

PAP, WP put out least content on Facebook and Twitter

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The two political parties that received the biggest vote shares at this year's general election were also the least active on new media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.

Researchers found that the People's Action Party (PAP) was the least active on its Facebook page, with only 47 posts. The Workers' Party (WP) had just 102 posts.

This is in contrast to the Singapore Democratic Party (SDP), which had 481 posts, and the Reform Party (RP), with 365 posts.

Nanyang Technological University (NTU) assistant professor Debbie Goh says the dissonance between the number of Facebook posts and election results 'suggests that Facebook on its own simply is not sufficient to sway voters'.

She presented her analysis yesterday as part of the Institute of Policy Studies' national survey on the impact of new media on the May general election.

The study examined the main websites and Facebook pages of all political parties during the election period.

But it did not look at separate microsites and Facebook pages for constituencies and candidates set up by parties because the team did not have enough manpower.

As for Twitter, a separate study done by NTU assistant professor Xu Xiaoge found that the PAP tweeted the least during the hustings, followed by WP.

The National Solidarity Party (NSP) was the most active on Twitter, followed by RP.

Both SDP and RP had relied heavily on new media to reach out to voters.

During the elections, SDP candidate James Gomez said the party's main outreach effort was taking place online rather than on the ground.

Dr Goh also noted that RP was 'a young party that had professed to leverage on the Internet to reach out to young voters'.

On the other hand, the WP preferred reaching out to voters on the ground while the PAP took a decentralised new media approach in which its electoral candidates individually engaged with voters.

Dr Goh's study also shows that almost all the political parties tend to produce Facebook posts with text, like status updates, rather than images.

The exception was WP, which had more photo postings.

Altogether, the political parties produced 1,380 posts during the survey period from April 27 to May 8.

Most aimed to update readers on candidates' campaign efforts.

Though fewer, the PAP's and WP's Facebook posts attracted the most comments, with the PAP getting 3,309 and WP, 3,279.

During the election campaign period, the Facebook pages of the PAP and WP saw dramatic increases in 'likes'. The PAP's 'likes' doubled, while WP's quadrupled.

The study also looked at party websites and found they were mostly used to raise issues, mobilise voters and volunteers, promote candidates and give updates on election rallies.