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Group Type and Social Media Engagement Strategies in the EU: The Case of British Interest Groups on Facebook

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Although interest group strategies have been studied by a number of authors who compare different types of groups, our knowledge about how these different types of groups differ in the way they use social media as a strategy to realise their goals is limited. In this paper, we use the hierarchy of engagement model and investigate how British public interest groups and sectional groups, which are active at the European Union (EU) level, engage with the public on Facebook. Compared with information and community-type posts, action-type posts can attract more attention on social media. Public interest groups can use action-type messages as a tool for attracting public attention, thus, alleviating their relative disadvantage in attracting and maintaining members. Results show that the use of action-type messages are significantly higher for public interest groups.

Keywords: Facebook, Interest Groups, Interest Group Strategies, Social Media

Interest groups have adopted social media as a strategy for success. Traditional ways of outside lobbying by interest groups (e.g., contacting reporters, arranging protests) are now being used together, complemented and sometimes even substituted by online activities on social media. It is contended that social media has disrupted the role, functions and activities of interest groups, and some interest groups have benefited, whereas others have faced challenges in legitimating their role as representatives of the public (Fraussen & Halpin, 2018). Interest groups act as citizens' voices in a democratic governance system. Having a disruptive effect on the way interest groups operate, and power balances between different groups, social media has had non-trivial consequences for the way different groups of people are represented in modern democracies.

Social media-focused interest group studies can be categorised into two different groups. The first group investigates the factors which affect the adoption and frequency of social media use by interest groups (see, for example, Brown, 2016; Chalmers & Shotton, 2016; Nitschke et al., 2016; Scaramuzzino & Scaramuzzino, 2017; van der Graaf et al., 2016). The second group analyzes how social media is being used by interest groups. For example, Merry (2013, 2016a, 2018, 2019) investigates how American interest groups construct policy narratives (framing) about gun policy on Twitter. Merry (2016b) also examines how groups working on the gun policy issue engage with the public on Twitter, by looking at the way they use hashtags, Twitter handles, and retweets. In another study, Merry (2014) focuses on the use of interactive communication strategies by environmental organizations on Twitter. One study examines

public interest groups' and sectional groups' public engagement strategies on Twitter by using Lovejoy and Saxton's (2012) hierarchy of engagement model (Kanol & Nat, 2017). This paper aims to contribute to this second group of studies. Our motivation stems from a lack of research in how different types of interest groups use public engagement strategies on social media. Although interest group strategies have been studied by a number of authors who compared different types of groups, our knowledge of how these different types of groups differ in the way they use social media as a strategy to realize their goals is limited. Our aim, therefore, is to conduct a comparative study, using group type as the point of reference.

Previously, Kanol and Nat (2017) used the hierarchy of engagement model to investigate the relationship between group type and engagement with the public on Twitter. However, we are not aware of any study comparing how different types of interest groups (for example, public interest groups and sectional groups) engage with the public on social media via platforms other than Twitter. Auger (2013) demonstrates that nonprofit advocacy organizations use different social media platforms for different purposes; thanking and providing recognition on Twitter, engaging in two-way communication on Facebook, and communicating messages by using authority figures on YouTube.

Figenschou and Fredheim (2020) corroborate our understanding of different social media platforms being suitable for different kinds of purposes. According to these authors, Twitter is the most suitable platform for networked, middle-stage lobbying, and Facebook is the most suitable platform for networked information, community and dialogue, and mobilization. Therefore, interest groups might communicate on different social media platforms differently and for different purposes. Social media platforms other than Twitter are used frequently by a substantial number of groups. For example, research suggests that Facebook is as commonly used by interest groups as Twitter (Obar, 2014; Obar et al., 2012; van der Graaf et al., 2016). So, studying public engagement strategies of different types of interest groups on social media platforms other than Twitter is of utmost importance to draw a complete picture of interest groups' social media strategies.

In this paper, we use Lovejoy and Saxton's (2012) hierarchy of engagement model and investigate how British public interest groups and sectional groups, which are active at the European Union (EU) level use Facebook. Using the EU's Transparency Register to compile a list of British interest groups active at the EU level, we randomly select and analyze Facebook posts by public interest groups and sectional groups. We classify these posts as belonging to one of the engagement strategies (information-community-action) and compare the rate of use of each strategy between public interest groups and sectional groups. In the following sections of this paper, we formulate our expectations regarding group type and public engagement strategies on social media, describe our research design, present our results, and discuss the implications of our findings.

Theoretical Framework

We organize this section as follows. First, we define and differentiate between public interest groups and sectional groups and review the interest group strategies literature, which proposes differences in behavior between these two types of groups. We argue that public interest groups face collective action problems more acutely than sectional groups. We discuss how they use protest-type activities to overcome this disadvantage and mobilize and maintain members. Next, we propose our hypothesis by creating a link between the logic of membership and hierarchy of engagement model. We argue that protest-type messages on traditional media are similar to action-type public engagement strategies on social media. Because of the aforementioned collective action problems faced by public interest groups, we expect them to use action-type public engagement on social media more frequently than sectional groups.

Group Type and Interest Group Strategy: The Logic of Membership

We define interest groups as membership-based organizations which try to shape public policies. The organizational definition of interest groups takes the existence of individual members as a sufficient criterion, as opposed to the behavioural definition, which takes the intention to influence policy as a sufficient criterion for defining the interest group concept. Our definition coincides with recent studies which depict each of these criteria as necessary for defining the interest group concept (Baroni et al., 2014). An interest group is an organization with members which tries to influence public policy. This definition does not include organizations which do not directly or indirectly lobby the executive, legislative, judiciary, or bureaucracy. Also, some important lobbying organizations like firms, professional consultancies, and think tanks are excluded since they do not have individual members.

There is a distinction between interest groups which represent specific interests (issues benefiting a specific section of a society) and groups which represent diffuse interests (issues benefiting the society at large). The first type is called 'sectional groups' (Berry, 1977; Stewart, 1958), 'representative groups' (Halpin, 2006), or 'exogenous groups' (Dunleavy, 1988). The second type is called 'cause groups' (Stewart, 1958), 'solidarity groups' (Halpin, 2006), 'public interest groups' (Berry, 1977), or 'endogenous groups' (Dunleavy, 1988). This distinction is based on the logic of representation. Sectional groups are primarily interested in defending their members' interests. The issues that these groups represent exclusively benefit a specific section of society, and sometimes at the expense of another section of society. Business associations might, for example, advocate for the interest of business owners at the expense of workers. Likewise, trade unions could work towards the benefit of the workers at the expense of business owners. Professional associations can also be classified as sectional groups because their endeavour is to represent the interests of a specific section of society consisting of its members. For example, doctors, teachers, etc. have their own associations to protect their rights and pursue their own interests. Public interest groups, however, aim to transform society in favor of either disadvantaged groups or society as a whole. Their work does not exclusively benefit their members. For example, protecting the environment does not only benefit the members of an environmental NGO, but the whole society; advocating for human rights does not exclusively protect the rights of the members of a human rights NGO, but of all people.

According to Olson (1965), public interest groups face collective action problems more acutely than sectional groups. People believe that they can get the same benefits from the actions of a group advocating diffuse interests without participating in its costly activities. Therefore, people might not become active members or might not renew membership of public interest groups. This is not so much the case for groups which represent specific interests. Members of this type of group perceive more direct and material benefits from incurring the participation costs of becoming a member. People must become and stay members of groups advocating specific interests to receive such tangible benefits.

According to Olson (1965), benefits of group membership are confined to material gains. However, the 'revisionist' approach demonstrated that people also seek other types of benefits. People might be joining interest groups because of a sense of duty, satisfaction from doing good, sense of political efficacy, friendship and recreational opportunities, a sense of belonging, and prestige (Cook, 1984; Knoke, 1988; Moe, 1981). Moreover, members and potential members are also affected by how good the marketing strategy of interest group leaders are (Jordan & Maloney, 1996). Nevertheless, public interest groups' relative disadvantage in offering selective benefits to their members is still valid.

This logic of membership influences these two different types of interest groups' strategies. Compared to public interest groups, sectional groups use inside or direct lobbying, providing

information directly to public actors more often, and relying less on outside lobbying. (Binderkrantz, 2005; Binderkrantz & Kroyer, 2012; Binderkrantz et al., 2015; Dür & Mateo, 2013). Public interest groups, on the other hand, 'go public' more than sectional groups (Dür & Mateo, 2016; Kollman, 1998). Public interest groups use the means of media to alleviate their relative disadvantage vis-à-vis their members and potential members. Media strategies are used as a tool to maintain their existing members and attract new members (Binderkrantz, 2008; Binderkrantz et al., 2016).

Survival of a public interest group might depend less on the amount of influence it exerts on policies than how successful it is in attracting members. The severity of the collective action problem for public interest groups forces them to attract new members to survive, even if it means less policy influence. Policy influence can, in fact, be used solely to impress members and potential members (Dür & Mateo, 2016). Public interest groups might even deliberately decrease their chances of policy influence by shifting their concentration from narrow and 'reasonable' policy proposals to hot, contentious issues argued in public (Lowery, 2007). They approach these issues with protest-aimed and conflictual messages that target the hearts of people. Public interest groups try to deliver drama, which disrupt the business-as-usual and produce newsworthy material for journalists (Danielian & Page, 1994; Thrall, 2006). The higher the level of action, the higher the level of media attention for public interest groups. Because of this, they might have to increase their tone and make their demands more radical to connect with the public and recruit new members (Dür & De Bièvre, 2007).

Group Type and Hierarchy of Engagement on Social Media

The ease of use of social media provides an opportunity for public interest groups to reach out to potential members and maintain their existing members, thus, alleviating their collective action problems. Social media offers an easy and cheap way of online communication opportunity with members and potential members. Findings of some previous research suggest that public interest groups are more likely to use a social media advocacy strategy than sectional groups (Brown, 2016; Chalmers & Shotton, 2016; Kanol & Nat, 2017). However, can the logic of membership affect how public interest groups and sectional groups use social media too? We argue that it can. In particular, we argue that the way these groups engage with the public should be different. We build our hypothesis by combining the logic of membership with Lovejoy and Saxton's (2012) hierarchy of engagement model, which has been used by scholars investigating social media-based advocacy by nonprofit organizations (NPOs) (Auger, 2013; Bürger, 2015; Guo & Saxton, 2014; Zhou & Pan, 2016).

The hierarchy of engagement model proposes three types of public messages on social media by NPOs – information, community, and action. The first message type (information) provides information about the organization, its activities, and what the organization or its members or followers on social media might find interesting. The second message type (community) aims to build a community in the virtual world by interacting with followers and potential followers. The third message type (action) aims to call people to take action for or against something (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012).

It may be contended that the rationale of public interest groups' social media strategy is different from sectional groups' use of social media. As protest-type actions and conflictual messages are used by public interest groups more often to attract and maintain membership on traditional media, we expect public interest groups to use the action strategy more than sectional groups on social media. This is because protest-type and conflictual messages are closest to action-type messages compared to information- and community-type messages. Action-type messages on social media are usually contentious in nature, inviting members, potential members, and the public in general to act against policy proposals or actions that are deemed to be against the public interest. This contrasts with information-type messages, which take a more neutral and less personalized stance towards public issues, and community-

type messages, which strive to build personal relationships with the public; however, they lack an attempt to mobilize the public and protest about sensitive public policy issues (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). Using the action strategy on social media is an excellent opportunity for public interest groups, not only to influence policy by shaping public opinion, but to consolidate its membership base and attract new members. Therefore, we expect public interest groups to use the action strategy more than sectional groups specifically for the purpose of building a community.

Hypothesis₁: Public interest groups use social media more than sectional groups to call on the people to take action.

Research Design

We employ a case study analysis by studying British interest groups operating in the EU polity. This research design does not allow us to infer to interest groups in other contexts. If contextual factors affect the use of social media strategy, then our data cannot capture this. However, using a case study approach was preferred since the data were manually collected and analyzed by the authors who are not fluent in multiple languages. Facebook, which is a leading social media platform is utilized to gather the messages of British interest groups and compare their public engagement strategies. Facebook is a social media platform that provides an opportunity for organizations to engage with stakeholders in a public forum.

First, we operationalize our main independent variable, which is group type. According to Binderkrantz (2009), “The basic line of distinction in the literature is between public interest groups and other types of groups – or between endogenous and exogenous groups. While this distinction may seem neat and logical when discussed in theoretical terms, categorizing actual groups into different types is challenging” (p. 662). One way of classifying interest groups is by looking at the issues they represent (specific vs. diffuse), then manually coding them as public interest groups or sectional groups. This method allows researchers to use their expert knowledge to code groups as either public interest groups or sectional groups.

The problem with this classification technique, however, is that no matter how knowledgeable experts and carefully analyzed group goals are, there are ‘grey areas’ that would make it difficult to code groups as either advocating diffuse or specific interests. For example, Weiler and Brändli (2015) could classify 1,127 out of 1,270 organizations they studied into one of the groups. The authors had to create an additional category ‘other’ for some groups that could not be classified into one of these group types. The authors followed Binderkrantz (2008) when doing this and classified religious groups, patient associations, scientific societies and hobby groups into the ‘other’ group category. Binderkrantz (2008) validates the distinction between public interest groups and other groups in her sample by directing a question to the respondents, asking if the group appeals to everyone supporting group goals or a specific group. This technique is intuitive; however, it might also have its own problems, as some groups might argue that they appeal to everyone in order to seem like they represent a wider community.

We use an alternative method to classify interest groups into public interest groups and sectional groups (see also, Chalmers & Shotton, 2016). Business associations, trade unions and professional associations represent a specific segment of a society and advocate the benefits of their members. Business associations represent business owners, trade unions represent the workers, and professional associations represent the people who have a certain profession. Therefore, we code them as sectional groups. NGOs, however, primarily advocate for diffuse issues. The NGOs we have selected for this study, for example, are interested in issues like deforestation, whale and dolphin conservation, minority rights, etc., which are diffuse issues. Admittedly, this classification technique might also have its problems, as some

NGOs might still represent specific interests. However, our analysis of the population and the sample we have selected lead us to believe that only a very few number of NGOs had this ambiguous stance. So, we opted for this straightforward classification technique. We categorise British sectional and public interest groups based on the European Commission's Transparency Register categories; "trade and business associations" and "trade unions and professional associations" are classified as sectional groups, whereas "nongovernmental organizations, platforms and networks, and similar groups" are classified as public interest groups.

Our analysis covers Facebook posts of British interest groups between September 1, 2016 and November 30, 2016 (a 3 month period). The full list of British interest groups is downloaded from the EU's Transparency Register. In this list, there were 302 sectional groups (262 trade and business associations and 40 trade unions and professional associations) and 250 public interest groups. In order to identify organizations that have a Facebook account, their web presences were searched, and their Facebook page IDs were collected. Out of 262 trade and business associations, 92 had Facebook accounts. Out of 40 trade unions and professional associations, 25 had Facebook accounts. And, out of 250 public interest groups, 160 had Facebook accounts. Therefore, 38.7% of sectional groups (117 out of 302) and 64% of public interest groups (160 out of 250) adopted Facebook, which is in line with research suggesting public interest groups use social media more than sectional groups (Brown, 2016; Kanol & Nat, 2017).

Our dependent variable is measured by coding Facebook posts one-by-one and classifying them as either information, community, or action. Since we are not able to have access to interest groups' private messages, the analysis was confined to interest groups' public posts. Therefore, our data do not include messages conveyed by interest groups in private exchanges with their audiences. All Facebook messages of organizations were downloaded in .csv format through Facebook developers API and JSON converter. During this process we realized that, although organizations have Facebook pages, some of them did not post during the period of September 1, 2016 and November 30, 2016. Out of 92 trade and business associations, only 85 posted on their Facebook pages. Out of 25 trade unions and professional associations, only 22 posted on their Facebook pages. And, out of 160 public interest groups, only 145 posted on their Facebook pages. Therefore, we had Facebook posts from 97 sectional groups and 144 public interest groups.

When all Facebook posts were merged and grouped accordingly, we obtained 2,525 posts from trade and business associations, 1,559 from trade unions and professional associations, and 8,780 posts from public interest groups. In other words, we had 4,084 posts from 97 sectional groups and 8,780 posts from 144 public interest groups. We used the stratified random sampling method to select 500 posts representing the 4,086 posts by these sectional groups and 500 posts representing the 8,780 posts by these public interest groups. Since some organizations posted very rarely between September 1, 2016 and November 30, 2016, their posts did not end up in the random sample. Also, it was observed that some posts only included a link, video, or photograph. Since we could not confidently interpret how the messages provided in these videos, photos, and links could be categorized as one of the message types in the hierarchy of engagement model, such posts which do not include any written message were coded as missing observations. Therefore, the number of observations in our analysis is 891, where 446 posts come from 78 sectional groups and 445 posts were made by 108 public interest groups.

We coded each post based on the hierarchy of engagement scheme. The messages of both types of groups were assigned a single code from the scheme to identify the type of public engagement strategy. In cases where a message appeared to serve dual purposes, we assigned codes according to what was considered the primary purpose of the post (see, Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). In order to comply with our conceptual and theoretical framework, we have to

mention that our coding criteria slightly deviates from Lovejoy and Saxton's (2012). The latter includes "passive" tweets like "selling a product" under "action" (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012, p. 342). However, since our theoretical framework conceptualizes 'action' as messages calling people to take action on conflictual and contentious topics, messages which aim at things like 'selling a product' fall under the 'information' category rather than the 'action' category in our dataset. Initially, both authors coded 50 posts by sectional groups and 50 posts by public interest groups. Inter-coder reliability, comparing the consistency of the two authors' coding was tested with Cohen's κ , and a score of 0.63 was obtained, which shows substantial agreement between the authors (McHugh, 2012). Discrepancies between classifications by the coders were discussed, and coding rules were refined until 100% agreement was reached.

The analysis is conducted with a multivariate statistical model using idiosyncratic control variables used in previous studies on interest groups and social media. The dependent variable, which is action-type messages (coded as 1), as opposed to information- or community-type messages (coded as 0) is dichotomous, so logistic regression analysis is conducted to test the hypothesis. The independent variable (group type) is measured by coding public interest groups as 1 and sectional groups as 0.

Interest group strategies have a long story of scholarly research, however, research on interest groups' social media strategies is in its infancy. Therefore, some of the control variables used in this study can be qualified in future research. These variables include financial resources used for lobbying, number of public affairs employees, and the level of lobbying interest (Brown, 2016; Chalmers & Shotton, 2016; van der Graaf et al., 2016). We do not have any specific expectation about how exactly these variables should affect the use of different public engagement strategies.

Interest groups are asked to insert the approximate costs they have (in Euros) for activities aimed at influencing EU policies on the European Union's Transparency Register website. Transparency Register is a lobby register set up by the EU to strengthen transparency and accountability concerning outside influence on European institutions. Most groups insert this data, but in ranges (e.g., between 1,000 and 24,999 Euros). The data at hand is analyzed, and 5 major groups have been observed and recoded appropriately: groups which spent between €0 and €9,999 (50.3% of all observations), €10,000 and €49,999 (14.9%), €50,000 and €99,999 (12.2%), €100,000 and €199,999 (8.2%), and €200,000 or above (14.3%). Dummy variables are created for each variable, and €0-€9,999 is kept as the base in the logistic regression analysis.

Transparency Register also includes a section where interest groups can provide the number of persons involved in work about influencing EU policies. In our dataset, this number varies from 1 to 50. The vast majority of the groups have either 1 (31.7%), 2 (22.4%), or 3 (10.5%) people involved in such activities. Because of such skewness, the linear variable is converted to a logarithmic variable in line with previous studies (Chalmers and Shotton, 2016; van der Graaf et al., 2016).

In addition, Transparency Register provides data about the venues interest groups are interested in. A group might be interested in working only at the national and local level, they may be interested in the European level or Global level, or they may practice multi-level venue-shopping, lobbying in multiple venues. Following van der Graaf et al. (2016), three dummy variables are created to differentiate between national, European, and global (international) players. In our dataset, 24.2% of the groups are national, 12.2% of the groups are European, and 63.6% of the groups are global actors. In the logistic regression analysis, national actors are kept as the base.

Table 1. Descriptive Information

Information			Community		Action	
<p>“War on Want's partners in the global South are at the sharp end of 'cheap' fast fashion and consumer culture. http://www.waronwant.org/media/black-friday-so-last-century”</p> <p>“170 organizations worldwide are supporting No Time to Lose. Read how MTR, Hong Kong’s national rail operator is raising awareness...”</p> <p>“Deloitte has resigned as the auditor of Game Digital after five years of service, following a competitive tender process. They will be replaced by BDO.”</p>			<p>“A big thank you to all our #era16 sponsors, exhibitors, speakers and delegates. We look forward to seeing you in Athens next year for #era17.”</p> <p>“Our next award is National Project. We welcome Ann Newlove from last year’s winning project Humber Skills to present. Congratulations to our National Project Award winner @MKCollege Offender Learning! What a great story.”</p> <p>“Thank you to @Build_Magazine for our Construction & Engineering Award - Best Trade Industry Intelligence Cooperative - UK #KBB #awards.”</p>		<p>“The routine mass-medication of farm animals is contributing to the antibiotic-resistance crisis whilst supporting inhumane farming systems. This must stop! Top UK doctors are calling on the Government to lead global change and ban the routine mass use of antibiotics in farming. Add your voice, and call on our health and agriculture Secretaries of State to take action. >> #WAAW”</p> <p>“Help us shut down the domestic ivory market in the UK. Please sign & share this petition today. Visit: https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/165905”</p> <p>“Want to #makeadifference in the lives of millions of children? DONATE on #GivingTuesday. http://ow.ly/x8iM306r8Ro”</p>	
	N 497	% 55.8%	N 147	% 16.5%	N 247	% 27.7%
Sectional Groups	271	60.8%	74	16.6%	101	22.6%
Public Interest Groups	226	50.8%	73	16.4%	146	32.8%

Results

Descriptive analysis shows that both types of groups post information-type messages to share one-way information, which usually includes links to additional resources, where people can find more information about a specific subject. Both types of groups post community-type messages to interact, build relationships, and create networks with stakeholders. Both types of groups post action-type messages to prompt their followers to do something such as donating for a cause, attending events, boycotting or protesting. Examples of these three types of posts can be found in Table 1. We provide descriptive information about the posts in Table 1. 55.8% of these Facebook posts belong to the information category, whereas 16.5% belong to community, and 27.7% can be classified as action. 60.8% of sectional groups use the information strategy compared to 50.8% for public interest groups. 16.6% of sectional groups and 16.4% of public interest groups use the community strategy. Sectional groups use the action strategy less than public interest groups (22.6% vs. 32.8%).

The logistic regression results are presented in Table 2. The hypothesis is tested in four different models for robustness. Odds ratios are used to interpret the findings of the logistic regression. Odds above 1 suggest a positive effect, and odds below 1 suggest a negative effect. For example, an odds ratio of 1.25 suggests a 1.25 times more likelihood of using the action strategy. An odds ratio of 0.67 ($1/0.67=1.49$) suggests a 1.49 times less likelihood of using the action strategy. In Model 1, a bivariate logistic regression is conducted. Compared with sectional groups, the odds of using the action strategy are 1.67 times more likely for public interest groups, which is a statistically significant result at the 99% confidence level.

In Model 2, financial resources spent for lobbying are introduced in a multivariate logistic regression model. Group type is again a significant predictor of using the action strategy at the 99% confidence level. The odds of using the action strategy for public interest groups are 1.81 times more likely than sectional groups. Interest groups which spent between €10,000 and €49,999 are 1.67 times more likely to use the action strategy, as opposed to groups which spent between €0 and €9,999. This effect is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Interest groups which spent between €50,000 and €99,999 are 1.88 times more likely to use the action strategy than that of interest groups which spent between €0 and €9,999. This finding is statistically significant at the 99% confidence level. Interest groups which spent between €100,000 and €199,999 are 1.79 times less likely to use the action strategy than interest groups which spent between €0 and €9,999. This finding is statistically significant at the 90% confidence level. Interest groups which spent the most (€200,000 or above) are 1.96 times less likely to use the action strategy than interest groups which spent between €0 and €9,999. This finding is statistically significant at 95% confidence level.

In Model 3, the hypothesis is tested while controlling for financial resources and the number of staff allocated for lobbying. Group type is again significant at the 99% confidence level. Public interest groups are 1.79 times more likely than sectional groups to use the action strategy. Financial resources that are used for lobbying activities also matter, albeit only for interest groups which spent between €0 and €9,999 compared to interest groups which spent between €10,000 and €49,999 and €50,000 and €99,999. The odds of using the action strategy are 1.75 times more likely for interest groups which spent between €10,000 and €49,999 compared to interest groups which spent between €0 and €9,999. This finding is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. The odds of using the action strategy for interest groups which spent between €50,000 and €99,999 are 2.27 times more likely than interest groups which spent between €0 and €9,999. This finding is significant at 99% confidence level. The third model shows that the number of staff allocated for lobbying barely manages to reach statistical significance. At the 90% confidence level, it is observed that the likelihood of using the action strategy decreases with the number of public affairs employees. If an interest group employs one more staff for lobbying, the likelihood of using the action strategy decreases by 1.22 times.

Table 2. Logistic Regression Analysis

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Odds Ratio	P Value	Odds Ratio	P Value	Odds Ratio	P Value	Odds Ratio	P Value
Group Type	1.67	0.01***	1.81	0.01***	1.79	0.01***	1.85	0.01***
€10,000– €49,999			1.67	0.03**	1.75	0.02**	1.75	0.02**
€50,000– €99,999			1.88	0.01***	2.27	0.01***	2.37	0.01***
€100,000– €199,999			0.56	0.08*	0.68	0.28	0.70	0.33
€200,000 +			0.51	0.02**	0.70	0.31	0.73	0.39
Staff (ln)					0.82	0.10*	0.81	0.09*
European							1.12	0.72
Global							0.85	0.43
Constant	0.29	0.01***	0.27	0.01***	0.30	0.01***	0.32	0.01**
N	891		769		769		769	
Pseudo R-Squared	0.01		0.05		0.05		0.05	
Log-Likelihood	-520.20		-433.37		-432.00		-431.30	

Note: *** significant at the 99% confidence level, ** significant at the 95% confidence level, * significant at the 90% confidence level.

In model 4, the effects of all the control variables are taken into account. At the 99% confidence level, the odds of using the action strategy are 1.85 times more likely for public interest groups, providing empirical evidence for the hypothesis. Compared with the groups which spent between €0 and €9,999, groups that spent between €10,000 and €49,999 are 1.75 times more likely (significant at the 95% confidence level), and groups that spent between €50,000 and €99,999 are 2.37 times more likely (significant at 99% confidence level) to use the action strategy. This suggests that the likelihood of using the action strategy is higher for groups which spent more for lobbying compared to those which spent the minimum range. However, this is not the case for groups which spent the highest numbers, as there is no statistical significance for the categories of €100,000 to €199,999 and €20,0000 or above. If an interest group employs one more staff for lobbying, the likelihood of using the action strategy decreases by 1.24 times. This finding is significant at the 90% confidence level. We do not find a significant effect of the level of lobbying on the odds of using the action strategy.

Our results show that British public interest groups in the EU are clearly more likely to use the action strategy on social media than sectional interest groups. This statement holds up when financial resources spent for lobbying, the number of staff responsible for lobbying activities, and the level of interest groups are controlled for in multiple statistical models. Our models also suggest a statistically significant relationship between financial resources and the use of the action-type public engagement strategy. Financial resources might increase the chance of using action-type messages; however, too much of it seem to have a negative effect, although this negative effect is significant only in one of the models. A higher number of public affairs personnel has a negative effect on the use of the action-type public engagement strategy. Interest groups with lower numbers of staff responsible for influencing EU policies use the action-type messages more, even though there seems to be only a small and barely significant effect of the number of EU public affairs staff. The level of lobbying does not influence the use of the action strategy.

Conclusion

Interest group theory argues that public interest groups are relatively disadvantageous in attracting and maintaining members compared to sectional groups. Compared with information and community-type posts, action-type posts can attract more attention on social media. Public interest groups can use action-type social media posts as a tool for attracting public attention; recruiting, mobilizing, and maintaining members. Thus, our expectation was to observe a higher frequency of the use of action-type messages by public interest groups compared to sectional groups.

The results of this research suggest that action-type public engagement strategies are used significantly more by British public interest groups active at the EU level than sectional groups on Facebook. Therefore, one can argue that group type is a crucial factor in determining how interest groups engage with the public on social media. This finding not only corroborates previous research on the impact of group type on public engagement strategies on social media (Kanol & Nat, 2017), but it also supports previous studies about interest group strategies which draw a distinction between strategies by different types of groups in the 'offline' world (Binderkrantz & Krøyer, 2012; Dür & Mateo, 2013, 2016). This suggests that there are intrinsic differences between different types of interest groups which determine their use of advocacy strategies both in the digital and non-digital worlds.

Although both sectional groups and public interest groups studied in this research are NPOs, the findings suggest that there can be important differences between NPOs based on things like what types of issues they represent and what types of relationships they have with their members. Therefore, our results contribute to the nonprofit advocacy and social media engagement literature (e.g., Auger, 2013; Carboni & Maxwell, 2015; McKascill & Harrington, 2017) by differentiating between different types of NPOs (public interest groups and sectional groups) and comparing their public engagement strategies on social media.

Although similar differences are found between these groups both in the digital and non-digital worlds, this does not mean that it is business as usual after the introduction of social media into interest groups' toolkits. On the contrary, such differences might be more nuanced or they might be mitigated since social media has become a common medium of engagement and communication by interest groups. So, our findings do not refute the argument that digital disruption has influenced different types of interest groups differently (Fraussen & Halpin, 2018). Increasing importance of social media could imply that we might see increasing effects of digital disruption not only on interest groups' strategies, but also their influence on policies, which should be investigated in future research.

Recently, Figenschou and Fredheim (2020) interviewed 40 Norwegian health care interest groups and observed that different social media platforms are used for different purposes. Similar to Lovejoy and Saxton (2012), the authors differentiate between information-type engagement strategies (networked information and engagement), community-type engagement strategies (networked community building and dialogue), action-type engagement (networked mobilization), and an additional category of direct engagement with decisionmakers as a targeted middle-stage between inside and outside lobbying (networked middle-stage lobbying). It would be interesting to examine if and how group type affects the use of networked, middle-stage lobbying in future research.

All in all, findings such as the ones provided in this paper suggest that old but important questions about political organizations like collective action problems, access, influence, and democratic implications of advocacy might need to be reinvestigated by bringing social media in the discussion. Literatures focusing separately on organizations such as Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), NGOs, NPOs, Social Movement Organizations (SMOs), and interest

groups would need to be brought together in order to approach political organizations holistically and develop and test integrative theories effectively (Minkowitz et al., 2020).

Disclosure Statement

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest that relate to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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