

***e-campaigning in local elections:
Out with the old, in with the new?***

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Introduction

- Communication trends in local government campaigns
 1. What the voters said
 2. What the candidates did in 2008
 3. Campaign 2012

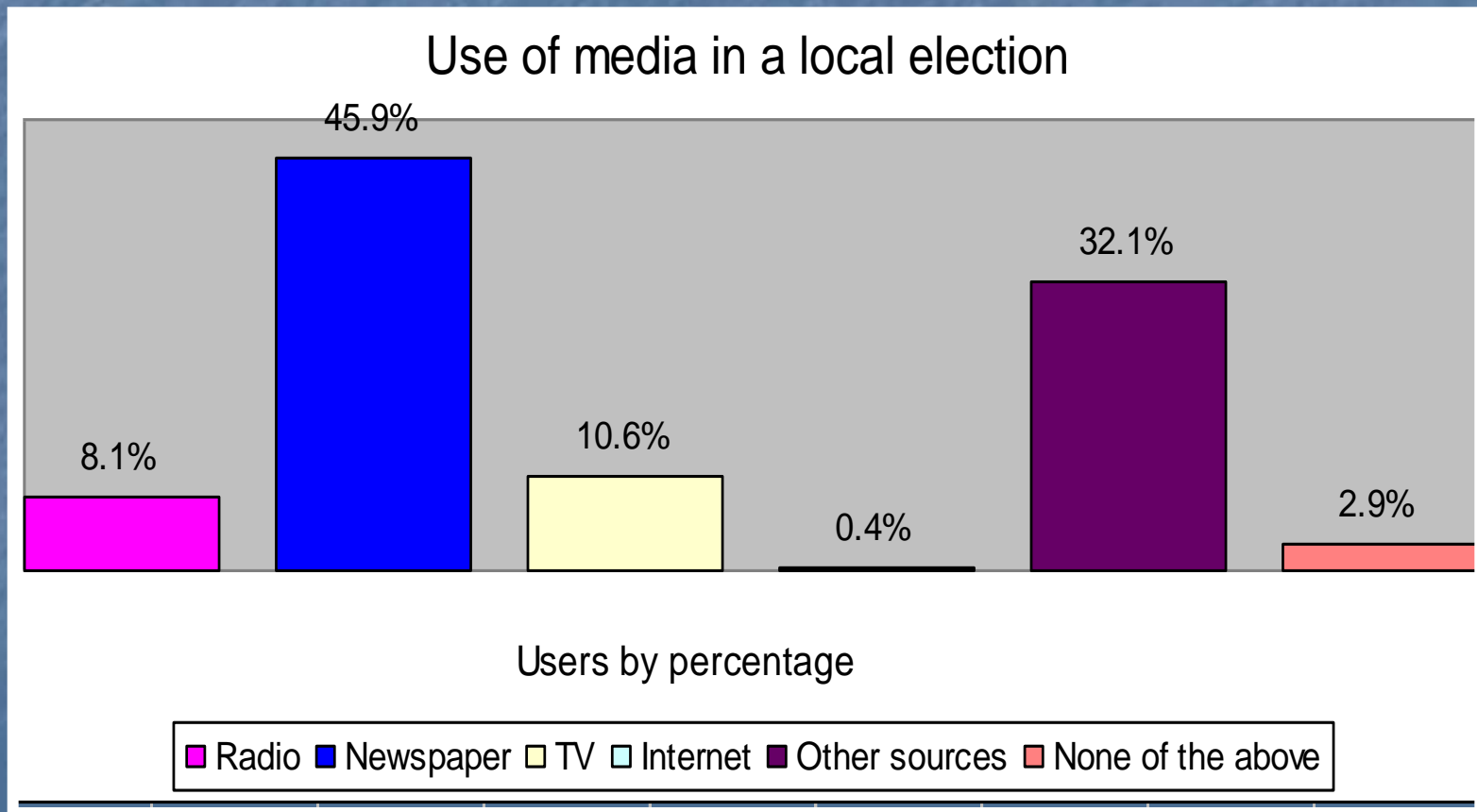
1. What the voters said

● Survey:

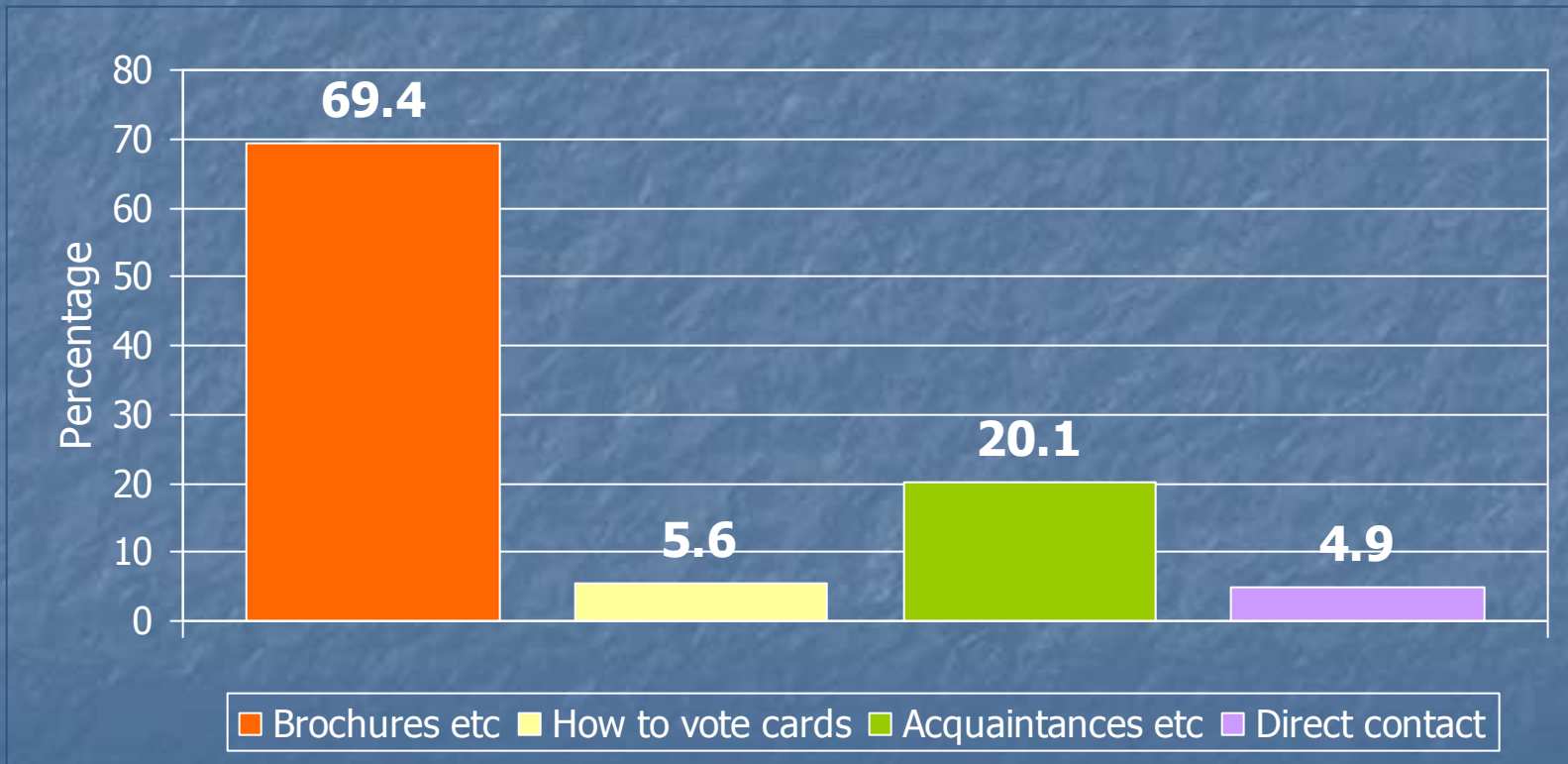
- Which media (mainstream and alternative) did you use to get information about the council candidates?
- Did the mainstream media influence your decision about who to support in the election?

Survey available online: http://www.lgaq.asn.au/web/guest/library/-/journal_content/56/10136/6A956BB38FBCB9DE62A6236C19A26F72

The findings



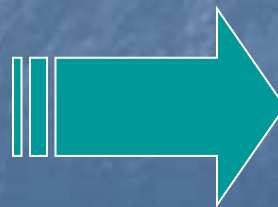
Use of alternative media (Other sources)



Media influence on voters' choices

No influence	Small	Large	Very large
34%	46%	17%	3%

Total respondents = 504



333 people (66%) said
media influenced their vote

Summary: What the voters said

- They used newspapers and alternative sources (most often) to get information about council candidates.
- One in every three took no notice of political information in the mainstream media when deciding their vote.

2. e-election strategies in 2008

● Survey of candidates:

- “New” media tools used to get news/info to voters
- Value of campaign communication methods

Interviews:

- Reasons for campaign communication choices

Why Toowoomba & Rockhampton?

Similarities

- History: Voters' strategies to get political information
- Amalgamations → super councils
- "Provincial" councils (ACLG classification)

Differences (voting)

- TRC – first past the post; whole-of-area
- RRC – optional preferential; whole-of-area & divisions

Sample

- 65 respondents (out of 73 available candidates)


"New" media tools used in 2008

Tool	Used by
Email	69%
Website	48%
YouTube	11%
Facebook	11%
Blog/wiki	9%
My Space	0%
Twitter, Flickr, Bebo, Friendster, Orkut, LinkedIn, etc	0%

Most valuable	Personal contacts, door knocking, meetings, forums	
	Leaflets, newsletters, how-to-vote cards	
	Newspaper articles and/or ads	
	Outdoor advertising	
	Television appearances and/or ads	
	Radio appearances and/or ads	
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	Email	
	Personal website	
	Facebook, My Space, YouTube, Twitter, Flickr, Bebo, Friendster, Orkut, LinkedIn, etc	
Least valuable	Blog/wiki	

Reasons for adopting media tools

■ Cost benefit

"I did look at what it cost ... I would suggest that the more you use, the more diverse types of media you use, then probably you are getting across wider audiences as a result." **RESPONDENT 21** 

■ Perceptions of voters' use of online media


"I had in mind that people who were less likely to be thinking about the issues in the area were probably more likely to be the ones that were using Facebook or YouTube ... Just how influential it was was the only issue."

RESPONDENT 26





Reasons for adopting media tools

■ Own IT/computer skills

"I'm conversant in the use of Facebook and YouTube ... it's just another communication tool to me. I wanted to differentiate myself from the other candidates and that was the means by which to do it." **RESPONDENT 36** 


■ Mainstream media exposure

"He [the news director] basically told me ... they wouldn't be doing any candidate profiles." **RESPONDENT 8** 


"It was more or less to communicate with other forms of media. To get into local government your form of communication has to match theirs." **RESPONDENT 4** 

Reasons for adopting media tools

■ Time and length of campaign

"I chose not to use it ... owing to the shortness of the campaign ... I just thought that by the time I sat down and learned how to use it to campaign time was too short." **RESPONDENT 19** 

■ Communication control

"It's the longevity of new media. The Internet is not short term so it's cost effective. I can control how long the information is there and I can change it." **RESPONDENT 25** 


Profile of a successful candidate: 2008

● Of the 20 elected respondents:

- 13 used email
- 9 had a website
- 2 were on Facebook, 2 had videos on YouTube
- 1 wrote a blog/wiki
- None used My Space, Twitter, etc.

Eight elected resp. used more than one form of “new” media:

- 1 – website, email, Facebook & YouTube
- 5 – website & email
- 1 – email & YouTube
- 1 – email & Facebook

<p>Most valuable</p>  <p>Least valuable</p>	Personal contacts, door knocking, meetings, forums	
	Leaflets, newsletters, how-to-vote cards	
	Newspaper articles and/or ads	
	Outdoor advertising	
	Television appearances and/or ads	
	Radio appearances and/or ads	
	<hr style="border-top: 1px dashed yellow;"/>	
	Personal website	
	Email	
	Facebook, My Space, YouTube, Twitter, Flickr, Bebo, Friendster, Orkut, LinkedIn, etc	
Blog/wiki		

Profile of a successful candidate: 2008

On average, they spent:

- 22 weeks campaigning for election
- 35 hours/week canvassing for votes
- 2.6 hours/week doing media interviews

Other facts:

- Used the Internet to get news/info about the election and/or other candidates
- Age: more than half were aged 55-64 years
- Education: majority had completed tech/further ed. or university
- Gender made no difference to election outcome

3. Campaign 2012

Feedback from voters (LGAQ 2011, “Community Satisfaction Tracking” study):

- more than a third of Queenslanders are “dissatisfied” with the quality of their elected local government representatives
 - perception that “our councils are no longer serving or listening suggests political change is in the air” (www.couriermail.com.au, 1/8/11)
- 38 per cent want to change their local council leader

→ 2012: Broad brush strokes – go with mainstream traditional + mainstream alternative + “new” media (including social media)

Thank you

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