

# Campaigning in a Changing Media Environment: The Public as a Creator, Consumer and Distributor of Information

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## **Abstract**

The public's capacity to create, distribute, and selectively consume information presents non-governmental campaigns with distinct challenges and opportunities. Challenges arise from an environment in which there exists an overabundance of information and the public has an unprecedented level of control in their selection. Opportunities arise from the environment's cost effective nature and the public's ability to participate. Together the challenges and opportunities encompass four pragmatic effects: (1) audience fragmentation, (2) partisan selective exposure (selecting news based on partisan beliefs), (3) selective exposure (selecting sports or entertainment information over political news for instance), and (4) there has been a dramatic proliferation in the amount of content available. Concerns over a healthy democracy come as the public can narrowly tailor their information consumption through partisan and selective exposure, fragmenting the public sphere and potentially limiting a person's exposure to uncongenial information. This thesis is concerned with the potential synergy between this communication environment and non-governmental campaigns. Exploring this synergy is made difficult because of the heterogeneous nature of non-governmental campaigns. This difficulty is combated by individually analysing the effects of this communication environment on the campaign techniques of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines' (ICBL). The five techniques are: (1) disseminating information to raise awareness and generate an issue, (2) establishing a network, (3) framing and normative grafting, (4) shaming, and (5) reversing the burden of proof from proponents of the campaign to opponents. In this communication environment non-governmental campaigns must harness the public's propensity to participate, relinquish control, hold credibility, and formulate a

clear and concise message. The public's once passive role in the execution of campaign techniques has shifted to that of an active and instrumental role. A consequence of this shift is an increasing interdependence between campaigns and the participation of public.

The fact that people are creating, disseminating, selecting, and collaborating in diverse projects and protests sees debate concerning the onset of change in the communication landscape steadily become displaced with the need to investigate its effects. This need is elevated by the growing array of international issues that must be met with a global and systematic response if they are to be challenged with success (e.g. global warming, global financial crisis, environmental conservation, regional conflicts, world hunger and poverty). The core contribution of this thesis also originates from this need to understand the effects of mass self-communication. This contribution is threefold: (1) developing an interdisciplinary and systematic method of campaign analysis, (2) using it to examine the broader effects of mass self-communication on the techniques used to stimulate normative change, and (3) applying it to an original case study of the Ban Live Export (BLE) campaign.

## Statement

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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Maarten Walter Rikken

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Date

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<sup>1</sup> Favourites: Henschke Julius Riesling, 1996; Paulett's Aged Release Polish Hill River Riesling, 2005; Penfolds Reserve Bin 10A Chardonnay, 2010; Bouchard Pere & Fils Premier Cru Meursault, 2007 & 08; Kaesler Old Bastard Shiraz, 2008; Leeuwin Estate Art Series Chardonnay, 2009; Irvine Grand Merlot, 2008.

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