# Podemos in the Regional Elections 2015: Online Campaign Strategies in Castile and León

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**Abstract:** Internet has revolutionized many aspects in the way that political parties communicate. The Network has induced a complete transformation of the political strategies used during election campaigns to spread their message to the electorate. Politicians use social networks and digital platforms to promote their messages and to communicate with citizens during these periods of time. Facebook has proven to be one of the most effective networks in this regard. The party Podemos was born in 2014 in Spain, surrounded by a deep economic, institutional and political crisis. This political party promises to be a real hope to the negative situation of the country. In the recent years, Podemos has aroused the interest of social scientists because of the innovative way they use social networks. This paper explores the cybercampaign strategies that Podemos used during the 2015 Castile and León regional elections, a region where the population is very different from the party's average voter. To this end, a quantitative analysis of their activity on Facebook and their website was made during the regional election campaign. The results of this study allow us to observe an ordinary use of the digital tools by Podemos that highlights the engagement achieved with users in Facebook.

**Keywords:** cybercampaign, social networks, Podemos, electoral campaign, political communication.

*Resumen: Internet ha implicado diversos cambios en la forma en que los partidos políticos se comunican, así como una transformación completa de las estrategias utilizadas para difundir su mensaje*

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*al electorado durante la campaña. Desde esferas políticas se utilizan las redes sociales y plataformas digitales para promover sus mensajes y comunicarse con la ciudadanía. En este sentido, Facebook ha demostrado ser una de las redes más efectivas. Al mismo tiempo, Podemos nació en 2014 en España, en un contexto de profunda crisis económica, institucional y política. Este partido se presentaba como una esperanza real para la situación negativa del país y en los últimos años ha despertado el interés de la ciencia social por la forma innovadora de su uso de redes sociales. Este documento explora las estrategias de cibercampaña de Podemos en las elecciones regionales de Castilla y León 2015, cuya población dista de la del votante promedio del partido. Con este fin, realizamos un análisis de contenido de su actividad en Facebook y de su sitio web durante la campaña en la región. Los resultados de este estudio nos permiten observar un desarrollo ordinario de las herramientas digitales por parte de Podemos, que sí destaca por el compromiso que manifiestan sus usuarios en Facebook.*

**Palabras clave:** *cibercampaña, redes sociales, Podemos, campaña electoral, comunicación política.*

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, politicians have found in social networks one of the most direct mechanisms to communicate and disseminate their messages to an electorate (Delany, 2012). These digital platforms present themselves as a way for political parties to develop a positive image which they control, regardless of the image they have in traditional media (Slimovich, 2012). More specifically, Facebook is considered to be one of the most powerful platforms for politicians because of its ability to transmit a chosen message to thousands of people (Hughes et al., 2012).

The Spanish party Podemos was born in 2014 in a context of economic and institutional crisis and a decline of bipartisanship. This party emerged as a hopeful alternative, with an operational base characteristic of the Digital Era –horizontal and decentralized– (Castells, 2009). Given the short history of the party, 2015 was the first year they contested the regional elections. This article aims to analyse the online campaign strategies undertaken in Castile and León's circumstances.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. The emerging academic interest in Podemos and its online strategy

The birth of the Internet in the mid-nineties of last century captured the attention of political parties which began to use new technologies to broadcast campaign messages through electronic spaces (Dader, 2009). They have been considered as essential tactical elements of campaigns which centralize other tools, integrate the different online strategie, widely inform the electorate and mobilise voters (Delany, 2012; Mas-

suchin, 2015). Moreover, in recent times, the key role of a website is to inform and has given way to a new period featuring social networks orientated toward grassroots work (Gibson, 2013).

Therefore, the use of social media strategy by candidates such as Barack Obama and Sarah Palin sparked academic interest in the study of platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube as a channel of communication with voters (Nielsen and Vaccari, 2013). In the case of Facebook, the social network analysed in this study, researchers have considered it a tool that, with varying success, has been used to communicate and interact more directly with Internet users (sometimes sympathizers, sometimes detractors) and project an image, independent independent of what is offered in traditional media (Slimovich, 2012; Jensen and Dyrby, 2013).

In the case of Podemos, due to the brevity of its existence in the political scene, the body of literature dedicated to its development and practices has had a short trajectory in terms of time, generally about the party results in the Spanish election. Thus, Boix Palop and López García (2014) or Sampietro and Valera Ordaz (2015) interpret the that led to the party to obtain five MEPs in the European Parliament elections of 2014.

These authors describe a context featuring institutional and economic crisis, which in the latter case particularly affected Spain as one of the most vulnerable countries in the euro zone. These circumstances resulted in the decline of bipartisanship and the rise of emerging forces, including Podemos, that developed an online strategy characterized by the following (Boix Palop and López García, 2014): horizontality, decentralization and frequent activity on the Internet.

Sampietro and Valera Ordaz (2015) focus their study on the Podemos discourse on Facebook, to conclude that this social network was used for campaign business such as information about events or forms of financing. In addition, there is a significant presence of generally positive emotions and the hope for political change in the party discourse. Dader (2015) believes that it is precisely the use of emotion in their posts which enabled the party to create their own iconography and attractiveness to the electorate.

For that reason, traditional television has not ceased to be a relevant means for the rise of Podemos (Dader, 2015; López García, 2015). In this same line of thought, Sampedro (2015) argues that the success of the party in the last round of elections was due to the combination of traditional media and the use of the Internet not only to transmit information, but also as an organisational platform: participatory democracy, transparency or self-financing via crowdfunding would not have been possible without the Internet.

Besides the messages about requests for funds, the mentions referencing the party or its leaders and the promoting of campaign events, there was also a big visibility of social movements, such as 15M, which articulate the party discourse in Facebook (Jerez et al., 2015). Thus, social networks would have been used to amplify the impact of television: the appearances are initially uploaded to YouTube, and then Twitter and Facebook are used to react to them (Rueda Laffond, 2015).

Apart from social networking, this political party has also been adding other tools to its organisational methods for discussion and voting: *Plaza Podemos* (Podemos Square), *Reddit* or *Agora Voting*, etc. Other scholars have also begun to use these tools to see if these innovations assist in achieving their goals to increase citizen participation in decision-making (Jerez et al, 2015; Fenoll and Sanchez Castillo, 2015). In this study, the analysis of Facebook is combined with that of the website; in both cases for elections with different scope to the European elections – the regional elections.

## 2.2. The Castilian and Leonese political context and its contrast with the Podemos electorate

In addition to theory dedicated to researching Podemos' Internet campaign strategies, other studies have been devoted to defining the archetypal Podemos' voter. Jaraiz Gulias and Barreiro Rivas (2015) explore the European Parliamentary elections of 2014 in order to highlight the demographic contrast of the party electorate against that of traditional groups – Popular Party and SSWP: their youth and their qualifications. Podemos has an electorate of young voters aged between 18 and 49 (71.3%), who have successfully completed higher educational studies and are currently in employment (Jaraiz Gulias and Barreiro Rivas, 2015).

This data is endorsed by Galindo's (2015) results from the Centre for Sociological Research (CIS). This author indicates that as well as being highly skilled and youthful Podemos' electorate comes from urban centres and has an ideologically left position: Podemos receives votes not only of those who had taken a position of abstentionism (sceptics and disaffected to politics) but also of former SSWP (29%) and United Left (16%) supporters.

This young, qualified, urban, and leftist electorate contrasts with the socio-demographic characteristics that Castile and León present within the group of regions that make up Spain. 23.7% of their population is 65 or older and the average age is 46, 4.1 years more than the Spanish average of 42 years according to 2016 data from the National Statistics Institute (INE). Moreover, it is a scattered rural population: 49.04% of its 2,248 municipalities have fewer than 2,000 inhabitants (Abellán Pujol Garcia and Rodriguez, 2015).

The ideological tendency of the community is also significant, since it is eminently conservative. Between 1991-2015 Popular Party remained in government of the autonomous community for seven consecutive terms - six of them with a majority in parliament. Only in the last election did this trend changed as Popular Party had to rely on the support of the 5 members of the party Citizens to preside over Castile and León.

In these elections Podemos became the third political force in the region, with 10 of the 84 seats in the regional parliament - coming behind therefore, PP, which won 42 deputies; SSWP, with 25; and in front of United Left, with 1 (Courts of Castile y León, 2015).

**Table 1**
Election match results analysed by year

|         | 1983 | 1987 | 1991 | 1995 | 1999 | 2003 | 2007 | 2011 | 2015 |
|---------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| PP      | 39   | 32   | 43   | 50   | 48   | 48   | 48   | 53   | 42   |
| PSOE    | 42   | 32   | 35   | 27   | 30   | 32   | 33   | 29   | 25   |
| Podemos |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 10   |
| Citizens|      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 5    |
| IU      | 0    | 0    | 1    | 5    | 1    |      | 0    | 1    | 1    |
| UPL     |      |      |      | 2    | 3    | 2    | 2    | 1    | 1    |
| UPyD    |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 0    | 0    |

*Source:* created by the authors from Junta de Castile and León data (www.jcyl.es).

It is also relevant to mention the *Post-election study of the 2015 regional elections in the autonomous community of Castile and León* (CIS), which provides information relative to the digital divide - relevant to understand the importance of how the online campaign was managed during the 2015 regional elections which is the focus of this article. Of the 57.1% of respondents who said they had used the Internet in order to inform themselves about the elections (14.5 percentage points below the Spanish average), only 8.3% used web pages of political parties and a larger percentage, 21.4%, accessed information through social networks. These socio-demographic characteristics of Castile and León Autonomous Community make it an object of interest to study the dynamics of Podemos in the regional elections, as the general profile of the electorate in this area differs greatly from the average Podemos' voter.

## 3. Methodology

This study, which is exploratory in nature, aims to investigate what the online campaign strategies are for Podemos, a party that has usually been considered innovative in its online practices. However, in Castile and León this organization has to manage with and adverse context. The demographics of the region are a long way from the median party voter, as population shows a low amount of Internet usage, including during election time, and tend to vote to traditional, conservative and right-wing parties. Therefore, six research questions are examining:

RQ 1. Is Podemos more active in the use of Facebook than the rest of the parties?

RQ 2. Does Podemos reach more involvement of their social network users?

RQ 3. Is there any difference between Podemos' discourse and the other parties on the Internet?

RQ 4. How is Podemos visual identity on its website?

RQ 5. How is the interaction developed in Podemos' web?

To do this, we compared the activity on Facebook and party websites comparing it with that of the six other major competing groups: Partido Popular (Popular Party/ PP), Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party /SSWP), Ciudadanos (Citizens/C's), Izquierda Unida (United Left/UL), Unión del Pueblo Leónes (Leonese People's Union /LPU) and Unión, Progreso y Democracia (Union, Progress and Democracy /UP&D).

### 3.1. Podemos' Facebook page

We undertook a quantitative analysis of posts published on the pages of the leading politicians, and candidates during the 15-day election campaign, the day of reflection, election day and the day after (from the 8th to 25th May 2015) in order to study Facebook use by Podemos. Only party publications or candidates themselves were analysed and not the shared content from other accounts. Of the 356 messages analysed, 54 posts corresponded to Podemos, in particular 53 published on the party web site and 1 on its candidate's page, Pablo Fernández.

Each unit of analysis was coded in SPSS according to a book of codes that included the following major categories: "basic identification data"; "importance of the publication", which analyses the presence of images or videos and the number of likes and comments (Xue, 2014); "formal aspects of the post", in order to study whether the communication was personalized, depersonalized or hybrid (Lee and Oh, 2012); and "tone of language used" (Giglietto and Selva, 2014).

One of the objectives of the analysis was to assess the engagement of publications on Facebook, according to the variables "number of likes", "number of shares", "num-

ber of comments" and "number of commentators". This index was developed using as the starting point the median of each of the variables. These were rated in values from 0 to 10 and finally the results of each variable were added up and divided by three to obtain a final index that measured the engagement from 0 to 10 for each party alike.

The book of codes also included references to the thematic content of the post, such as the proposed policies or social issues, based on the study of Fernandes et al. (2010). Finally, the 2.0 commitment of the candidate or party was analysed, taking into account the number of candidates' comments, interactivity in communication and level of contribution to knowledge (Wasko & Faraj, 2005), and the quality of the contribution to knowledge (Giglietto & Forest, 2014).

### 3.2 Podemos' website

The methodology used to study the web use was a quantitative content analysis, mirroring that used by Dader et al. (2014) in the article *The Spanish Political Party Websites in Electoral Campaigning. Similar Trend since 2008 thru 2011*. Like these authors, we divided the page analysis and the rest of the parties into four different categories: "information", "interactivity", "ease of use and update" and "aesthetic and attractive customisation".

Each section had a maximum possible score of 120 points; and so therefore, each individual website could gain a maximum total of 480 points. The data presented in the results section is of the percentages obtained in relation to the highest possible score. Qualitative comments collected during the analysis are also added to this evaluation which allow us to explore reasons for specific scores.

Scores were recorded on two different dates: May 11, at the beginning of the election campaign and on May 25, one day after completion of election day on May 24. In order to make the comparison with the Podemos' Internet website, websites from other political parties were analysed except for Citizens who did not register a website during the analysis period.

### 4. Results

### 4.1. Highest score rating in the category of engagement for the Podemos' Facebook page

Podemos and Citizens were the only parties that participated for the first time in the 2015 Castile and León regional elections and the creation of their Facebook pages coincides in February 2015. By this time the veteran parties had already had their

pages registered: UP&D (April 2010), PP (May 2010) or SSWP (January 2014). LPU was the only party that had no Facebook page.

During the period analysed a total of 356 posts were registered of which 89% were published by the parties, compared with 11% of postings by candidates. Podemos published 53 post on its party website and only 1 on their candidate's page (15.16% of total posts), ranking it as the fifth most active party just ahead of Citizens (13 posts) and LPU - which had no Facebook page - and the 96 posts of SSWP, the party which produced the most content during the campaign.

**Chart 1**
Activity of political parties on Facebook
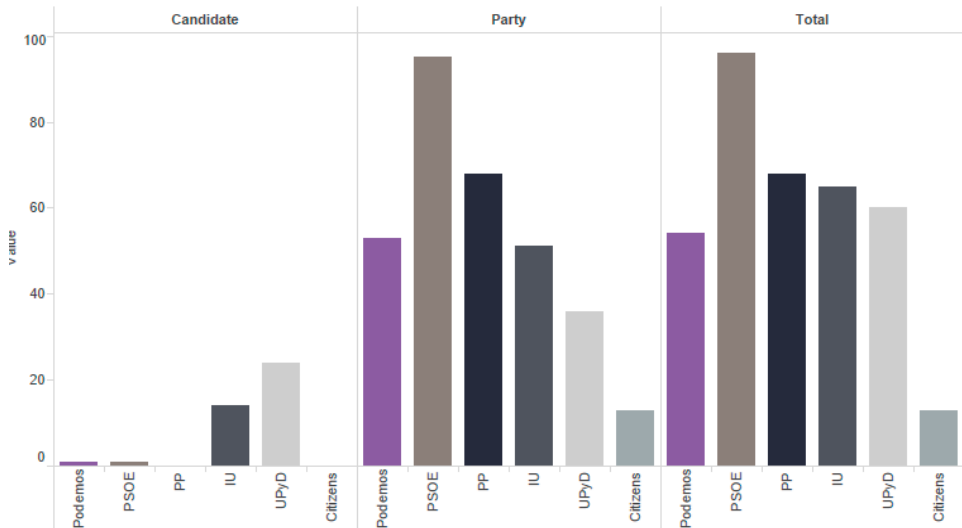


*Source:* created by the author.

The day of the campaign's launch was when most activity was recorded with a total of 41 publications (although only four belonged to Podemos) and the parties ceased almost entirely to report via this medium once the campaign concluded. Podemos, PP and UP&D published on election day while Citizens and SSWP did it on the day after the election.

As regards to the formal aspects of posts, Podemos was within the expected photograph usage range (68.5% of the posts added images) and links (25.9% of the posts included them), whereas other parties excelled in the use of images - UP&D (82%),

SSWP (83%) and Citizens (100%) - and sharing links to other websites - UP&D (48.3%) and PP (45.6%). The inclusion of video footage in messages was generally low (only 7% of publications were accompanied by this type of content) as was the use of labels or mentions in publications (5.1%). Podemos, along with Citizens and PP, did not use these at all.

Podemos was ahead in terms of engagement achieved with a maximum score of 10 out of 10. The party obtained an average of 43.56 likes per post and 16.44 shares on its publications. Podemos' Facebook page published the message with the highest number of likes (131) of all the content analysed, which was a proposal announced by Pablo Iglesias in Zamora about local government reform. It included a link to the regional newspaper *El Norte de Castilla* and it was also the post that was shared most times (77). Podemos also published the most commented-on message (12 occasions) which spoke about a woman from Salamanca who had lost her European Health Card due to government cuts.

Of the remaining parties only Citizens was able to achieve a pass mark on the engagement index with a score of 6.07. SSWP, which proved to be the party with the most number of likes, only reached a score of 2.95 due to the paucity of comments. PP and UL obtained 1.84 and 1.16 respectively and UP&D had the lowest score (0.35) due to the minimum values of the variables analysed.

**Chart 2**
Engagement of political parties on Facebook
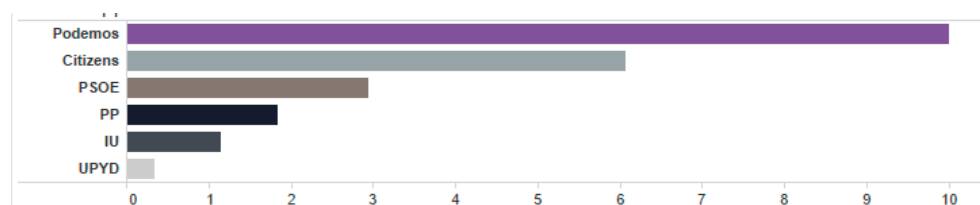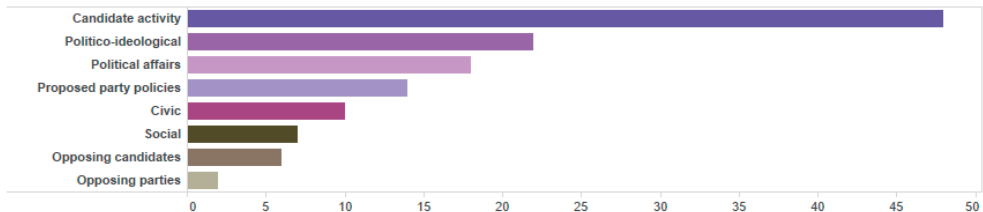


*Source:* created by the author.

About formal aspects of its posts, Podemos stood out from other parties in its use of personalized communication on its Facebook page which were used in 96.3% of publications, unlike other parties that always used an impersonal tone. In the type of language used, Podemos stood out for the use of informal messages, similarly to Citizens and UP&D. They often used the second person and familiar forms to address the electorate, including exclamation marks as well as informal expressions to provide

strength to their posts: "Come and be part of the change!", "Together we'll throw them out!"," With people like you, yes we can!".

In relation to the thematic content of the messages published, it was notable that all parties made references to personal matters or informational reports on candidate or party activity (62.4% of the total) and comments of a political-ideological nature (52.8%). Policy proposals or references to personal matters of other candidates were the least mentioned in party publications (6.7% and 6.2%, respectively).

In the case of Podemos, the thematic content was similar to the other parties', with posts predominantly relating the candidate's activity (47 posts), followed by posts which included content of a politic-ideological nature (21) and, to a lesser extent, comments referring to political affairs in general and proposed party policies (17 and 14 respectively). The themes less present on the Podemos Facebook page were references to the program of opposing parties (2), references to personal matters of opposition candidates (6) and posts with social themes (7).

**Chart 3**
Podemos' thematic content on Facebook



*Source:* created by the author.

Podemos was above the average referring to its use of a "game strategy", especially in the *posts* analysed that included sporting, combat and even war metaphors. The party used expressions such as "courage and strength!! Let's keep fighting9 " It's time for decent people to take back institutions, the time of real change in Castile and León. Yes we can!", " 24M will be a historic day!" or " Without you, none of this would be possible!". Using this strategy, the party obtained a 4.506 percentage, far ahead of the second highest figure: a 0.769% in the case of Citizens. Although, this framework showed poor internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.491).

The third framework, "thematic news or political substance", resulted in the highest internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.757). It analysed messages that addressed political problems, texts about the party's position, posts that related to

real-life situations with political implications, the party's position on these issues or debate among political actors and implications and impacts of proposals. On many occasions, Podemos accompanied these publications with links to news related to the topic. 25.8% of entries were positions or statements by the parties on political issues (5.5% in the case of Podemos).

The leader of Podemos in Castile and León, Pablo Fernández, only published one post on his official Facebook Page during the period analysed. It was a message about the start of the election campaign and was emotionally charged: "Extraordinary start to the campaign. The enthusiasm and desire for change will ensure Castile and León will finally be governed by its citizens. Thank you very much to comrades from Palencia and Valladolid for the work and effort and, of course, those in the campaign team. It is now, it's time for decent people ... and TOGETHER WE CAN".

As for interactivity, what is surprising is how little dialogue is established with Facebook users' comments. We only recorded one Podemos' response to all the comments made by the users, demonstrating a very poor 2.0 commitment considering that a total of 54 publications were analysed. Furthermore, it was a response with little knowledge contribution and was simply reinforcing the content of the main post.

## 4.2. Websites with attractive design, but published late and with low levels of interaction

With regard to the use of the website, the first fault diagnosed was its delay, as it was launched after May 8, the day that the regional election campaign started. While that day and subsequent days, the pages of PP, SSWP, UL, LPU and UP&D were active, Podemos published its virtual space at the end of the campaign. As a result, what was collected for this article was done so on the last of the two days of coding, May 25, the day of the election having drawn to a close and therefore the fortnight prior to election dedicated to promoting the candidacy of Pablo Fernández having already passed. In fact, on May 17 Facebook was used to inaugurate the website with the following message: "We present the Castile and León Podemos' website: a new way of doing politics by and for the citizens of our community. Come in and really get to know us."

The results obtained by the party do not improve any more when dissected by each of the categories included in this study. In the first of them, the informational, Podemos gained 20% of the total rating: 8 points below average and far from the 43% and 42% obtained by SSWP and UL. Moreover, the content appears to focus mainly on self-representation by providing content on the main candidate lists for Parliament, with a brief bibliographic note on each candidate illustrated with a photograph.

Press releases and the policy platform for the 2015 elections can be sourced but no other documents that reference the political and ideological position of the party can. Nor is there information outside the organization itself, unlike SSWP and UL which do include links and documents about party foundations and youth organizations. Any data about the campaign team, the webpage administrators, or the cost of the webpage were recorded.

Although the interaction of Podemos' space rates worse in this first category, with 16%, it is closer to the overall average obtained by all parties (21%), this percentage remains below expectations and there is a difference of 10 percentage points compared to LPU and UL and 9 points compared to UP&D - attaining 26% and 25% respectively. This space is the only one which has a banner linked to OSOIGO, a tool that enables the sending of questions to the candidate, but it does not list other access points for electronic correspondence such as generic party email addresses or subscription via RSS that are generally offered by other political organizations. Links to the party's social networks in Castile and León (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) were included.

The objectives most effectively fulfilled in terms of interactivity are those related to the downloading of informational material (although there is no download button nor is the size of the files indicated), like the rest of the websites analysed in this study. However, Podemos does not upload a regular newsletter nor does it have any indications about its policy platform that would facilitate user interaction in the page - even if it was only through the lower-level activities.

The simplicity of use and its update increased the result of the previous category by a point which places it close to the same overall percentage average which, once again, is 21%. However, the score is below the average of the other parties (for this section in particular, in all cases except in that of LPU - 10%) and 16 points short of United Left, the organization leading in this ranking.

Thus, while this traditional party updates its news section, provides access to specialized documents or has internal and external search engines, Podemos' website was limited to adding an updated organization chart, a website map and a simple structure design with a small number of pages which facilitated user navigation. Moreover, despite being a party that defends the right to self-determination in the autonomous regions and national diversity within Spain, it does not make information available in other languages – neither those that are official in the national territory nor foreign ones.

Finally, aesthetics, attractiveness and customization became the only characteristics that exceeded the average: 51% on 48% overall. Once again achieved a lower percentage than the other parties, except LPU, which got 8% in this category. How-

ever, the score is close to the PP (58%), UL (54%) and UP&D (53%), and far from SSWP, which gained 65%.

The party coincides with the rest of the parties analysed in this study as its web-site has a balance between graphic and textual elements and a harmonious combination of colours - in this case white or black type on white or violet background. Like other parties, Podemos lacks humour and irony in its pages. We did not register games, quizzes, competitions, satirical texts or videos or links to this type of pages. In addition, the site stands out from other organizations for its clean design and easy readability due to its clear textual graphology, its pleasant visual identity, attractive hierarchy of information and a balanced presence of symbols and emblems.

**Chart 4**
Website data for Podemos in four categories with respect to other parties and the overall total
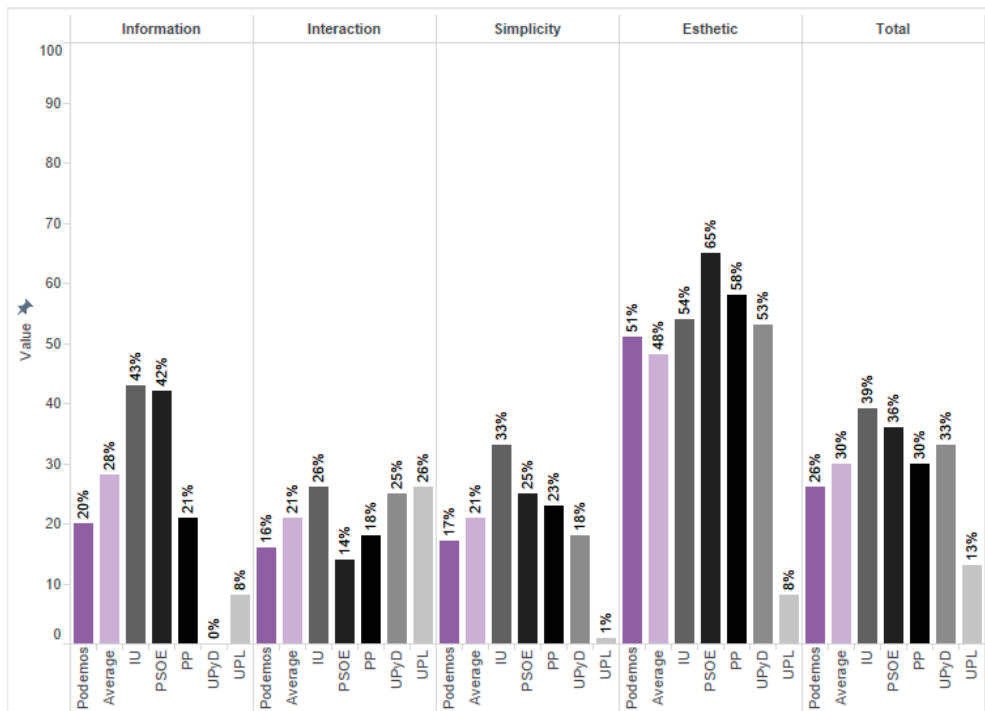


*Source:* Created by author.

Despite the positive data from the final section of analysis the overall balance is negative for Pablo Fernández's party in the Castile and León region. The total percentage

of the categories is 26%, far below than expected. Other pages received higher scores: Podemos achieved 13 less than United Left (39%) and 10 than SSWP (36%).

Podemos remained 4 points below the average, which was 30%: a rating that shows a low level of regional parties' website development, given that study by Dader et al. (2014) employing the same methodology, rated national websites at 50%. Thus, not only did Podemos achieve a subpar level of development in the regional context but the performance of the Castile and León websites in general was poor compared to national projects.

## 5. Conclusion

Podemos has aroused the interest of social scientists who through cyberspace are investigating its strategy during the election campaigns, and the possible reasons for its popularity and political results. After the European elections of 2014, the autonomous communities' elections held prior to the national elections of December 20, 2015, were an opportunity for the organization to consolidate its tactics outlined in the theoretical section.

Despite having become the third force of Castile and León, the specific context of this region put Podemos in a difficult position to develop its online campaign strategy given the gap between the average Podemos voter and the characteristics that define the electorate of the region: aged, conservative and with relatively low interest in new technologies. The first elections for the party show successes and failures as described in these findings.

Podemos launched its Faebook page in February 2015, less than three months before the start of election campaign, which lead to it being the party, along with Citizens, which had less experience in the use of this social network. During the period analysed, although it was just above average in the number of publications (54 post compared to almost 53 on average), it was the party with the second lowest level of activity recorded - only ahead of Citizens, which published 13 posts in total. Thus, answering first research question, Podemos is not more active in the use of this network than the others. In addition, it focused its activity on the party page and limited the use of the candidate's site, Pablo Fernández, to only a single publication during the campaign and did not use it again afterwards.

With regard to the second research question, Podemos stood head and shoulders above the rest in terms of engagement through its publications in its social networks. Despite not being the most active party, it got a score of 10 out of 10 in the variables analysed. Podemos and Citizens, are so-called "emerging" parties, as they were running for the first time in the regional elections in Castile and León in 2015, achieving higher rates of user involvement. Although in a different social media platform, this

scenario could have been similar in other regions, e.g., in Valencian Community, Podemos' hashtag #VotaPodemos24M was the third most popular Trending Topic in Twitter during this regional electoral campaign (López García et al., 2017).

Results related to the third research question show that Podemos publications' content does not differ from the themes of the other political parties on their Facebook pages. They published predominantly candidate activities during the campaign and there was also a strong presence of comments with a politic-ideological theme. As regards to the framing, it only distinguished itself from other parties through the use of a strategic game framework, with numerous sports, battle and struggle metaphors. This score was almost four percentage points above the next party that employed this framework the most (Citizens).

Except for some of the mentioned variables, there were no large differences in formal or thematic post content, nor in frequency of publication, that would explain the difference in engagement with other parties. The variables that explain this participatory behaviour by the electorate of the party may be an avenue of research for further studies.

As for the website, the clear and simple design due to its simple structure and a pleasant combination of colours and typography give it a positive rating. Limiting the colours to purple, white and black, as well as the appropriate use of the party emblems and other graphic elements facilitate navigation of the website and makes the aesthetic dimension one of the best features of the page. These characteristics also answer the fourth research question.

However, there is a broad set of shortcomings that the party will have to improve if it wants to enhance its online campaign strategy for future elections, not only to reach the national average - the most recent data attributed a 50% overall rating to these sites (Dader et al., 2014) – but also to try to achieve the overall regional rating of 30%, or even to close the gap with parties that have shown better development of cyberspace areas such as UL (39%) and SSWP (36%).

One aspect that requires further major improvement is upgrading the website as there is a paucity of documents to download, complete lack of search engines - either internal and external - nor is there the option of reading information in other languages. Connected with research question 5, interaction also deserves special attention as the resources for citizens to participate on the site are scarce. There were just displays of the main social networks and a link to an external tool (OSOIGO). As a result, interaction in these spaces is external to Podemos' own site.

The webpage gives few options to allow the electorate dialogue with representative officers. It is essentially an information deposit for basic information, but without adding additional information about the main candidate. Pablo Fernández appears

only in the party organizational chart and does not have an additional section nor an extensive information available.

Finally, one of the main problems presented by the webpage was its absence during part of the campaign which was only surpassed by Citizens - in its case the party never provided a website specifically for the region of Castile and León with information on the elections. In the case of Podemos this content arrived late, after the campaign had already begun, which reduced the importance and visibility of the political organization for a few days - something key if one takes into account that in Spain an election campaign lasts only two weeks.

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