

In one of my [previous articles](#) , I likened social media to a war zone during elections. If this is the case, then the Respect Party candidate in Bradford West is a the political equivalent of Rambo. A one-man army, all oiled up and with a [proclivity for verbal fights](#)

, George Galloway last week proved once again that while Twitter is a great way to engage with your potential constituents, sometimes it's best to stay clear of the platform, particularly if you have thin skin.

The [Bradford Brewery](#) made somewhat of a snarky comment asking whether Galloway was "[still a thing?](#)"

". Arguably, any respectable politician would ignore such jibes, but on a list of things Galloway is unlikely to say, "no comment" ranks quite highly. After saying that the brewery had been "unwise" to make such comments, the hopeful MP made what could be viewed, as it was by the brewery, some tweets of a threatening tone. He then went on to block the Bradford Brewery's account. This is the equivalent of running away from a fight.

All in all, this was much ado about nothing. The brewery gained a bunch of [free advertising](#) and Galloway simply added to the list of things with which [the public mocks him for](#)

. However, there is a lesson to be learnt here.

The young and the reckless

The important thing to take away from this incident is that politicians of all parties probably need better social media training. It's common practice that they receive traditional media training such as how to behave in front of a television camera but in today's social media age, the importance of knowing how to not only correctly use social media, but also get the best out of it is increasingly important.

A case could be made that this is only an issue for politicians over a certain age and that when people of my generation begin to raise to the top ranks of political parties that we'd be all au fait with how to correctly use social media as a politician.

I'd like to think so, but if cases like that of [Paris Brown](#) , the youth police and crime

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commissioner who resigned after her past Twitter activity came to light, are anything to go by, I feel my generation will require even more social media training to stop us getting into unnecessary online squabbles or saying stupid things. With [29% of young people thinking they have made social media posts that could affect their future careers](#) and the inevitably higher percentage of actually career threatening posts out there, my generation's future politicians will have a lot of deleting to do.

Of course in 20 years time we may all become so jaded when it comes to online scandals that being a faultless Twitter user may not be a requirement for politicians. Hear me now and quote me later: there will come a time when [a politician getting caught tweeting out a dick pic](#) won't even raise an eyebrow.

Infographics: better than green screens

Moving away from the graphic and into the graphical, fancy election graphics such as [holographic houses of parliament](#)

or

[fancy maps](#)

were once a toy just for traditional media. But these days, infographics are the go-to tool to display data and statistics in an interactive way online, allowing us to personalise our experience to make it more useful and relevant.

If you're like me and you love going into the minutia of polling, [fivethirtyeight.com](#) has an excellent election forecast map that illustrates not only the likely outcomes in every constituency, but also how simple infographics can be an effective tool in conveying data online. And for those of a betting disposition the man behind the website, Nate Silver, made almost [perfect predictions for the US 2012 election](#) and so it's excellent source for second guessing what the final numbers will be come May 7.

Another infographic driven website is [voterpower.org.uk](#). Here, anyone can look up how powerful their vote really is and have it shown to them in a clear and illustrative manner. For instance, knowing that in my local constituency, [we have roughly 2.89x more power than the average UK voter](#) due to it being a marginal seat, could help encourage people to go out and vote knowing they actually could make a difference. Obviously this site could have the opposite effect in safe seats such as Knowsley where their voting power is roughly [100x weaker than the average UK voter](#)

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and hence could lead people not to vote.

Both these sites among many others highlight how online media is an increasingly important tool during elections. Not only does it allow for smaller news sites to display interesting data driven stories with vastly smaller budgets than that of traditional media, but it also grants the public an additional platform from which to access this sort of information in an easily digestible way.

Television no longer has a monopoly on graphical data and this election cycle, the public should look towards the internet for innovative new ways to understand the election and learn how their vote does, or in some cases, does not matter.

Read more <http://theconversation.com/politicians-need-to-be-taught-how-to-tweet-and-so-do-the-rest-of-us-39883>