Don’t mention the ‘c’ word
Charities and social media in the UK

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“If you want to liberate [a people], give them the Internet”

Wael Ghonim, Egyptian Activist*

"I have in my pocket a device capable of accessing all of human knowledge, and I use it to get into arguments with strangers and look at pictures of cats"

Anon
What is the reality of engagement with causes and charities on social media?
Methodology

• **Secondary research**
  – Across sectors
  – Across academic disciplines

• **Primary research**
  – Qualitative: Focus groups x 2 with UK users of social media
  – Quantitative: Survey, 2000 UK social media users
The Social Media Ecosystem
Social media = Facebook?

Percentage of UK social media users logging into platform at least twice a month

June 2013
Only Youtube has a substantial number of users who are not on Facebook
Social media – an ecosystem of different cultures
Facebook – the hub

“Because everyone kept mentioning that this is the new thing...and it kinda replaced email as the way of talking to everyone”

“A lot of people have got it and they’re all communicating you just go to the one place and communicate with the lot”

“Everybody’s on it”

“...and this is important for you, ‘cos it goes straight to Twitter and Facebook so every time you pin something you have the option of it automatically going to Twitter and Facebook as well so everyone can see what”

“It’s the one hub”
A personal space for connecting with friends

‘Cocktail party’ etiquette
Twitter – public face

Used for politics, news, information – more natural fit with campaigning
Social Media and Charities
Only around a quarter of users feel like engaging with a charity at present

“I don’t feel like engaging with charities on social media even if I engage with them in other ways”
Causes and fundraising not seen/sticking in most people’s heads

Which of the following can you remember seeing/watching on any of the social media that you use [last 7 days]?
Most don’t see themselves as influential on social media and struggle to link it to political or social change in this country.

The exception is customer service:

“So you don’t just write a letter to the company you put it up on Twitter and you and you tag the company you’re unhappy with and the company the write back to you straight away you know and they sort they sort it out”
Many find it very hard to understand how a little ‘like’ here can have an impact there

“I don’t see how engaging with charities on social media is going to help the charities achieve their aims”

This is the strongest barrier to engaging with charities on SM
Social media can also be seen to trivialise a cause

“It feels less important putting it on Facebook like 38degrees and Avaaz... I go to my email because [Facebook is] more like your social life it’s more important to have it via email it’s kind of separate a little bit”
‘Cocktail party’ etiquette works against charities

“You don’t bring up [something] that’s not cocktail party conversation saying things about charity and politics so I’ll be very careful”

Respondents very aware of potential for abuse ("trolls") or unintentionally causing offense

Very easy to be misunderstood – humour and irony don’t translate well

For many charity = politics and therefore potentially risky
Not too much self-promotion

“They call it smugbook anyway”
Being explicit about donations is considered somewhat ‘vulgar’

Associations with narcissism and egotism

“It, yeah, it’s vulgar, ‘I’m donating I think you should to’”
The more personal the space the more defensive people are about fundraising in it

“They [chuggers] drive me mad and you wouldn’t want them invading your virtual world”

“It means they [charities] can have marketing I suppose, they can bombard you with their marketing”

Facebook in particular is unlikely to be well suited to direct asks

(The exception is events sponsorship)
Censoring is also inherent in the platforms themselves
If Facebook doesn’t think you want to see something, you won’t

“A squirrel dying in front of your house might be more relevant to your interests right now than people dying in Africa”

Mark Zuckerberg*
So what does this mean in a multi-channel context?
Treat each social media platform as its own ‘mini world’

Be careful to observe the unwritten rules and taboos of each of these ‘cultures’

These constraints will need to be built into planning. For example:

Most social media, and especially Facebook, are not well suited to direct asks

They largely challenge the ‘push’ model of comms – will need more interaction/’co-creation’ (Twitter is to some extent the exception)

Generally better for brand engagement than requests
Is there a proposition that sets out how social media helps you as a charity?