impact of voters' technology access comprises two sides: positive and negative.

Nearly all parties in this study indicated that voters' technology access was a crucial factor in their e-campaigning utilisation. All those parties found that the rapid increase of broadband access in the country just before the election incentivised them to incorporate online videos for the first time or more online videos in their e-campaigning. The Greens further indicated that increased broadband access was a key stimulus for its innovative approach to support mobilisation that encouraged voters to create and share their own Green web banners. But meanwhile, all those parties suggested that voters' technology access restricted their e-campaigning utilisation. Notably, Labour revealed that it did not pursue a more interactive, personalised, and seamless e-campaign operating on a smartphone in the election because the number of voters with access to the technology was fractional.

It is pointed out in the literature that e-campaigning utilisation in Singapore is restricted despite voters' technology access being rated high (Kluver, 2008; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). This is considered to be attributable to Singapore's stringent electoral regulations (Kluver, 2008; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). It can be inferred that the impact of voters' technology access is subject to the moderation of another

factor. This is evident in this study. For instance, the high level of mobile phone access in New Zealand stimulated Labour to consider deploying a text campaign as part of the party's e-campaigning. That was not realised in the end due in part to the EFA 2007.

11.3.4 Resource availability

It is widely recognised in the literature that a party's or candidate's e-campaigning utilisation strongly hinges on the campaign resources available to the party or candidate (e.g., Margolis et al., 2003; Small, 2008; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). There are two main theses, namely equalisation and normalisation, concerning the impact of resource availability on parties' or candidates' e-campaigning utilisation. The equalisation thesis holds that parties or candidates with limited campaign resources tend to embrace e-campaigning more expansively and extensively (Gibson & McAllister, 2014; Small, 2008). In stark contrast, the normalisation thesis argues that a high level of campaign resources encourages, whereas a low level of campaign resources discourages, e-campaigning utilisation (Gibson & McAllister, 2014; Margolis et al., 2003; Small, 2008). Accordingly, it is asserted that major parties' e-campaigning utilisation is considerably more expansive and sophisticated than their minor counterparts' because major parties possess a significant resource advantage. It can be inferred that the impact of resource availability on e-campaigning utilisation includes two facets: positive and negative.

All parties in this study indicated that their e-campaigning utilisation was considerably shaped by the availability of their campaign resources. Almost all parties expressed that their e-campaigning utilisation was motivated by the lack of campaign resources, seemingly supporting the equalisation thesis. However, such motivation was brief or highly limited. As those parties further engaged in e-campaigning, they all found that advanced, professional, sophisticated e-campaigning required immense campaign resources, and their e-campaigning utilisation was substantially undermined by resource poverty. Thus, this study supports the premise that a high level of campaign resources encourages, whereas limited campaign resources discourages, e-campaigning utilisation. On that note,

some political scientists' argument, noted by Small (2008), that the normalisation thesis is less visible in party-led elections is not evident in this study.

This study has observed that major parties' e-campaigns appeared to be more advanced and sophisticated than their minor counterparts' in some aspects, take, for instance, National's targeted campaigning at specific voters, Labour's targeted campaigning at National and Key, and National's and Labour's online applications for voters to interact with the parties' key policies. However, in other areas minor parties' e-campaigns seemed more advanced and sophisticated than their major counterparts', such as United Future's online opinion polls and discussion forum, and the Greens' online merchandise shop. Taken together, therefore, the assertion that major parties' e-campaigning utilisation in general is more expansive and sophisticated than their minor counterparts' is not completely supported in this study.

In this study both major parties strongly refuted that they possessed any significant resource advantage over their minor counterparts, contrary to common belief in the literature. This study has identified three aspects to understand this contradiction. First, according to both National's and Labour's campaign teams, e-campaigning was considered to be resource-friendly by many senior party members. Those members did not realise that the resource-friendliness of e-campaigning was only superficial, and advanced, professional, sophisticated e-campaigning was in fact resource-intensive. Second, according to Labour's campaign team, e-campaigning was perceived to be a temporary event with a short-term focus within the party. Last, according to both parties' campaign teams, campaign resources were finite, and offline campaigning was increasingly expensive and still took precedence over e-campaigning. Each aspect not only constrained the allocation of campaign resources for e-campaigning utilisation but also hindered further resource commitment, thereby diminishing any potential resource advantage. It is also worth pointing out that the last aspect echoes Ward, Owen, et al.'s assertion (2008, p. 267) that when political parties or candidates are forced to 'choose between traditional and new modes of campaigning in the allocation of resources', the latter, such as e-campaigning, often ranks 'relatively low in the priority list'.

It is worth reiterating the claim made by National's campaign team that had its campaign resources been comparable in scale to some of its overseas counterparts' such as Obama's, National's e-campaign would have been no less creative than theirs. This presents a perspective for understanding the scarcity of innovative e-campaigning in the election.

This study has found that the impact of resource availability on e-campaigning utilisation is subject to the moderation of another factor, which is not present in the literature. For example, National's campaign team did not initially intend to host campaign videos on its own because of resource availability. This was moderated by the strong advice from National's senior members and focus groups – in other words, subjective norm.

11.3.5 Subjective norm

Based on Venkatesh and Davis' (2000) reasoning, this factor suggests that how e-campaigning is utilised by a campaign team is guided by the team's perception relating to how people who are important to the team behave or what they suggest. This implies that the impact of subjective norm consists of two facets: positive and negative.

Almost all parties in this study observed the impact of subjective norm on their e-campaigning utilisation. They all suggested that some parts of their e-campaigning were motivated by the factor. For instance, Labour's campaign team perceived that targeted campaigning at political opponents was widely practised by its overseas counterparts and accepted by many voters, this consequently inspired the party to fiercely and extensively attack National and Key in its e-campaigning. Half of the parties in this study claimed that they were discouraged to employ some e-campaigning approaches because of the factor. For instance, although Twitter became increasingly popular in New Zealand during the election, the Greens' campaign team did not perceive that it was widely expected by the party's supporters to feature the social media as part of the Greens' e-campaign; Twitter was consequently excluded.

This study has distinguished three types of 'people' whose opinions or behaviour mattered to the campaign teams, namely, political rivals, overseas counterparts, and voters. It is worth noting that references to subjective norm in existing e-campaigning studies feature only the first type, namely political rivals (e.g., Dezelan et al., 2014; Farrell & Schmitt-Beck, 2002; Gibson, 2012).

Farrell and Schmitt-Beck (2002) theorise that competitive pressure motivates innovative and polished e-campaigning. While it is not evident in this study that competitive pressure inspires innovative e-campaigning, some parties, such as the Greens, indicated that mounting competitive pressure propelled them to professionalise and sophisticate their e-campaigns. Thus, Farrell and Schmitt-Beck's theory pertaining to the impact of competitive pressure on e-campaigning utilisation is partially supported by this study.

It is worth reiterating the remark of the Greens' campaign team that campaign teams' e-campaigning utilisation mirrored technology utilisation in commercial sectors; that is, instead of being innovative, the majority tended to follow. This comment not only indicates the role of subjective norm in e-campaigning utilisation but also presents an alternative perspective for understanding the sparsity of innovative e-campaigning in the election.

Venkatesh and Davis (2000) suggest that the impact of subjective norm is subject to the moderation of voluntariness and experience. This does not appear evident in this study. However, this study has discovered that the impact of subjective norm could be moderated by another factor. For instance, ACT's campaign team sensed a strong expectation from its supporters that the party would deliver a more expansive and creative e-campaign, however, resource poverty hindered the team from fulfilling the expectation; in other words, the impact of subjective norm was moderated by resource availability.

11.3.6 Image

Based on Venkatesh and Davis' (2000) reasoning, this factor suggests that how e-campaigning is utilised by a campaign team is shaped by the team's perception relating to the resulting impact on the political image of the party with which the

team associates. This implies that the impact of image consists of two sides: positive and negative.

This study has found that image played a profound role in e-campaigning utilisation. All parties indicated that this factor motivated various aspects of their e-campaigning utilisation. For instance, ACT attacked its close ally National in its e-campaign because the party perceived that it would promote an image to the public that despite being minor, the party was independent in its views and not hesitant to take a stand. Most parties claimed that concern over their political image deterred them from considering certain e-campaigning approaches. For instance, the Progressives decided not to promote all of its election policies in its e-campaign because the party perceived that it would have 'instantly looked like a political party with very little credibility' otherwise. This study has shown that in the context of e-campaigning, the factor image pertains to public perception, appearance, appeal, brand, or credibility.

It is suggested in e-campaigning research that consideration of political image forms a driver of professional, sophisticated e-campaigning. This study concurs. For instance, all campaign videos in the Progressives' e-campaign were professionally produced and highly polished, owing to the perception that it would promote the Progressives as a conscientious, sharp, and polished party to the voting public.

Venkatesh and Davis (2000) hold that image is influenced by subjective norm. This does not appear to be evident in this study. However, this study has found that the impact of image is subject to the moderation of another factor. For instance, initially, Labour's campaign team did not intend to incorporate Facebook in its e-campaigning because that was believed to potentially damage Labour's image. This, however, was changed in the end because the team sensed a strong expectation from voters to do so – in other words, the impact of image was moderated by subjective norm.

11.3.7 Job relevance

Based on Venkatesh and Davis' (2000) reasoning, this factor suggests that how e-campaigning is utilised by a campaign team is informed by its applicability as perceived by the team. This implies that the impact of job relevance on e-campaigning utilisation comprises two dimensions: positive and negative.

Most parties in this study acknowledged that their perceptions relating to job relevance influenced their e-campaigning utilisation. Most of them indicated that this factor encouraged various aspects of their e-campaigning. For instance, the Progressives believed that it was essential for a political party to take aim at their opponents, especially in an election. This judgement resulted in the Progressives extensively attacking National in its e-campaigning. Most parties also suggested that their judgements relating to job relevance discouraged them from conducting e-campaigning in certain ways. For instance, National believed that despite their popularity, Bebo, Myspace, and LinkedIn bore no relevance to the purpose of election campaigning. Consequently the party did not campaign on those social networking sites.

Venkatesh and Davis (2000) note that the impact of job relevance is subject to the moderation of output quality. This has not been observed in this study. That said, this study has found on one occasion in Labour's e-campaigning that the impact of job relevance was moderated by another factor. More specifically, the party did not initially intend to incorporate Facebook as part of its e-campaigning because the social networking site was deemed highly irrelevant to election campaigning. This, however, was overturned in the end as Labour sensed a strong expectation from voters to do so – in other words, the impact of job relevance was moderated by subjective norm.

11.3.8 Output quality

Based on Venkatesh and Davis' (2000) reasoning, this factor suggests that how e-campaigning is utilised by a campaign team is affected by how well it performs as perceived by the team. This implies that the impact of output quality on e-campaigning utilisation consists of two facets: positive and negative.

All parties in this study experienced the impact of output quality on their e-campaigning utilisation. They all indicated that this factor motivated parts of their e-campaigning. For instance, ACT disseminated its key election policies also in Chinese because that was believed to best allow the party to develop a bond and trust with Chinese voters. Meanwhile, all parties suggested that their perceptions of output quality dampened their e-campaigning utilisation. For instance, United Future did not believe e-campaigning would outperform, or perform as well as, offline campaigning in securing party leader Dunne's hold of his electorate. Consequently, despite being the core focus of United Future's election campaigning, Dunne's candidacy was absent from United Future's e-campaigning.

This study has identified on one occasion in the Greens' e-campaigning that the impact of output quality was subject to the moderation of another factor, which is not present in the literature. More specifically, the Greens believed that campaigning in the newspaper produced the strongest impact. However, the party did not have sufficient resources to fund that; consequently, the party opted for e-campaigning – in other words, the impact of output quality was moderated by resource availability.

11.3.9 Result demonstrability

Based on Venkatesh and Davis' (2000) reasoning, this factor suggest that how e-campaigning is utilised by a campaign team is influenced by how tangible the results are to the team. This implies that the impact of result demonstrability on e-campaigning utilisation comprises two sides: positive and negative.

Over half of the parties in this study suggested that their e-campaigning utilisation was affected by result demonstrability. Almost all of them indicated that segments of their e-campaigns were encouraged by this factor. For instance, online videos were extensively utilised in National's e-campaign because they produced tangible results. Some parties also suggested that result demonstrability discouraged their e-campaigning utilisation. For instance, United Future felt that in contrast to offline campaigning, e-campaigning often did not clearly indicate its impact to the party; consequently, the party restricted its e-campaigning utilisation and primarily engaged in offline campaigning.

This study has found that result demonstrability chiefly applied to a novel technology, application, or e-campaigning approach. This suggests a limited scope of influence pertaining to this factor. Some parties in this study, such as the Greens, pointed out that their knowledge relating to when, where, and how to discern the results or impact of e-campaigning was highly limited; also, many aspects of e-campaigning did not usually produce tangible results but were still essential. Therefore, those parties were wary of reacting to result demonstrability alone.

It is worth reiterating the remark of United Future's campaign team that 'If you have lots of resources, you could give most things [related to e-campaigning] a go and be less concerned about whether you're going to see anything concrete out of it. But it's a totally different story if you have very limited resources.' This suggests that the impact of result demonstrability could be moderated by resource availability.

11.3.10 Perceived ease of use

Based on Venkatesh and Davis' (2000) reasoning, this factor suggests that how e-campaigning is utilised by a team is orientated by how free of effort it is as perceived by the team. This implies that the impact induced by perceived ease of use on e-campaigning utilisation involves two facets: positive and negative.

Half of the parties in this study observed the impact of perceived ease of use. They all indicated that parts of their e-campaigning utilisation were encouraged by this factor. For instance, online videos were extensively utilised in National's e-campaign because they were perceived by the party's campaign team to be simple and straightforward to produce and deploy. Some parties also claimed that their e-campaigning utilisation was limited by perceived ease of use. For instance, Labour found it challenging to shift the interest and focus of 'Facebookers' from socialising with others to engaging with the party's election campaign; consequently, Labour's campaigning on Facebook was extremely limited.

As noted, TAM research is divided on the relevance of perceived ease of use when the target technology or system is Internet-based (Y. Lee et al., 2003). More specifically, some assert that Internet-based technologies or systems are general-

purpose and therefore inherently relatively easy to use; consequently, perceived ease of use is inconsequential. Others disagree, arguing that perceived ease of use remains relevant in the Internet context when specialist tasks, such as online purchasing, are being performed. This counterargument is supported by this study – as noted, half of the parties in this study reported that their e-campaigning utilisation was informed by perceived ease of use.

11.3.11 Summary

The discussion above pertains to the factors that influenced the e-campaigning utilisation of the six political parties in this study. It encompasses various aspects that support, contradict, or extend the current knowledge of e-campaigning and IS. Notably, this study has discovered that long-established public profiles and offline communication networks, party membership, and stable resources encouraged, as opposed to dampened, e-campaigning utilisation; resource poverty stimulated e-campaigning utilisation only superficially; major parties did not deliver more advanced and sophisticated e-campaigns in all practices than their minor counterparts; major parties did not necessarily possess a significant resource advantage over their minor counterparts in e-campaigning; the scarcity of innovative e-campaigning was related to two factors, namely resource availability and subjective norm; image was a driver of professional, sophisticated e-campaigning; and perceived ease of use remained relevant in the Internet context when specialist tasks were performed.

The impact of any given factor in this study has been found to consist of two facets: positive and negative, which, however, was not experienced by all parties. This suggests that each factor could be an enabler as well as an inhibitor of e-campaigning utilisation, depending on the campaign team and context. Put differently, the duality of the impact induced by any factor in this study is organisational and contextual. Furthermore, this study has discovered that the impact of any given factor except perceived ease of use was subject to the moderation of another factor, again, depending on the campaign team and context. Taken together, it evinces that e-campaigning utilisation is complex, contextual, diverse, and dynamic. In general, the ten factors in this study are empirically

relevant, accurate, and adequate. This study has also demonstrated that a multidisciplinary approach is crucial to adequately explain e-campaigning utilisation; in other words, it is highly insufficient to rely on the political science or IS discipline alone to understand factors influencing e-campaigning utilisation.

11.4 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented a discussion focusing on the two research questions, based on the main findings from both academic literature and the empirical data. The discussion in section 11.2 has addressed the first research question, and the discussion in section 11.3 has addressed the second research question. Any suggested changes to the initial conceptualisation of e-campaigning have also been covered.

Chapter 12 Conclusion

12.1 Chapter introduction

This is the final thesis chapter. It proceeds as follows: section 12.2 illustrates the contributions of this study; section 12.3 outlines the limitations; section 12.4 suggests avenues for future e-campaigning research; and last, section 12.5 presents concluding remarks.

12.2 Research contributions

This comprehensive empirical study contributes to both academic research and e-campaigning practitioners. This section is structured accordingly.

12.2.1 Contributions to academic research

This study contributes to scholarly research in six areas. First, it is recognised that due to its nature, e-campaigning research can greatly benefit from involving other technology-related disciplines such as IS (McGrath et al., 2012; Norris, 2001; Wattal et al., 2010). However, e-campaigning studies so far have been conducted almost solely by political scientists. This study is one of the few that responds to calls for a multidisciplinary approach in e-campaigning research by adopting both the political science and IS disciplines. As a result, it has provided fresh and unique insights, especially concerning factors that influence e-campaigning utilisation.

Second, although e-campaigning research began about two decades ago, empirical knowledge of the phenomenon is limited. Notably, differing from other social phenomena, the e-campaigning phenomenon occurs only periodically with considerably long intervals in between. In other words, access to the e-campaigning phenomenon is highly restricted. Further, existing empirical e-campaigning studies are highly geographically concentrated (Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). More specifically, most empirical e-campaigning studies in the literature focus on European and US contexts. This study is not only empirical but also situated in New Zealand, a small democracy rarely investigated in existing e-campaigning research. This is therefore a valuable contribution to e-campaigning research.

Third, political parties' or candidates' campaign teams are an integral component of the e-campaigning phenomenon. It is therefore crucial to involve them as research participants in e-campaigning studies, particularly the ones that pertain to explaining e-campaigning utilisation, in order to gain insights into the phenomenon. However, little prior e-campaigning research has done so. This, according to Lilleker and Vedel (2013), is chiefly due to the difficulty in accessing campaign teams. This study has involved six of eight possible campaign teams, including all the major parties', in the election under research. Therefore, the empirical understanding offered by this study, particularly concerning factors that influence e-campaigning utilisation, is highly comprehensive, inclusive, and representative, which forms a significant contribution to scholarly research.

Fourth, as demonstrated comprehensively in the Discussion chapter, this study confirms, contradicts, as well as extends the existing understanding of e-campaigning, which constitutes another major contribution to scholarly research. For instance, in line with existing e-campaigning research, this study has found that e-campaigning utilisation varied noticeably within the same election, even in a small, arguably homogeneous democracy, namely New Zealand, with relatively equal access to technologies. In stark contrast to common belief in existing e-campaigning research, this study has illustrated that party-led elections could be beneficial to e-campaigning utilisation. Largely novel in existing e-campaigning research, this study has discovered that among the factors that influenced the political parties' e-campaigning in the election, the impact of any given factor except perceived ease of use was subject to the moderation of another factor, depending on the campaign team and context; put differently, this study has found e-campaigning utilisation to be highly dynamic and the associated dynamics to be immensely contextual, organisational, and therefore unpredictable.

Fifth, a conceptual framework is essential to understand, describe, and compare increasingly complex and sophisticated e-campaigns. Various e-campaigning frameworks can be found in the literature. They, however, exhibit three main issues, namely, a lack of academic rigour, the orientation of campaign practices, and variation in the coverage of campaign practices. These issues potentially undermine research and knowledge relating to campaign teams' e-campaigning

utilisation. This study has proposed a new framework, based on an extensive review of existing studies, addressing the three identified issues. The a priori framework has then been used to frame comprehensive empirical data analysis and subsequently extended and refined. Put differently, this study has devised a framework that is theoretically-based, empirically grounded, extensible, and built on a uniquely comprehensive and representative evidence base. The framework proposed in this study therefore has a superior theoretical and empirical grounding to previous frameworks and can be employed with confidence to analyse subsequent e-campaigns.

Last, from both e-campaigning and IS literature, this study has identified ten factors to explain campaign teams' e-campaigning utilisation. While both external and internal factors have been considered, this study has particularly focused on the latter. To that end, it has alleviated an issue identified by this study as well as Marcinkowski and Metag (2014) that existing factors in e-campaigning research are chiefly external to campaign teams, consequently, they are inadequate for explaining e-campaigning utilisation within the same election. Further, the ten factors have been empirically studied. Collectively, it represents another contribution of this study to e-campaigning research because the factors presently in e-campaigning research are highly limited, mainly external, and mostly hypothetical.

12.2.2 Contributions to e-campaigning practitioners

Half of the campaign teams in this study noted that e-campaigning evaluation was vital, yet their evaluations were narrow, unsophisticated, and unreliable. This, according to them, was largely due to the lack of a robust and holistic view of e-campaigning. The e-campaigning framework proposed in this study is based on a comprehensive review of scholarly studies and has been empirically applied, it therefore could serve as an instrument for campaign teams to conduct more robust and holistic assessments of e-campaigning.

The e-campaigning framework proposed in this study could also serve as an instrument for campaign teams to systematically plan and implement their e-campaigns. Further, this study has identified and discussed a wide range of factors

influencing e-campaigning utilisation, which could inform the planning and implementation of e-campaigns.

12.3 Research limitations

This study consists of four main limitations. First, this study focuses on one election cycle within one country as well as only one form of election – party-led. Thus, the generalisability of the empirical findings is restricted.

Second, Lilleker and Vedel (2013, p. 405) point out that although content analysis is most frequently employed for analysing e-campaigns, a notable limitation is that 'it can only categorise features and make assumptions about the experiences that are enabled but not necessarily realised; it remains more difficult to assess what experiences are actually provided.' This limitation could be addressed by including voter perspectives. Since this study employs content analysis and excludes voter perspectives, the limitation indicated by Lilleker and Vedel is present.

Third, new content elements, campaign practices, and factors influencing e-campaigning utilisation are likely to continue to emerge, based on technology, political practices (although these have been surprisingly stable even in technology-mediated environments), or the introduction of a new theoretical lens. Therefore, neither the e-campaigning framework proposed in this study nor the factors discussed in this study should be considered as exhaustive or 'finished' in other words.

Last, the ten factors influencing e-campaigning utilisation considered in this study are for explaining e-campaigning utilisation only. As demonstrated extensively in this study, it is difficult, if not impossible, to predict e-campaigning utilisation with those factors because e-campaigning utilisation is complex, contextual, diverse, and dynamic.

12.4 Avenues for future research

Based on the findings, contributions, and limitations of this study, several avenues for future research are illuminated. First, more empirical e-campaigning studies

should be conducted, especially with a multidisciplinary approach, in different contexts, on different levels, and involving campaign teams or voters as research participants. Second, the e-campaigning framework proposed in this study should be applied in further empirical research in order to assess its empirical relevancy, accuracy, and adequacy. Third, longitudinal e-campaigning studies should be considered in order to chart both the evolution and consequences of e-campaigning. Further, in explaining the six parliamentary parties' e-campaigning utilisation in the 2008 New Zealand general election, this study has empirically explored the factors that influenced those parties' e-campaigning utilisation, their different impacts, their various interactions, as well as the associated contexts. However, this study has not ultimately formulated a new theory or a causal model. This is quite appropriate considering that, as noted, research pertaining to factors influencing parties' or candidates' e-campaigning utilisation is still in its infancy and the factors commonly noted in existing e-campaigning research, namely, election type, electoral regulations, voters' technology access, and resource availability, are mostly theoretically-based only. Subsequent research should continue to empirically investigate factors that influence parties' or candidates' e-campaigning utilisation – either those in this study or new factors, their impacts, their possible interactions, their associated contexts, and possible new entities within the e-campaigning phenomenon. And with that as well as the empirical understanding offered by this study, subsequent e-campaigning research should posit a new theory or a causal model that *explains* (as demonstrated comprehensively in this study, it is difficult, if not impossible, to predict) parties' or candidates' e-campaigning utilisation. A theory or a causal model that is empirically grounded, or with an empirical dimension, in other words, is immensely significant and beneficial. Notably, it could enable positivist or postpositivist researchers to better discern or comprehend the fundamental structure of the e-campaigning phenomenon; it could also serve as a fine instrument for constructivist researchers to discover or interpret different realities relating to the e-campaigning phenomenon.

This study has demonstrated that IS can provide unique and valuable insights into the e-campaigning phenomenon. Therefore, more IS scholars should join their

political science colleagues in future e-campaigning research, particularly in areas concerning knowledge management and sharing, outsourcing, and virtual collaboration. Seen from another perspective, the characteristics of e-campaigning as highly situated, temporary, and occurring at intervals separated by long periods of time with little or no activity represent a unique form of IS to those that exist in the more usually studied organisational context. There are likely to be unique IS challenges in the management of e-campaigning, for instance, in knowledge retention, organisational learning, and technology maturity, which also warrant further study.

12.5 Concluding remarks

E-campaigning research began in the 1990s when Clinton deployed a website for his first presidential election campaign. Yet, the e-campaigning phenomenon remains largely unexplored and unexplained, mainly due to limited access to the e-campaigning phenomenon, the narrow and geographical concentration of e-campaigning research, the quickening pace of technological advancement, the accessibility of campaign teams as research participants, and a dearth of multidisciplinary research. Because of that, this study has empirically explored and explained six parliamentary parties' e-campaigning utilisation in the 2008 New Zealand general election with both political science and IS perspectives and a qualitative multiple-case research approach.

This study has discovered that the six parties' e-campaigning utilisation varied markedly beyond information dissemination and targeted campaigning at political counterparts, despite the underlying technologies and applications being almost identical. It has also found that innovative e-campaigning was the exception rather than the norm. While social media, such as Facebook, was introduced as part of almost all parties' e-campaigning, it was chiefly intended for information dissemination, its interactive nature was hardly exploited. In online voter interaction and engagement, the major parties focused on key election policies while their minor counterparts on dialogues with and between voters. Many parties also targeted specific voter segments in their e-campaigning,

however, the level of sophistication varied widely. Resource generation exhibited the least creativity in almost all parties' e-campaigning.

Interestingly, campaign practices in all parties' e-campaigning appeared to be stable, with the practices adopted by the various parties all well recognised from political science literature. However, the application of ICTs to those practices was very diverse. This then raises an interesting question: Are political parties just continuing to do what they know and understand, with a bit of technology 'thrown in', rather than genuinely harnessing opportunities for new forms of election campaigning?

This study has illustrated that e-campaigning utilisation is attributable to diverse factors, both external and internal to campaign teams, both objective and subjective, and both technology-related and non-technology-related. This clearly indicates that any adequate explanation for e-campaigning utilisation is multifactorial and, more importantly, a multidisciplinary approach is pivotal to investigating the e-campaigning phenomenon. The impact of any given factor in this study consists of both positive and negative sides. This, however, was not experienced by every party under study, meaning that a given factor in this study can be an enabler or inhibitor of e-campaigning utilisation and it is difficult, if not impossible, to predict. Further, this study has demonstrated that the impact of almost any given factor is subject to the moderation of another factor. However, it is virtually impossible to predict which factor will moderate the impact of another factor and when. Taken together, it evinces that e-campaigning utilisation is complex, contextual, diverse, and dynamic.

While the complex, contextual, diverse, and dynamic nature of the e-campaigning phenomenon undermines the generalisability of the empirical findings of any e-campaigning study irrespective of the research approach being employed, it makes each empirical e-campaigning study unique and it also makes e-campaigning research at large infinite, intriguing, and enlightening.

Appendix 1: An example of an e-campaigning framework

Below is an example of an e-campaigning framework developed by Schweitzer (2008a).

Categories	Website elements	
Information	Items on the political system	Items on campaign organisation/strategy
	Items on the election system	Download of party documents
	Items of the party history	Current party news
	Items of the party organisation	Dossiers on background topics
	Items on party members	Newsletter
	Items on the election program	Event calendar
	Items on party conventions	Press releases
	Items on junior party organisations	Local candidates
	Items on party projects/foundations	Campaign coverage
	Items on canvassing tour	Party members in the media
		Times of party broadcast slots
Interactivity	Online fundraising/donations	Online opinion polls
	Online membership	Discussion forums/news groups
	Online friendraising	Weblogs
	E-volunteers	Chat rooms for non-party members
	Intra-/Extranet	Computer games/quizzes/gimmicks
	Feedback option on text articles	Lotteries
	Online petitions/protest mails	Tax calculator
	E-cards	Bulletin board/guestbook
Sophistication	Press accrediting	Search engine
	News archive	Home page icon on lower levels of the website
	Photo archive	Toolbar
	Imprint	Back button
	Offers of post	Upward button
	Hotline	Photos
	Email contact	Graphics
	SMS service	Animated icons/banner
	E-shop	Audio/video streams
	English version	Online subscription/use of party publications
	Text-only version of articles	Download of party paraphernalia
	Print option for text articles	Internet packages
	Email option for text articles	Download of party broadcasts
	Download option for text articles	Download of party billboards
	Offers of additional software	Web radio/podcasting
	Site map/index	
	Information tour	

Appendix 2: List of instruments for data collection and analysis

The following exhibits 11 instruments employed in the collection and analysis of empirical evidence in this study. References to those instruments can be found in section 3.7 and 3.8. Also note that the instruments are ordered according to the sequence that they appear in this thesis.

1. Interview protocol
2. Information sheet
3. Consent form
4. Interview notes
5. Coding framework for the first research question
6. Analytic memos for the first research question
7. Matrices for displaying the primary data for the first research question
8. Analytic memos for the second research question
9. A priori codes for the second research question
10. Matrices for displaying the primary data for the second research question
11. Diagrams for displaying the primary data for the second research question

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