Abstract Submission

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Abstract

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