

Demonstrate how a political party OR a politician was promoted using techniques of public relations. Consider whether such promotion was actually effective.

In this essay I will explore the Labour party's use of public relations techniques and evaluate how effective these techniques were in promoting their campaign/party. I will look into how Labour traditionally used public relation techniques and transition to the present day.

The practice of public relations has been around for centuries however it became more prominent during the 1900s where it was used by many pioneers such as 'Edward Bernays, the Father of Public Relations' (Meltwater, 2020). Edward Bernays 'argues that rulers of ancient Egypt... all used personal and political publicity' (Baines, Egan and Jefkins, 2007,p.23) for example Vikings used symbols on their ships. However, the practice of public relations has changed drastically since this and is used differently today as a result of technological change and higher demand for promotion.

In contemporary society, Public relations is at the centre of communication and promotional activities. Every organisation and brand uses public relation techniques to promote their product. Public relations can be defined as 'the communication and exchange of ideas to facilitate change' (L'etang, 2008). The 'public' aspect represents the general public and public opinion. This links to Habermas' public sphere, which is seen as 'a space where rational discussion among citizens can take place in resolving opinion about the current issues of the day'(L'etang, 2008). Habermas also addresses the idea of a 'political public sphere' which is 'when public discussion deals with objects connected to the activity of the state' (Habermas, 1974, p.2). Politics has always had a close relationship with public relations, however it took some time for politicians to utilise public relations effectively. Propaganda was originally used as a way for politicians to communicate to the public, it was not until later that public relations techniques were effectively administered.

The labour party have implemented both effective and ineffective public relations techniques throughout the years. Traditionally, they used film, broadcasting and professional adverts to create awareness of their party and manifestos. The radio became a 'key vehicle' for change in public relations and political communication during the 1950s. In 1946, labours first broadcasting officer was appointed and he 'saw the benefits of this 'refined' means of communication' and so by the 1950-1951 general election campaigns, 'radio was serving 12 million licence holders with both main parties using 'personalities' to make their case (Wring, 2004, p23-24). During this period, using the radio was clearly an effective technique as it attracted a mass audience. The labour party also gained the support of novelist, J.B Priestley and businessman Richard Stokes. Priestley's' novels targeted the conservatives and portrayed them in a negative light which fundamentally gained support for the labour party. Influencer and celebrity engagement is a very significant and effective public relations technique as it attracts public support, having someone with a large influence promote your party can almost guarantee extra votes as many people are impressionable. The labour party have continued to use celebrities to strengthen their support and they have also introduced their campaigns onto social media.

Research has confirmed that 'social media has been a useful tool for parties to spread messages and win voter support' (Greenwood, 2015, cited in Elizabeth Anne Bailey, 2021). In 2015, Jeremy Corbyn drew in large numbers of new supporters partly because of his online media activity, 'Social media enabled contacts to be made' and it allowed his supporters to 'spread the message through social media to like-minded people' (Quinn, 2016, p.6). In the run up to the 2017 general election, Corbyn gained the support of multiple British artists such as Stormzy and Rag'n'bone man, research finds that 'Facebook users... were inclined to share pro-Corbyn and anti-Tory stories, including celebrity endorsements from Stormzy' (Seymour, 2017) Social media is an effective strategy as it targets the younger generation who want to shape a better future for themselves. Also, linking to Grunigs model, this fits his two way symmetrical model as the conversation is flowing both ways, there is a relationship between the political party and the mass media. Nevertheless, it is much more difficult to reach mature audiences through social media. Statistics from 2022 support this as only '8% of people that are 65+ use Instagram' and on Twitter this figure is even less with 7% (Khoros, 2022).

Politics has always been centred around the public as its main aim is to reach and serve people, arguably they cannot function without them. With the advancement in technology, digital spaces today have enabled politicians to reach more people and voters through engaging with them on social media. One way in which politicians use this digital space is by uploading public relation campaigns to their website and YouTube. In 2017, just before the general election, Labour produced a video including American comedian Rob Delaney. Delaney used humour to persuade viewers to vote for Labour on behalf of him as he is not able to. Keeping it light hearted will make it an easy watch for viewers and enhance their engagement. Furthermore, having it available online means it can be accessed by anyone at any time. Influencer engagement is very effective as they have lots of followers and support behind them. Research into online campaigns and digital political public relations tools found that they are 'cost-effective for the organization' (Stromback and Spiro Kiousis, 2019) and overall they are more accessible. Labour host multiple other campaigns both locally and nationally, there is an option on their webpage to find a local event which will ultimately support them in the next local election. These campaigns can be accessed via zoom, which is effective as it makes it accessible to a lot of people and they are also held in person with public speakers.

Another popular way of generating media coverage is through press releases as they have been central to the public relations industry for over a decade. This is where 'writers provide information to journalists in the hope that it will be passed on to the general public' (Maat, 2007). Research into press releases has found that they are effective in getting a specific message across and that 'they do influence what reporters write' (Maat, 2007). Politicians will often produce press releases to promote their new policies or changes that they are keen to make. The Labour party's recent press release was announced by Kier Starmer, the current Labour leader, he presented a New Years speech and covered topics including the changes he has made and will continue to build upon, the need for a new government and the need for economic change. With the issues that the British public have faced over the past year, producing a detailed speech covering all of these issues and how they will be

solved is effective as he is creating this relationship with the public. furthermore, by sharing all of these positive changes with the public he is promoting himself as a reliable and worthy leader. In conjunction with this, press releases often have a 'propagandist purpose' meaning they only cover positive news about themselves and if they do not, 'the information is presented as favorable as possible from the corporate viewpoint' (Maat,2007). A study researching presidents' letters to shareholders found 'a tendency to resort to a more factual, objectifying style when discussing negative news, apparently to divert blame from persons that could other-wise be held responsible' (Thomas, 1997, as cited in Maat,2007).

Negative campaigning is another effective technique employed by the Labour party. Research finds that As an electoral strategy, 'negative campaigning aims at persuading risk-averse voters 'not to vote' for a party or candidate and to mobilize own supporters' (Riker 1996, 1991; Ansolabehere et al. 1994; Lau, 1985, as cited in Haselmayer, 2019,p.7). Their ultimate aim is deter voters from the opposing party by attacking them. A recent example of this is 'partygate', the tory government broke covid guidelines by hosting a party at downing street. Labour leader Kier Starmer accused the Prime Minister of 'taking the British public for fools' and often demanded he resign. This is effective as highlighting your rivals flaws publicly and showing the public you stand with them attracts many voters and promotes the Labour party. Furthermore, psychologists have proven that negative information is retained more than positive information, this is also known as 'negativity bias'. further research into this topic supports this, 'Accordingly, individuals pay more attention to and give more weight to negative information, compared to positive one' (Soroka 2014; Baumeister et al. 2001; Rozin and Royzman, 2001, as cited in Haselmayer,2019). Nevertheless, this public relations technique could prove to be ineffective in the future as negative campaigning is employed by both parties, this will result in an inevitable backlash for the Labour party.

In conclusion, the Labour party have implemented many public relations techniques during their time in government which has helped to promote their party and Members of parliament. With the advancement of technology, they have been able to reach a larger audience and gain supporters through social media sites. Furthermore, they have been able to make their campaigns and speeches more accessible by uploading them to their website. It is important to note that the Labour party have not always succeeded and been promoted in an effective way as they are in a constant battle with their opposition.

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## Bring back the night bus!

The safety of women in Liverpool is being undermined, this is why bringing back the night bus is essential.



Bus travelling through city centre, Liverpool, 2013. Photograph: Terry Kearney/ Flickr images

Since lockdown, safety concerning our wellbeing and health has increased as we now wear masks and protect those around us, but the safety of women has decreased significantly. I partly blame the unsafe streets and eradication of the night bus for this. The streets are simply not safe for women, especially at night. Transport is key to keeping women safe on the streets, it allows them to get home safely. In Liverpool, people are demanding for the night bus to be reinstated as many people relied on it before covid. I find that many men don't suffer the same issues as women, they could walk or get a taxi alone with no fear. A [study](#) produced in 2021 showed that, One in two women felt unsafe walking alone after dark in a busy public place, compared to one in five men. Overall, men have to be less cautious.

Reinstating the night bus would have a positive effect on everyone's lives, not just vulnerable or drunk women. Liverpool hosts 3 universities so it is more cost effective for students to get the bus instead of a taxi or uber. We must also consider workers such as those on night shifts or those working in the nightclubs. Furthermore, the night bus could increase employment in the city centre as jobs become available to more people, this would further boost the businesses that suffered in lockdown as more people would want to attend a club or a bar knowing they had a journey home. One thing that deters me from working late shifts in the city centre is the dreaded journey home, as a young woman I would not feel safe as I would be alone. Introducing the night bus prevents this as there is more of a community presence.

Before lockdown, the night bus that ran hourly through Liverpool was vital for so many students as without transport home we are stranded, we cannot rely on family to pick us up as we are away from home. The [metro mayor told the echo](#) in 2021 that it will not be

brought back as there are driver shortages and revenue cannot cover the operating costs. However, if everyone worked together to sign petitions and reinstate the night bus, it would arguably bring more jobs to bus drivers and generate a lot of money as it would be a 24 hour service. Furthermore, stagecoach announced during covid that they would be hopeful to bring back their night bus however as we know this did not happen.

Our environment has also been a top priority over recent years, we want to keep the Earth clean. The night bus is environmentally friendly as [research](#) shows that 1 bus is equivalent to 75 cars so they save 500kg of co2e per journey. Buses are therefore imperative in reducing carbon emissions. Reinstating the night bus would also reduce traffic congestion at night meaning more people can get home, there would be less taxis and ubers regulating the area. Another benefit of the night bus, regarding taxis, is that most women don't feel safe travelling home in a taxi, whether that be with other women or alone. There are many [horror stories](#) about fake taxis or dishonest taxi men so often women don't feel comfortable travelling in them. During freshers week in Liverpool, my close friends experienced a dodgy taxi as they were locked inside with another man in the back. It is very easy for 'taxi men' to drive around places where they know drunk and vulnerable girls will be and its heart breaking to know that as a society we aren't protected.

Violence against women is something that is very common in worldwide news. The solution to this news is often that women should cover up or simply not go out, they are expected to protect themselves and take necessary precautions. Personally, this is a very lazy mindset and the expectation and responsibility should be on the government, police force and most importantly the male perpetrators. A lot of incidents occur at night as it is dark and people may be under the influence and therefore vulnerable so I do believe that reinstating the night bus, specifically in Liverpool, would prevent a lot of these incidents from occurring. The [echo reported on a case](#) that took place in August 2022, a women was approached and sexually assaulted on Hanover street at 5am. Another case related to this is the murder of Sarah Everard, this case shocked the world and impacted many women as they no longer felt safe walking alone. I know from personal experience that I no longer trusted anyone around me on the street and I refused to walk anywhere by myself after dark. Daylight hours disrupt many women's lives as they have to plan around and ensure they won't be by themselves after dark. In December there is as little as 8 hours of daylight meaning most night outs begin and end in the pitch black. This results in an increase of violence and need for protection, something the night bus could offer.

Promotional writing

### Review of the Liverpool's museum virtual tours

Virtual tours are one of the newest ways to effectively market a business and during the pandemic they increased in popularity. They can be defined as [‘a simulation of an existing location that is composed of a sequence of video image’](#), and its primary purpose is to recreate a real life experience through the internet. During the coronavirus pandemic, tourism came to a standstill because they rely on customers to run their business, as a response to this many businesses created virtual tours to boost their relationship with their customers. The [Liverpool National Museum](#) is one example of this, they offer virtual tours on several of their galleries and exhibitions.

I chose to focus on the ‘Dinosaurs and Natural World’ gallery tour, there are 38 different slides to select and view, majority of them focus on different dinosaurs and fossils with the remaining slides offering a general overview and images of the floorplan. I found this tour to be very convenient as it included many interactive features. Firstly, I could zoom in on the information boards which is especially helpful for those with bad eyesight. Another feature of this tour that I found to be helpful was the play/pause button, you can skip slides but if you wanted to engage in the full experience then you can press play and be immersed in the tour. The option to view this tour through a Virtual headset is also a great interactive feature, seeing the dinosaurs fly across the screen would be very entertaining, especially for young children fascinated by dinosaurs. In addition to this, virtual tours could attract the younger generation and millennials as it saves them time and is cheaper, they could show their children instead of having the hassle of taking them in person in a crowded room. Further [research](#) supports my theory on the younger generation, they found that Customers aged between 18 and 34 are more likely to book a venue or use a service if the business website offers a virtual tour.

We are living in a digital age so as technology continues to evolve, people are finding access to activities through their phones to be much more convenient. From this I believe that virtual tours and virtual reality will eventually take over a business's way of marketing. They will be useful as they are available 24/7 so can attract more sales. Furthermore, they are cheaper for those who live far away and the only option for money on the ‘National Museum Liverpool’ website is for donations. Furthermore, in relation to the museum tours, they allow people that are interested in history and art to maintain this relationship and also enable newcomers to build these relationships. When I was exploring their webpage I discovered that there is a tour for everyone. Finally, in times like covid, being able to engage with these tours adds a sense of normality to many peoples lives.





